

Being formed into community—telling our stories into our fuller humanity
Genesis 18:9-14; Leviticus 25:8-12; Luke 4:18-19
Meditation on jubilee, anti-racism, and being human

Celebrating our 50 years of being a congregation in South Central Elkhart is a perfect time for us to consider the biblical call to *jubilee*. In the Book of Leviticus, we hear the intention that the 50th year, the year after 7 x 7 years, is a holy year. It is a year of returning and re-ordering. In this vision, lands and possessions that have accumulated over the years are re-distributed and re-allocated.

It's an amazing vision. Creator God instituted an economic system for humans founded on the principles of abundance and equity and justice. Built into jubilee is a reset that restores a fullness of humanity within a community. A fullness founded on economics and evidenced by economic equity to all.

As our Creator, God knows and understands human beings. Fear and greed and a desire to dominate *will result* in some people accumulating and amassing wealth while others become poor and dis-empowered. The disparity and injustice de-humanizes those who struggle to live. And it dehumanizes those who amass fortunes and use it to dominate and oppress.

As I've been thinking about *jubilee* this week, I have begun to see the uprisings in cities across our nation as cries for *jubilee*. In our country and around the globe, the demand for a reset, for a re-allocation and a re-distribution of wealth and resources, is growing. Racism and white supremacy are more than attitudes towards people and cultures of color—white supremacy and racism are necessary to maintain the economic systems and structures of this country. The economy of this country is an economy that has advantaged and favored whiteness. Systemic and systematic disadvantages for indigenous, black, and brown bodies has been built into our systems. It is how this country works.

Racism maintains the structures and systems of our economy, our institutions, and our civic life.

So as we at Fellowship of Hope are celebrating our 50 years, we are also being asked to participate in God's call for jubilee. When I, as a white person, begin to reckon with the white supremacy and advantages that I have inherited, that inhabit my very body without my permission and without my conscious awareness, when we begin to pay attention to the ways we embody supremacist ways of thinking and being, we are ushering in the year of jubilee.

Sometimes when we as white people hear about racism and white supremacy, we experience guilt and shame. And we react by defending ourselves or by becoming paralyzed by the shame and guilt. But please hear me: Do not be afraid. Do not be burdened by this. Do not defend yourself. Do not be ashamed. We are people of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit of God is alive in us and is always, in every circumstance, is our defender. In the midst of facing our racism, the Holy Spirit of God is our advocate and defender. The invitation in this year of jubilee is to turn our eyes toward the truth. Because the truth *will set us free*.

Because here is the thing about jubilee. Jubilee isn't a new set of laws for how the reset and re-allocations and redistributions happen...jubilee is about *release*, about letting go, about forgiving and being forgiven. In *jubilee*, we are no longer captives to our supremacy; we are no longer bound by our guilt and shame. Because in *jubilee*, we are forgiven...released...set free!

The Greek word for *jubilee* is the same word that is often translated in the NT as *forgive*. When we tell the truth about what is so—the painful truth—we are set free because our God is a God of jubilee. God's economy is a jubilee economy.

Some of us relate to being forgiven in the same way that Sarah related to being told that she would give birth to a child. We may not laugh, but we don't believe it. Deep in our bodies...deep within our muscles and bones we carry a belief that we are not worthy. We think it is impossible for God to forgive white people for centuries and centuries of systemic injustices and dehumanizing oppression.

But there is *nothing* too hard for God. There is no forgiveness that is too difficult for God. There is no reset that is too difficult. There is no jubilee that is too difficult or impossible for God. Because our God—the God of Jesus, the God of the Holy Spirit—the resurrecting and living God is a giving God, a forgiving God. A God of jubilee. Always a God of jubilee.

May we *give* ourselves to God's economy of release and forgiveness....

May we join the *jubilee* that God is raising up....

May it be so.