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"Where there is no vision the people will perish..." Proverbs 29:18

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What Would Isaiah Do? (About Reverend Wright)

"We cannot spend all of our money, time, and energy, making war on others, without it destroying our own lives."



By Rebecca Kaplan

So many mainstream media commentators seem outraged, shocked,

and frankly confused about how to understand the sermons of Reverend Jeremiah Wright. They feel they must denounce them, or distance themselves, or call them hostile. I wonder to whom they are comparing him. Do they feel his approach is "inappropriate" compared to other powerful spiritual leaders? What would Isaiah, for example, do, or say, in this situation? It would be:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD hath spoken: Children I have reared, and brought up, and they have rebelled against me. ... Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly; they have forsaken the LORD, they have contemned the Holy One of Israel, they are turned away backward. On what part will



Reverend Jeremiah Wright

ye yet be stricken, seeing ye stray away more and more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by floods."

Isaiah 1: 2-8.

Today the TV news says, "How could any worthy spiritual leader say that their nation has been damned by God?" yet, this was often the role of the prophets to tell their nation that their own misconduct might have some role to play in their suffering, and to urge new behaviors.

I guess, since the religious teachers I follow quote Isaiah,

they would tell me to leave my congregation, since no candidate for public office can possibly be respected if they participate in a faith tradition that says such "radical" things?

Where did the TV pundits suddenly get the notion that there is something wrong with saying that we shall reap what we sow (Job 4:8)? I'm guessing it's because they never read the bible, or didn't understand it.

The prophet Isaiah shamelessly tells the people of his nation that they have been damned by God, due to their conduct. He seeks to bring their attention to problems and suffering, and urge people to seek justice.

This has often been the role of prophets and spiritual leaders -- to urge people into a better direction, sometimes through the use of strong language, including telling people that God is unhappy with their misconduct.

The fact that we reap what we sow, we harvest what we plant,

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is simply a statement of truth. It does not matter whether we call the enforcer of that truth "God" or the "ecosystem" -- it simply is true that we all live downstream; we cannot poison others without it impacting ourselves. We cannot spend all of our money, time, and energy, making war on others, without it destroying our own lives.

This has been the point that leaders like Isaiah have been trying to make for thousands of years. Rev. Wright was speaking fully within the biblical tradition. He was fulfilling, not overturning, the teachings of the scriptures.

-Rebecca Kaplan

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