

Week 2: What Do We Do Now?

Shifting Paradigms in Times of
Chaos, Upheaval, and Injustice



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Holding things lightly...

*...There will be times this next year
when I desperately need wonder,
and though I will likely forget
the particulars of this night,
let me not forget how to be stirred
by beauty, remade by it, even.
So I practice now, this art
of falling in love with the world.
Come tomorrow, I will practice again.*

-From "At the New Year's Eve Bonfire" by
Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer



Seek the beautiful, good and true...

Teleological framework for this series

- We were created to live in union with God (not separate)
- Love is the Source and Goal (Ground of all Being)—“telos”
 - Faith is the slow, steady process of getting there
 - Hope is the willingness to move forward without resolution or closure
- We need all three (Love, Faith, Hope) to make the arduous journey
- We need to reflect on Scripture as it informs us in our time...
- We are always in the “womb of the incarnation”—preparing to be born into what’s next.
- In the fullness of time, we open/yield into union with God (mystery)—nothing and no one is irretrievably lost!

Be gentle with yourself

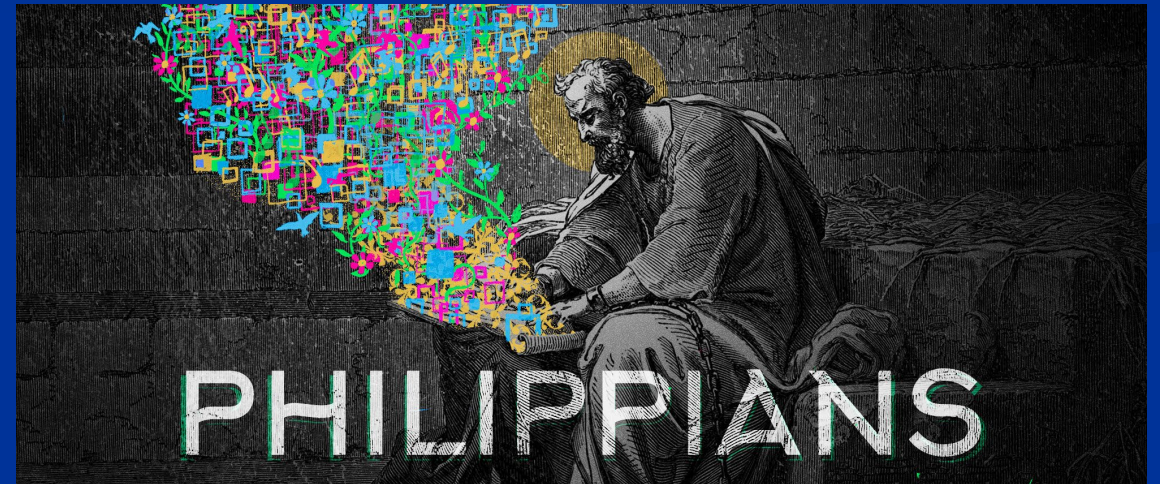
Bible Reflection and Discussion

Philippians 2:1-5

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...

Philippians

- Located on outskirts of empire—distant from Rome
- Paul writing from prison replying to letter they sent him
- Paul is surprisingly joyful:
 - Gospel is spreading
 - Epaphroditus is recovering from illness
 - Anticipating Christ's Reign coming
- Paul is encouraging them to “press on!”



Joyful, but NOT pollyannish

- Paul expresses his disappointment – turbulent times
 - Some missionaries are preaching uncharitable practices (self-serving)
 - Concern that Philippians might fall prey
- Live a life worthy of the gospel!
- Be in community
- Be in relationship
 - Look to the interests of others
 - Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus!



