

Occupy the Church, Occupy Together

by Tia Everitt - Friday, October 07, 2011

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Christians.

Church.

God.

Jesus.

Occupy.

What do these words mean to you?

For many, the connotations are negative. Personal experiences with judgemental, rigid, frozen people who identify themselves as Christians have left a bitter taste in their mouths. Memories of being harangued, condescended to and lectured linger long after their encounter. Media and political examples of those who proclaim to be faithful are nearly always of a deafeningly ignorant and perplexing sort. If these were my sole run-ins with Christians, I would write them off as a group as well. After all, who wants to yoke themselves to a group of closed-minded and finger pointing hypocrites?

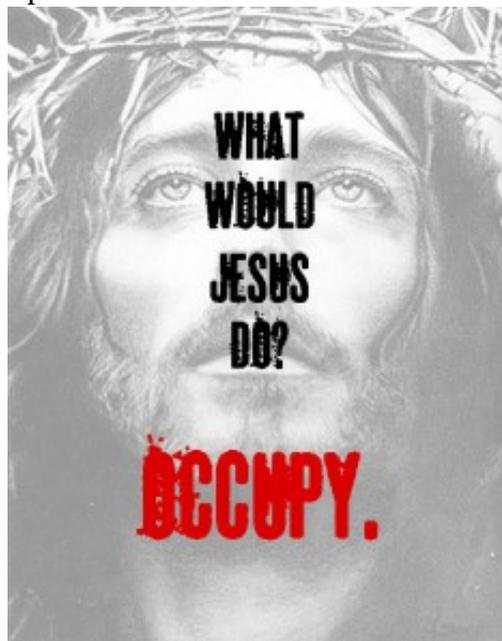
I found myself bashing my head against my desk earlier in the day, when I stumbled upon a [Tweet](#) from [Westboro Baptist Church](#). Westboro is notorious for being vehemently anti-gay, anti-Semitic and viciously Pro-Life, and have gone to extremes to publicly harass and shame these aforementioned groups in the media, often turning up at events with angry pickets and inflammatory signage. Should you ever require an emetic to induce vomiting after eating some bad sushi, I whole-heartedly suggest reading through their www.godhatesfags.com website.

As someone who identifies as a Christian, I am loath to lump myself in with their ilk, and was disgusted and nauseated after reading through their prejudiced, hateful vomiting of words. Today, they were generating press for themselves by announcing that they were going to ramp up their new crusade of placards and brimstone, by picketing the funeral of [deceased Apple founder, Steve Jobs](#). Beyond smacking of a cheap stunt to get attention, I fail to understand how this would be useful to anyone, other than the Westboro coffers that are filling up with the tizzied tithes of like-minded Tea Party wing nuts and illiterate mouth-breathers. According to Margie Phelps of Westboro, Jobs is sizzling in the deep-fryer of Hell tonight, because he failed to use his riches to give glory to God. Ergo, this is a good time to spread a little of the crazy in front of his mourners and the sundry members of media in attendance. I'm impressed that Westboro has been struck with the divine ability to know with certainty what Jobs is doing for eternity. Margie, honey, it's time to go back to the basics, and visit Matthew 7: 1- 5. *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log*

that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Hmm. Convenient to forget this choice nugget, n'est pas?

After I finished spitting at the screen, and hissing invectives, I was consumed by reading up and following the [Occupy Wall Street](#) solidarity movement, [Occupy Together](#), that has been gaining traction worldwide. Borne out of backlash against the corruption, oppression and suppression of Americans by corporations and government, the movement has replicated like a virus, with a rapid surge of action groups springing up in cities around the world. As it should. For too long, people have been complacent in allowing themselves to be stepped on and kicked by the greedy and evil. A good, old-fashioned peasant revolt, replete with pitchforks and torches has been direly needed for a long time. It has begun. It is good. Again, Westboro's various Twitter accounts decry the movement, proclaiming protestors infidels, sodomites and heathens. As do other fundamentalist, extreme right lurching (they don't lean) organizations.

