

BOARD GAMES...

Did anyone get a new Board Game for Christmas?

It's *fascinating* to learn a new board game.

Well, fascinating – and sometimes frustrating.

When everyone present is learning how to play a new board game, all at the same time, typically someone reads the rules aloud, so that everyone is starting from the same place.

However, if you are at someone's home and learning a new board game, from them, then chances are you *didn't* read all the rules together. More likely, the person most familiar with the game explains the rules to everyone present before you start.

Yet – if your family or friends are anything like mine, inevitably, some of the rules are forgotten about until something happens in the game to make them relevant. *Then* the PERSON WHO KNOWS the rules explains that rule they forgot to tell you about.... And it also, often, seeeeeems like the newly introduced rule benefits the person, who introduces it.

It's intriguing to consider Rules.

~Who sets them.

~Who Follows Them.

~Consequences for Not Following Them.

~And Who Decides – All Of That.

We are living in a time when the rules are changing.

Some for the better.

And some... not so much.

Of course, *who* decides
“For the better” and the
“Not so much” ???

It’s relative...

And one could be horrified to hear the casual reference, of
“Not so much” as in *Not* for the Better

when the reality is, “Not So Much” **can be a Monumental Force for Destruction**

I mean after all - Lives are at stake, via:

- ~Jobs
- ~Physical Health
- ~Mental Health
- ~Environmental Health
- ~Generational Health/Wellbeing
- ~War...

In a recent article, titled: “**Giving Up The Patriarchy/Lent 2022**”¹

The author, **Dr. Kristin Hull**, states:

*“In my job, as an asset manager, women and people of color combined, manage **just 1.3%** of the **\$80 Trillion** financial industry. This means that *white men* are making decisions on which companies get investment and how funds are constructed **98.7% of the time.**”*

“Recognizing all of the places where male dominance makes up the status quo...From our state, federal and local governments, to agriculture and food production, to banking and financial institutions, to the boards of directors and C-suites of our tech start ups, to our largest companies, men (predominantly white men) are at the table, making most of the big decisions that affect us all. And look where we are.” [emphasis added]

In thinking about Dr. Kristin Hull’s words, it makes ***me*** wonder...

What **makes us** think that ***white men*** should **hold all that power...**

And why do we think that they should be making 98.7%
of the decisions for all the rest of us.

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus share a parable:

"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

.....

When the vineyard owner told the gardener to cut down the fig tree, the gardener protested.

That gardener... – Who wasn't the "top man."

That gardener... that could have lost his job...
been beaten...
could even have been killed,
for challenging

The One With The Power.

Also today we hear in Exodus about Moses. How when Moses saw the Burning Bush, he recognized that he was to pay attention. He was then told by God to take off his sandals to acknowledge sacred ground. And then that Moses was called by God to speak out to Pharaoh...

The One with The Power.

Just this month, there was an article in *Religion News* titled:

“Episcopal Bishop Curry says ‘more to do’ as poll shows Christians viewed as hypocrites.”ⁱⁱ

The article cites a new study *conducted* by the Episcopal Church, which “illustrates stark differences between how Christians and non-Christians view Christianity in the United States.”ⁱⁱⁱ

There are a lot of numbers in the article. I’ll share just a couple:

~Only 15% of people from other religions, viewed Christians as compassionate (and that number is even lower for those of no religious tradition)^{iv}

~ And on the question of hypocrisy, among the non-religious, 55% view Christians as hypocrites^v

Presiding Bishop – Michael Curry – *did* address some differences between Christian traditions, then added:

“But...We got some history.

*We as Christians need to own that — that **very often**, we have been silent in the **midst of unspeakable horrors** when we should have spoken up.”^{vi}*

[emphasis added]

It is worth noting that when we don’t speak out to The Patriarchy/The Ones With The Power... when we know we should say something, yet we remain silent – **we also hurt ourselves.**

In today’s Collect, there’s a part where we ask God to:

“Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul.” [emphasis added]

In ***Not*** Speaking Out....

When we let our own interests
or fears keep us silent,
we also hurt Our Souls.

And when the Collect pleads for God to: *“keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls”*

We could hear it acknowledge that in refusing to speak out... In remaining silent, in abandoning what we know we should say – we also abandon ourselves... we leave our bodies and souls.

That gardener pushed back against the Patriarchy, offering that with more care, more resources....the tree would do better.

Of course one could argue it's still a Capitalist/Able-ist construct.

Where one is only worth something if they can produce or “contribute.”

If one can't produce, can't “pay their way” then having likely absorbed the rules of the Patriarchy, the “non-producer” is made **to internalize the shame that their very own society refuses to own.**

But in the end we don't have to accept that Construct... perhaps speaking out is a first step.

Sometimes it is more clear, as with the Vineyard owner and the Gardener...other times it may simply be that **uneasy** feeling that we can't quite place, but suspect that **“Something is Wrong Here.”**

For both, perhaps we can consider that God is calling us to pay attention, and as we heard today in Moses seeing the burning bush, and his exchange with God, we too can say **“Here I Am.”**

In so doing...in that paying attention to something we can't quite place, perhaps can't quite see, we are entering Holy Ground.
We are opening ourselves to God and God's work.

Perhaps... at this point in Lent, we can consider anew, what we are giving up and what we are taking on.

When evil forces, when The Patriarchy demand our silence in the face of oppression,
God is calling us to stand on the Holy Ground of Speaking Out!

When the Gardener spoke out to the One with Power
When Moses was called to speak out to the One with Power.

They didn't know how things would turn out.

Much in that same way
we won't always know where, *our* pleas for mercy – or more rightly put,
our pleas for “Justice” will lead.

But we know one thing...
It's time to
Change Who Makes the Rules.

Perhaps we can remember our own
spark of Divine and feel empowered,
to remember that
even without official titles or impressive credentials

We *can* speak out to those in power and address injustice,
reminding ourselves: “I am who I am.”

and believe that that is enough.

The Rev. Jakki R. Flanagan
St. Thomas's Episcopal Church
New Haven, Connecticut
March 19, 2022
Third Sunday in Lent, Year C

Exodus 3:1-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

ⁱ The Money Doula: “*Giving Up the Patriarchy/Lent 2022*” by Dr. Kristin Hull, Ph.D.,
<https://kristinhull.medium.com/giving-up-the-patriarchy-lent-2022-649ea641cea7>

ⁱⁱ Religion News, “*Episcopal Bishop Curry Says ‘more to do’ as poll shows Christians viewed as hypocrites*” March 9, 2022, <https://religionnews.com/2022/03/09/episcopal-bishop-curry-says-more-to-do-as-poll-shows-christians-seen-as-hypocrites/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Religion News, “*Episcopal Bishop Curry Says ‘more to do’ as poll shows Christians viewed as hypocrites*” March 9, 2022, <https://religionnews.com/2022/03/09/episcopal-bishop-curry-says-more-to-do-as-poll-shows-christians-seen-as-hypocrites/>

^{iv} Religion News, “*Episcopal Bishop Curry Says ‘more to do’ as poll shows Christians viewed as hypocrites*” March 9, 2022, <https://religionnews.com/2022/03/09/episcopal-bishop-curry-says-more-to-do-as-poll-shows-christians-seen-as-hypocrites/>

^v Religion News, “*Episcopal Bishop Curry Says ‘more to do’ as poll shows Christians viewed as hypocrites*” March 9, 2022, <https://religionnews.com/2022/03/09/episcopal-bishop-curry-says-more-to-do-as-poll-shows-christians-seen-as-hypocrites/>

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