“Modern” Western Paradigm

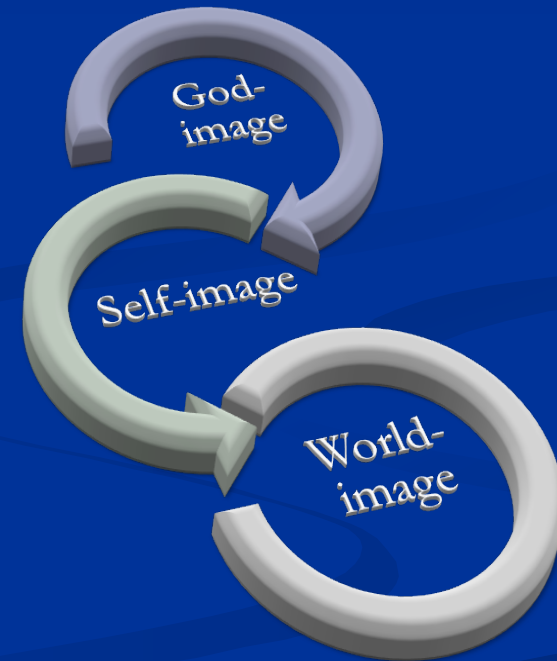
- Last 300 years, Western culture has been guided by a story of dominion, control, and materialism.
- Mastery over physical world, understood as a machine to be managed by technical solutions
 - Fear is part of the system (what can't be controlled is to be feared)
 - Pernicious effect on relationships (how we consider one another)—cogs in machines, machines ourselves needing to be organized/controlled
- Institutional inertia strives to hold on, even regress

Change and Chaos

- Margaret Wheatley: “In order to thrive in a world of change and chaos, we will need to:
 - Accept chaos as an essential process by which natural systems (including organizations) renew and revitalize themselves.
 - Share information as the primary organizing force in any organization.
[feedback loops]
 - Develop the rich diversity of relationships that are all around us to energize our teams.
 - Embrace vision as an invisible field that can enable us to recreate...our world.”

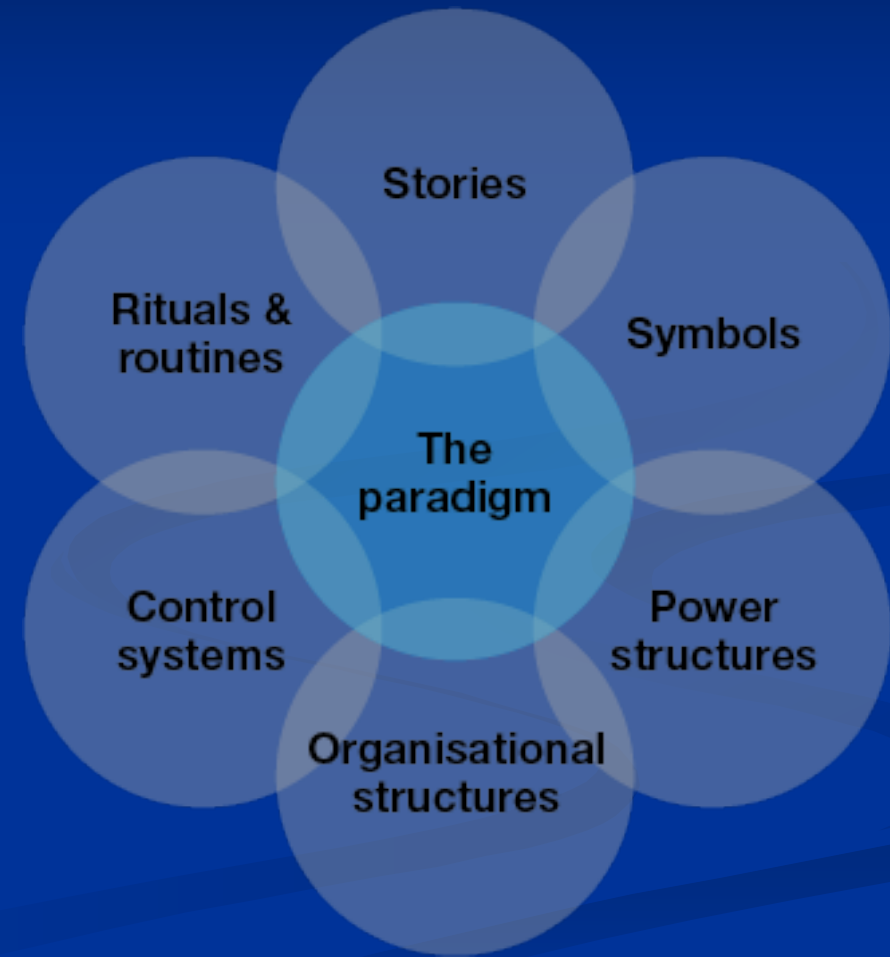
What is Your Window of Reality?

