

Love & Love & Love Again

If you back a cat into a corner
she'll arch her back,
show her teeth,
hiss in your direction.
If you back a human into a corner,
we'll raise our fists,
raise our voices,
throw words of hate in your direction.
But when we backed Jesus into a corner,
he said, *Forgive them, for they know not what they do.*
He turned and looked at Peter, love in his eyes.
He offered grace to the criminal hanging beside him.
When we backed Jesus into a corner,
he loved and loved and loved again.

In this war-torn world,
we could do the same.
We could ground the bomber planes,
empty the gun cartridges,
unclench our fists, soften our jaws.
They say it can't be done,
but don't believe them.
In this war-torn world, we could try—
love and love and love again.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah Speed

Read Luke 22:47-53; Luke 23:33-38, 44-46
Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

Nonviolent Resistance

The Son of Man is on a mission—to resist the powers, human and otherwise, that foment injustice and tolerate brokenness. He speaks for the poor, advocates for release of the imprisoned, grants vision to the blind, and champions the oppressed.²⁶

Judas betrays Jesus, and his emancipatory mission, with a kiss that signals to the authorities: *he is the one you seek!* He is the one whose ministry resists the human inclination to legitimize the diminishment of society's most vulnerable through laws and glorified traditions. Consistently, defiantly, furiously—but always nonviolently—Jesus challenged those laws, even the Sabbath law,²⁷ and reframed many traditions²⁸ whenever those laws and traditions were treated as more important than delivering wholeness, healing, and liberation to shattered human lives.

Jesus' defiance made him a marked man. The authorities sought his arrest, but feared apprehending him publicly lest the people he fought for rise up in his defense. So, with Judas's treachery, they seize him secretly. In the chaos of the moment, forgetting the nonviolence Jesus has modeled, his disciples ready their weapons. One even swings his sword and cuts off the ear of an arresting official. Immediately, Jesus reminds his people that they fight with words, ideas, and vision. To press the point, he touches the wounded officer and heals him. The power of God that Jesus represents shows care even for the oppressor—even as Jesus uses God's power to overturn systems of oppression.

Dying on the cross, Jesus reinforces his message of nonviolent resistance in the most heartbreaking of ways. As the authorities crucify him for proclaiming and prosecuting the hope of liberation for all God's people, Jesus asks God to forgive them. To the end, he fights them by loving them.

Our calling is to go and do likewise.²⁹ Fight: Consistently. Defiantly. Furiously. Nonviolently. Whenever and wherever we encounter brokenness, injustice, and oppression. To do otherwise is to betray everything for which he lived and died.

Reflect

What might it look like to fight injustice with “words, ideas, and vision”?

²⁶ Luke 4:16-21

²⁷ Luke 6:1-11

²⁸ Luke 5:12-39

²⁹ Luke 10:37

Good Friday
the good news is... revealed through nonviolence

Read Luke 22:47-53; Luke 23:33-38, 44-46

Artist Statement | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Creating this image³⁰ was overwhelming. I sought to capture Jesus' nonviolent response to relentless violence. As I considered each moment of his journey to the cross, I felt despondent. I know how hard it is to resist the reactive urge that courses through me even experiencing mild forms of violence. How much more difficult then for Jesus to endure such dehumanizing acts? Was he stripped so completely of his humanity that only divinity remained—and even that restrained from retribution?

Begin at the center with Judas's kiss—intimate, subversively violent. Follow the sword behind Judas³¹ to the top left: a disciple fiercely defends Jesus, while to his right, the high priest's slave screams after his ear is cut. Jesus reproves the violence and heals the servant.

Moving clockwise, a man—representing the chief priests and temple police—points an accusatory finger, wielding the authority to kill an innocent man. To his right, a man crafts Jesus' cross, quietly sustaining the violence of the status quo. Below him, an opportunist casts lots for Jesus' clothes, while a leader laughs at the impossibility that the Messiah will save himself. Finally, in the bottom left, a man offers Jesus sour wine in a moment of deep thirst—physical and spiritual.

At the heart of it all is Jesus, tearful, looking at us. His halo shines, revealing the many faces of violence around him. From the foundation of his steady posture grows an olive tree. Its branches extend beyond his clothing, reaching out to embrace those around him.

Through his nonviolent stance, the truth of a violent world is revealed. And in that truth, the good news of peace finds soil in which to take root, to grow, and to flourish.

Look

Allow your eyes to follow the olive tree as it weaves through the composition and touches each figure. What meaning do you glean from the olive tree?

³⁰ This composition is inspired by *Vivir en Compañía* ("Living in Communion") by Maximino Cerezo Barredo (1932-), a mural in La Paz, Granada, Spain. View the art here: [instagram.com/p/DFqUWgxx-i/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DFqUWgxx-i/)

³¹ The sword references Judas's backstabbing act of betrayal.



Revealed through Nonviolence | Lauren Wright Pittman
Gouache & colored pencils on paper