We Are Called

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Today we stand together feeling an uneasy sense of urgency in the atmosphere. You can feel it all across this country. And even though the table set before us seems to be on the edge of darkness, we are called to be God's Lights; and the Light always breaks the darkness. There is an electrifying, energizing need to move, mobilize, and strategize to build up our prophetic resistance for such a time as this. God's Light always cuts the darkness. I am not afraid of what may come because that is what God does. God cuts the darkness. God cut slavery. God cut Jim Crow. God can certainly cut this. We won't stand down.

So how do we build prophetic resistance?

1. Prophetic resistance will always be characterized by a call to repentance.

If the prophet's ministry could be summed up in one word, it is the word repent. Prophets gave an unrelenting call for people to be transformed, and, in the New Testament, to be baptized in the way of righteousness and justice. The prophet will always call for change, for transformation. That is the nature of prophetic resistance. When we embrace the call of prophetic resistance our eyes are opened by God to see the injustice and unrighteousness all around us, and we choose to both live differently and call others to a different way of living as well. In a time where there is a resurgence of racial violence and when white supremacy digs in its heels, we must not hold back from calling those around us to walk the path of justice. We need a baptism for such a time as this, and those of us who take up the call to live prophetically must lead the way into the waters of transformation.

2. Prophetic resistance will always come from the margins, not the center.

Typically, when people wanted to be changed they would go to Jerusalem, the center of religious and political power, to engage in the ceremonial rituals of the Temple. However, John the Baptist knew that Jerusalem had been corrupted. If people wanted to have a transformational encounter with God, they would have to go to the margins. They would have to spend time among the oppressed and outcast of the world. Those at the margins are the most aware of the need for change because they feel the debilitating pain of injustice more than anyone. The marginalized often have the eyes to see injustice and oppression most clearly, and, therefore, are the ones who know what needs not just to change, but be transformed. To live prophetically, we are called to stand with those on the margins and be willing to follow their lead. We cannot embrace the way of prophetic resistance and remain married to the Empire at the same time.

3. Prophetic resistance will always include a call to raise your voice.

John was "the voice crying out in the wilderness." He knew the importance of using his voice to affect change in the unrighteous times in which he lived. In Isaiah 58, God reminds those to desire to live prophetically to "shout aloud, do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet." The time for silence has long passed. In whatever your sphere of influence, do not shy away from using your voice to stand against racism in all its forms. Yes, call out overt racism when you see it, but also do the work of understanding the historical complexities of systemic racial oppression and

give voice to it. Use your voice to speak on behalf of those whose voices have been stamped out. Do not speak on their behalf as if they have nothing to say, but listen to them and then speak their words in the places where their voices will not be heard.

4. Prophetic resistance exposes the lie and calls us to tell the truth.
"For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" – John 18:37-38. Since becoming president, Donald Trump, both directly and through his top aides, has made a number of demonstrably false statements. Rather than backing away from these statements when confronted with the truth, he and his team have doubled and tripled down on claims that defy reason, logic, evidence and just common sense. (For instance, "alternative facts.") Jim Wallis states, "White Americans in particular, including white Christians, are especially subject to untruths told about immigrants, refugees, Muslims, African Americans and other minorities." Jesus' promise was fulfilled in the book of Acts: the promise of the Spirit to come down and empower us all to live into our God-given calling. We need a spiritual conviction to discern whether we have bought the lies of the Empire, promoting class and race and gender distinctions among us.

5. Prophetic resistance will always take the path of humility.
The prophets knew they were there to reveal God to the people, not pump themselves up. Isaiah said that all of our righteous deeds are like filthy garments (Isa 64:6). Too often, those of us who are passionate about justice can become arrogant in our thinking and in our speech. Pride will always be a snare for those of us who engage in the work of justice, causing us to think ourselves better than those whom we have deemed unjust. When fighting for justice, it is easy to look down on those who remain blind to the realities. When working for the good of those who are oppressed, it becomes easy to believe that we are better than those who oppose the very work we are engaged in. We are called to humility.

Humility should be the close companion of the prophet. The person clothed in humility will always keep the mercy of God at the center, and His grace at the front of their minds. It is not because we are righteous in and of ourselves that we stand against oppression, but we stand against oppression because God has been merciful toward us. Humility keeps us from dehumanizing those who are against us. As soon as we fall into the snare of dehumanizing the oppressor, we are guilty of committing the same injustice we so despise.

6. Prophetic resistance will always call us to challenge those in power.
John constantly spoke challenging words to the religious authorities of his day who had colluded with the powers of the empire. And he ultimately lost his life because he spoke out against the rule of King Herod. He knew that deplorable immorality in any ruler would lead to injustice and oppression of all sorts, and he could not sit by and watch that happen. The need for us in our time to challenge those in power is ever-present. It is the responsibility of the prophet to hold the Empire to account, reminding them that they must lead according to God's standard of justice and righteousness. If the poor and vulnerable suffer under their watch, we must hold them accountable.

The call of prophetic resistance is not just about what we stand against, but more about what we stand for. It also begs the question, what is God asking us to create together to offset and be a buffer for those who are going to be hardest hit by unjust policies and laws…for such a time as this!