- Everyone looks at the world through their own lens, a matrix of culture, family influence (nature and nurture), and life experiences.
 - Largely unconscious, largely hidden but potent driver of behavior
 - Attempts to answer existential questions: What should life be? Why do we suffer? What does it mean to be a good human being (make things right)?
- Our operative worldview is formed by three images inside every one of us:
 1. Image of God
 2. Image of self
 3. Image of the world



Is Capitalism a “Paradigm”?

- A common narrative that orders life
- Rituals that lend meaning/purpose
- Symbols that point to something with deeper value or meaning
- Sacrifice as a practice that sets apart and adds value to one's life
- Holds some moral claim on adherents
- Runs hidden in background



Insidious Diversion

- The Myth (Story) of Scarcity...
 - There is not enough!
 - More is better!
 - That is just the way it is!
- Fear-driven Life is Stifling
- The “incarnation” consecrates humanity and addresses our fear of being alone
- Pride (fear) tempts us to believe that vulnerability is weakness

****Confession (vulnerability) in community releases a healing power****

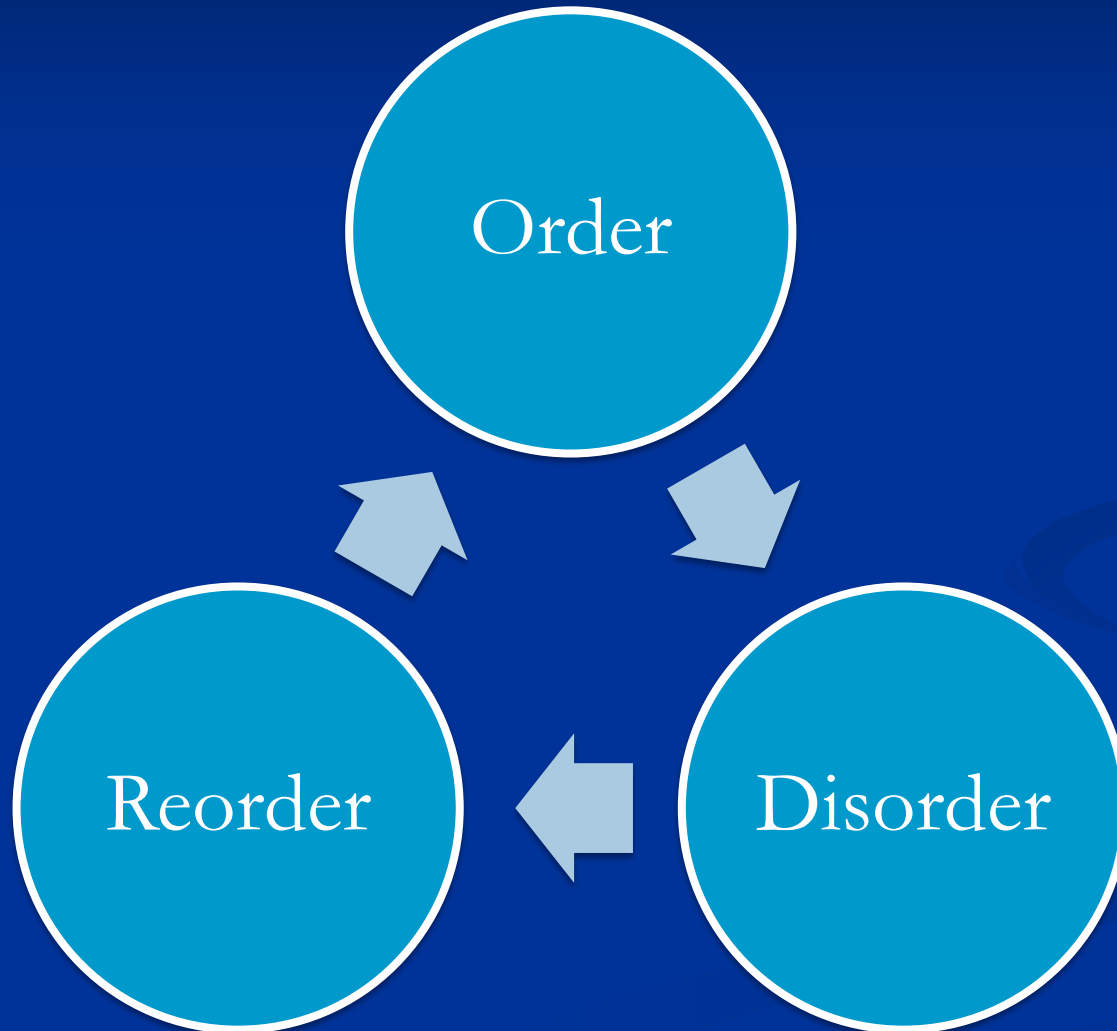


Reality and Ideology

- Marx: “ideology” refers to false consciousness, a misconstrual of reality to serve particular interests.
- People in power neglect reality (denial) as they promote ideology (exceptionalism)—there is always an economic injustice imbedded
 - Prophets call this out because God’s vision for the world is one of justice
 - Prophets console those who suffer because God’s vision is one of healing/wholeness



Models (heuristic guides, not straightjackets)



- Applied by Richard Rohr for spiritual journey
- Adapted from Walter Brueggemann
- Applies not just to Faith Development, but also Scripture, Politics, and Systems

This paradigm is counter-cultural, subversive

- Modern western culture holds fiercely to three premises:
 - Dominant ideology holds fast to continuity and success as supreme values
 - Real surprise is not welcome (curiosity okay as long as control is maintained)
 - Avoid pain, hurt and loss at all costs (aka, I am a winner!)—invulnerable
- Gospel mandate: lose one's life in order to save it... (the world reckons it as foolishness)

Lament accomplishes at least three things

1. A lament insists that things are not as they should be and can be changed.
 - It emboldens us to the possibility that God's kingdom is a clear and present reality as alternative to the status quo and its unjust power dynamic.
2. A lament declares that the current situation is intolerable as it is
3. A lament appeals to God as an agent of action and change.
