



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

The Story Lives On! by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

On Easter Sunday my pastor, the Rev. Dr. Becky Beckwith, preached a compelling sermon entitled *The Story Lives On*. Becky reminded us that even though we intentionally gather on Easter to celebrate the resurrection, every time we see life replacing death, resurrection occurs and the Easter story lives on.

Becky's message spoke to me in many ways, not the least of which to my lingering reaction to Glenn Beck's March 2nd comments about Christianity and social justice.

For those of you who do not know Glenn Beck, he is a Fox News personality who has his own daily radio and television show. On his March 2nd show he stated: "I beg you, look for the words 'social justice' or 'economic justice' on your church Web site. If you find it, run as fast as you can. Social justice and economic justice, they are code words. Now, am I advising people to leave their church? Yes! If I'm going to Jeremiah Wright's church? Yes! Leave your church. Social justice and economic justice. They are code words. If you have a priest that is pushing social justice, go find another parish. Go alert your bishop and tell them, 'Excuse me are you down with this whole social justice thing?' I don't care what the church is. If it's my church, I'm alerting the church authorities: 'Excuse me, what's this social justice thing?' And if they say, 'Yeah, we're all in that social justice thing,' I'm in the wrong place."

Beck went on to suggest that "social justice" and "economic justice" were code words for communism and Nazism.

Typically I refrain from making comments about politics or political commentators, but this time I cannot remain silent. Jesus' statements about justice were not comments advocating for a particular type of political structure. Jesus came proclaiming (and living) the very same message that the Old Testament prophets had been proclaiming for centuries: *faith and justice are inseparable*.

Jesus taught in the synagogue: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed, and announce the year when the Lord will save his people.* (Luke 4:18-19) Again in the 25th Chapter of Matthew (verses 31-46) Jesus announces that those who will be blessed in the final judgment will be those who *reached out to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned*.

Tony Campolo points out: "There are 2,000 verses of Scripture that tell us we must be committed to protecting the poor and the oppressed... there is no concern of Scripture that is addressed so often and so powerfully as reaching out to the poor."

When you come to the realization that you are loved not because of your status, opinion, or accomplishments, but simply because you are a child of God, then out of faith you cannot help but love as God has loved you. You cannot help but want justice for God's children who have been oppressed and pushed to the fringes of society. And every time you love others and speak up for those whose voices have been suppressed, then life replaces death, the resurrection happens again, and the story lives on!

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