Epic fail.



Jesus would occupy.

The man, whose name so many draw upon to justify their hatred and prejudice?

He was a liberal.

He was a rebel.

He was a political leader.

He was angry.

The Son of God was no namby-pamby, milquetoast, limp-wristed man. He blasted [money changers in the temple](#), who were thieving and corrupting through commercial activity. He didn't keep company with royalty and rulers, starlets and the popular. He had a band of misfits and loners who shucked off the trappings of everyday life, and gave up their comforts to incite action. Jesus hung out with prostitutes, and worse, the universally reviled tax collector. He doled out free health care. He dispensed food to the hungry. He forgave people of their debts to God. He was a carpenter who labored, and became a radical teacher. He faced the death penalty for a crime he didn't commit.

This man would Occupy.

So for those who need to return to the basics, and revisit exactly what Jesus DID espouse, I've got a few reminders of why Christians are called to be radical, inclusive, loving and political and why we need to Occupy the Church and our communities instead of hiding in glass houses.

Make Peace, Not War

Canada and the US spend absurd quantities of money fighting wars to protect the interests of multinational corporations that toss them kickbacks. We send our troops to places they have no business being, to come home in body bags, to fight wars that are not our own. Stop policing the world. Fix the problems here, where our people are being bled dry.

- *Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be Called the Children of God."*
- *Matthew 5:39 "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite the on thy right cheek, turn the other also."*
- *Matthew 5:44 "I say unto you: love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which fully use you and persecute you."*

Corporate Greed is an Abomination

Corporations are not citizens. They are given leeway by the government to devastate the environment, enslave workers, create artificial economic hardship, destroy lives.

- *Luke 12: 15 "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in abundance of his possessions."*
- *Matthew 6: 24 " You cannot serve God and money."*
- *John 2:14 & 15 "In the temple courts, Jesus found men selling cattle, sheep, doves while sitting at tables, exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove them from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tablets."*

Equality and Social Programs

All people deserve equal access to free health care, free education, and accessible housing. Not just those who can afford to pay, to skip a queue, to be born into a better social standing. Is that what we have now? Not even close. We are charged to take care of those who are unable to do this for themselves.

- *Luke 14: 13 & 14 "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*
- *Matthew 22:39 "So in everything do to others as you would have them do to you."*
- *Matthew 19:21 "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."*

Crime & Punishment

The recent case of [Troy Davis](#) in Georgia is a perfect example of the hypocritical nature of governance, law makers and those who are able to exert power over us. Even when presented with law that would cast reasonable doubt, decision makers in the state of Georgia were able to exploit loopholes to strong-arm their will. North Americans cried foul, rallied for benevolence, pleaded for justice. There was none. This was not the first, nor will it be the last time the death penalty was used to send a message to the world. *"Screw you. We are the government. We do what we want."*

- *John 8:7 "If any one of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone."*
- *Matthew 7: 1 & 2 "Do not judge, lest you too be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged with the measure you used, and it will be measured unto you."*

Christians are called upon to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) and to speak for those who have no voice. God does not hate fags. Or Buddhists. Or single mothers. Or immigrants. God hates hypocrites who spread lies, hatred and death. If Satan truly comes to kill, steal and destroy, as it is written in John 10:10, then it is our governments, banks and corporations that we need to rebuke. Jesus came so that we could live life, and live it abundantly. To watch our fellow-man wither on the vine, broken and indebted is to defy what our mission on Earth is. Every day that you and I turn our back on social justice, deny righteousness and turn a blind eye to corruption is a day that all of us have failed. The sickness and the sorrow that we are drowning in are symptoms of our own depravity, and the willingness to put on a blindfold. It is time to unite, join in solidarity, and scream *"This isn't working! Stop the madness. Fix this, and fix it now!"*

Occupy your city.

Occupy your church.

Tomorrow is too late.