

LIVING PURPLE



5TH WEEK IN LENT

SOUTHERN OHIO SYNOD

LENT 5

AUTHENTIC EQUITY

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READING FROM SCRIPTURE: JOHN 10:10B (NRSV)

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

FOR REFLECTION AND STUDY

Can you imagine if when Peter's mother-in-law needed cured of fever, Jesus had instead handed her a couple loaves of bread he'd miraculously multiplied? Or if when Zacchaeus needed forgiveness and welcome, Jesus put mud on his eyes and told him he was healed?

Jesus tells us that he came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Of course, Jesus' life death and resurrection means that we have eternal life – an abundance of riches indeed. But the gift also includes abundant life here and now. What does that look like? A life where our needs are met and we can flourish. A life full of community, mercy, and love.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus made that abundant life accessible to people. But he did so in various ways. Why? Because they each had particular needs. Everyone had distinct obstacles to overcome. The goal was the same, but the ways they arrived there were different.

Equity is a lightning rod of a word on our national stage right now. But it is simply meeting people where they are and providing them what they need to thrive. Through his life, Jesus gave us a blueprint of what to do – respond to people's needs, remove obstacles, build healthy community.

Jesus provided an example – and he also makes a way for us to do this. It is hard to be honest about the ways that sexism, racism, poverty, and other issues have created bigger obstacles for people, particularly if we have

benefited from these systemic issues. It's a challenge to admit that. It's often overwhelming as we look to make meaningful change. So we place our hope in Christ, who calls us to die to sin and rise to new life – daily. Trusting in Jesus, we can work for equitable and just treatment for all. Abundant life indeed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the concept of “abundant life” mean to you personally, and how does it connect with the idea of thriving in community, mercy, and love?

Reflect on what it might look like for you and your community to experience abundant life today, in both spiritual and practical terms.

2. In the reflection, we're reminded that Jesus responded to people's needs in different ways. Why do you think Jesus chose such diverse approaches, and what can we learn from this when we seek to respond to the needs of others in our communities?
3. The idea of equity is central to the reflection. What does it mean to meet people where they are and provide what they need to thrive? How does this differ from equality, and why is this distinction important in our faith and actions?
4. Jesus' ministry was one of justice and inclusion, addressing the specific needs of each person. How can we, as individuals and as a congregation, begin to identify and respond to the specific needs within our community to help them experience abundant life?
5. The prayer speaks of seeking clarity and courage in making the world more equitable. What are some of the barriers (personal, societal, or institutional) that make it challenging to pursue equity in our world today? How can we overcome these barriers through faith and action?
6. Consider the ways systemic issues like racism, sexism, and poverty create obstacles for people. How does acknowledging these barriers shift our understanding of Jesus' call to create a more just and equitable world?

7. In the ELCA's definition of equity, there is a focus on providing different resources to ensure people have the same opportunities to flourish. How can we, as a church, work towards equity not just in words, but in our actions and choices (e.g., community outreach, advocacy, resources, etc.)?

PRAYER

Grant us clarity and courage as we seek to make this world more equitable. Make us bold as we remove barriers so that all may experience abundant life. Keep us focused on you and your vision for this world you so love, in all that we say and do. Amen.

CONSIDER FOR USE IN WORSHIP

In worship, sing the hymn, ELW 710 "Streams of Living Justice."

EQUITY DEFINED IN ELCA CONSTITUTION

Equity means fair treatment of people according to their needs. The principle of equity takes into account that people exist on inherently uneven playing fields due to poverty, sexism, racism, etc. Because of these different contexts, individuals or groups may require different resources and support to ensure that they have the same rights and abilities to make choices as others do (such as having a choice of quality doctors, careers, neighborhoods, etc.). The goal of equity is to ensure each person receives what each person needs to flourish and is not disadvantaged.