 - Lament orients to God in hope for something different, even as we are inspired to work for that different, more just world (prayer and agency go together)
 - Antidote to cynicism, despair, hopelessness
 - Then lament can turn to praise (e.g., Song of Zechariah)--Hope

*Brief Break-out
Chats*

Are you lamenting anything currently? What is not as it should be and is intolerable?

How is your lament orienting to God to act?

Is that an antidote to despair or cynicism for you?

Leading from Within

- Our impulse is to believe in the power of external realities that distort (ideologies)
- Inner life impacts outer work
- In, Down and Puncture Through to something precious...(true self, unified field, hidden wholeness)—Leading from Within
- Important work for Community also...inner work is a personal matter but not private (vulnerable?)
 - How do we let fear drive the community?
 - Exodus story in a moment

Two Halves of Life

- First Half of Life: identity through affiliation, certitude (or lack of uncertainty), specialness, dualistic thinking to project problems away from self, tribal, narcissistic
- Second Half of Life: capacity for self-reflection, doubt, struggling with loss, failure or ambiguity, capacity to see all as good and bad (non-dual, non-tribal)
- Division is NOT age-specific, not well-demarcated, not unidirectional...but Disorder is the portal from one to the other

Disorder: Oscura vs. Tinieblas

- John and Teresa use “oscura” as the obscure darkness in which things are hidden (la noche oscura = dark night of the soul)
- “Tinieblas” is different—more sinister (evil), one is blind to the attachments and delusions that inhibit life
- Ironically, the dark night of the soul (oscura) is working to heal the tinieblas (blindness) of our lives

Distortions of Life

- We are all born with a desire for God and the fullness of love (most of us are unconscious of it)
- Complication: Western individualism convinces us we can achieve perfect satisfaction on our own
- We find proxys that convey “goodness” to us
- We habituate on these experiences—not bad unless they become attachments/compulsions (we no longer choose them)
- If they are especially unhealthy/destructive, we call them addictions

Distortions of Life

- We all have attachments and addictions, which can become our idols—misplaced love
- But the disruption of life that comes in the wake of addiction often becomes the *la noche oscura* that awakens us to another way (*oscura* vs. *tinieblas*)
 - Pit of Chaos helps us awaken to the desire for change
 - Never happens in the Order phase
- In this way, the dark night becomes a totally loving, liberating, life-giving process (even if it doesn't FEEL that way at the time)

