

Dry Bones and Temple Tables

To the teaching and to the testimony

Rwanda...dry bones etc.
It sucks the breath out of you

Jesus complicates the notion of temple.
What is space?
What is place?
What is built environment?
These venues where we gather
In the name of all that is holy
For what?

Is it the smell?
The stench
Of shit
Mixed with the incense
And oil
Is it that the bells
announcing high priestly entrée were
Drowned out by the sound
Of the animals that
Occasioned the birth
Of the son of man?

The man who chose
Tax collectors
Fishers
Prostitutes
Blue collar folk
Is he mad at the
butchers
shepherds
ranchers
hawkers of wares
carpenters?

Jesus was a low wage worker, y'all
The one who identifies with
Laborers and lepers
Who purposely
Places himself among the

Periphery with the pariahs
In the outer gate
With the women
With the unclean
When he is literally the mercy seat
The spotless lamb
At the center of it all?

Is it the optics
That a gated community
Those with priestly pedigree
Hovering over the holy
Of holies
Those who buy the fatted calf
But would never raise them
Those who benefit by the
Blood of the lamb
Smearred
On the post over the door
Could be invaded
By an inferior class
Of folks
Not from here
Not educated there
Not descended from TJ
One of Sally's bastards
With that god-awful accent
From Nazareth
From Samaria

This is the same Jesus
Who says that it is not
What enters the mouth that defiles
But rather,
What is within
Doves and sheep and cattle on a thousand hills
All belong to God
So it can't be that

So what makes the vignette distinct?
Jesus got mad just like
Jesus wept.
Jesus had emotions.
Got fed up with capitalism?

Girl Scout Cookie orders?
This is not out of the ordinary
Unique
Angry Palestinian activist man
Losing his cool
This is not purity politics.
This is not about the book of church order
This is not about obeisance to the Law
Or the Lawkeepers,
Who he called whitewashed tombs
This is not merely about cleanliness of a temple
That had been destroyed before
It cannot be.

I hear echoes of
The prophet Isaiah
Your festivals are an abomination to me!

To be ZEALOUS FOR
Means to be RADICALLY AGAINST
what?
Injustice
Unrighteousness.
When the righteous prosper
The people rejoice
Says Jeremiah
And what does righteous prosperity
Look like?

Reclamation
Reparation
Abolition
Liberty
Where the spirit of the Lord is
There is Liberty
Not do no harm
Eff my neighbor
Go for the gusto
American Dream Libertarianism
The original Prosperity Gospel
City on a Hill
New Jerusalem going to hell
In a swift handbasket Good News.

Because Jesus comes
For the blind
Those with eyes to see
That true power
Comes from below
Not found in temples
But in the testimonies
Of the oppressed
The humble
The meek
The hand to mouth
The can't get a vaccine
Even if they wanted to
The haven't had healthcare
Even under Obama's watch
Cause ain't got no laptop
Those with eyes to see
And ears to hear
What the still small voice
Is still saying

The ones who are unbought
And unbossed
The organic intellectuals
whose wisdom
Emanates from emptiness
From poverty of spirit
It is difficult for the rich
To enter the kingdom of heaven

It's not hard people
It's all in Luke 4.
Jesus literally spells it out.
You don't even have to decipher
The writing on the wall
A movement borne of
The Jesus
Sets people free
sets the earth free
dismantles structures
That oppress
EVEN TEMPLES

Because the power

To rebuild
To set right
To bring about justice
Is paradoxical
It is peripheral
It is weak
It is despised
It is debased

It is off kilter
Not left of Trump
Not left of Biden
Neither right nor left
It is on the outskirts
It is actually *in* the outer courts
With those whose tables Jesus
Turned over
For zeal that they not become like
Those in power
Who sell their birthright
Who give their children stones
Not bread, so
Jesus reminded them
That manna comes from the ground
It is not manure that defiles the temple
It is those who fail to see the powerless

Those who walk away empty,
Inconsolable
when Jesus says
Sell all that you have and follow me
Those who fail to see
that the keys of the kingdom belong
Not to religion
Not to the Vicar of Christ in Rome
Not to white evangelicals in Wheaton, IL
Not to Episcopalians and Lutherans and Methodists
Who pat themselves on the back for signifying
With rainbow flags on buildings
By drumming in the latest activist parade

So Grace Church,
Where do you find yourself?
In the center

On the periphery

Today is the day of Jubilee
For the dry bones on Monacan Land
To return that which we have stolen
For my Great Grandfather who lived
in Greenwood in Tulsa
Black Wall Street
To receive posthumous reparations
Via my Granny
For my people's proverbial 40 acres and a mule

Because Justice is nothing if not Restorative.
Grace Church
The call is a question
Not an answer
A call to lament
A call to examine
A call to commit
To turning over your own tables

Rwanda...etc
Jesus sucks the breath out
To breathe new life into
The dry bones