Transformation—from dark night into new dawn

- Offers three precious gifts for the human soul:
 - The soul's deepest desire is satisfied—freed from attachments, one is able to love God and others and self
 - The delusion of separation from God and creation is dispelled
 - With the newfound freedom to love and realization of union, one can actively participate in God (gentle with self as beloved, compassion and mercy for others as God is, the world changes)

Three Central Practices in Life of Reintegration (Reorder)

1. Communion (practicing Presence through spiritual practices)
2. Compassion (awakening the heart to connection)
3. Co-creation (aligning with Divine power and purpose)



Character of Reorder (Reintegration)

- Integrity—not as adherence to a moral order (exoskeleton), but to be whole, complete, healed (integrated, deep inner true self)
 - We stop obsessing over codes of conduct (compartmentalizing life)
- Relational—cannot do it alone (divided)—we need “circles of trust” which serve as fierce communities holding space for silence and truth as non-contradictory values
- Authentic—involves realigning “soul” with “role”—identity on the inside resonates with identity on the outside (non-anxious)
- Sacred—on recognizing the true self within as holy, we offer it to the world. (Rilke: “...the god wants to know himself [sic] within you.”)

Economy = oikumene = household

Household is setting where:

- ✓ Life is lived in common
- ✓ Housekeeping allows group to act and interact in healthy ways
- ✓ Leisure and creativity find space
- ✓ Common well-being is paramount
- ✓ Stability is critical and fosters trust
- ✓ Balances needs of all involved



Economy of Grace:

A Transformative Way of Being in the World

- Reintegration (Reorder) is about discovering True Self
 - Rediscovering meaning, purpose, identity
 - Leads to joy, gladness, soul-sustaining peace
- Economy = oikumene = household
 - Household is where we openly acknowledge connectedness
 - Our household is global (not tribal, us versus them)
- Grace = charis = gift
 - The "gift" is being created and rediscovering the true self as that created being
 - Gift is unmerited, unearned, freely given in love

The Economy of God, writ small

Individual choices

- “Gift-giving” with no expectation of reciprocation or acknowledgement
- Calculating the true “costs” of our purchases using money
 - Economic, ecological, social, relational costs
 - Living as if others in the household matter
- Refusing to have all of life “commodified” where money (possessions) become the chief metaphor of meaning.

The Economy of Grace, writ large

Three Consistent Principles (Practices for the True Self):

1. Unconditional giving
2. Noncompetitive relationships
3. Universal inclusion

The “gift” is being created for love...

Joy comes as a secondary and life-sustaining gift...

The gift given also becomes life-giving for others...

Paradigm Shift for our Consideration as People of Faith...

Orienting to God's Dream for a Transformed World



Paradigm Shift ...

-Story of Movement...

-Exodus (Left to Right)

-From Bondage to Freedom (free to be truly me)

-From False Self to True Self (inward journey)

-Trust in God who trusts in our true selves



One More Model: Wholehearted Living



Table Conversations

- Which of these alternative paradigms resonate with you and why?
 - Economy of grace (non-transactional gift in global household)
 - Exodus journey (from “power-over” to “power with”)
 - Wholehearted Living (practicing the virtues of transformation)

- How can/will the three essential practices of reintegration transform you/church/world?
 - Communion (practicing Presence through prayer practices)
 - Compassion (awakening the heart to connection)
 - Co-creation (aligning with Divine power and purpose)

Gerald May

- "Searching beneath anxiety, one will find fear. And beneath fear hurt will be discovered. Beneath the hurt will be guilt. Beneath the guilt lie rage and hatred. But do not stop with this, for beneath the rage lies frustrated desire. Finally beneath and beyond desire, is love. In every feeling, look deeply. Explore without ceasing. At bottom, love is." (Simply Sane, p. 87)

Rilke's gentle reminder

”Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves...Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.” (Letters to a Young Poet)

Selected Bibliography

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- Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*
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- Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace*
- Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life in a Wounded World*
- *Writings of the Mystics: John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Julian*

Selected Bibliography for Series

- Bennett Sims, Servanthood
- Parker Palmer, Leading From Within (this is an essay, can be found printed in pamphlet form), and other books
- Margaret Wheatley, A Simpler Way; Leadership & the New Science
- Gerald May, Addiction and Grace
- Denise Breton and Christopher Largent, The Paradigm Conspiracy
- Killian Noe, Finding Our Way Home
- Don Riso and Russ Hudson, Wisdom of the Enneagram