

Searching for Heart in a Heartless World (Gale Bellas-Papageorge)

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I was having a conversation recently about the Occupy Movement, where it was described to me as violent and un-American. I have to disagree with my fellow Orthodox Christian's viewpoint. Although I do agree that perhaps the youth of the Occupy Movement could be better organized, and it has attracted some rogue rebels without a cause as with any movement, I do not see how speaking out against injustice could ever be a bad thing?

In fact, isn't speaking out against injustice a major principle of Jesus' teachings? From my upbringing in the Orthodox faith, I was always under the impression that speaking out against injustice is the ultimate expression of love towards mankind.



First of all, I realize that recently part of the Occupy Movement stormed a city hall, caused some damage and were arrested. My response to this event is that overall,

the Occupy Movement has been peaceful. History, however, is filled with cases where individuals get fed up and act out of character in their attempt to fight against injustice. The most obvious one that comes to mind is when Jesus storms the temple and over turns tables on the money changers. This event surprises, even shocks most people when they read about it, since Jesus, for the most part, does not resort to violence in His ministry.



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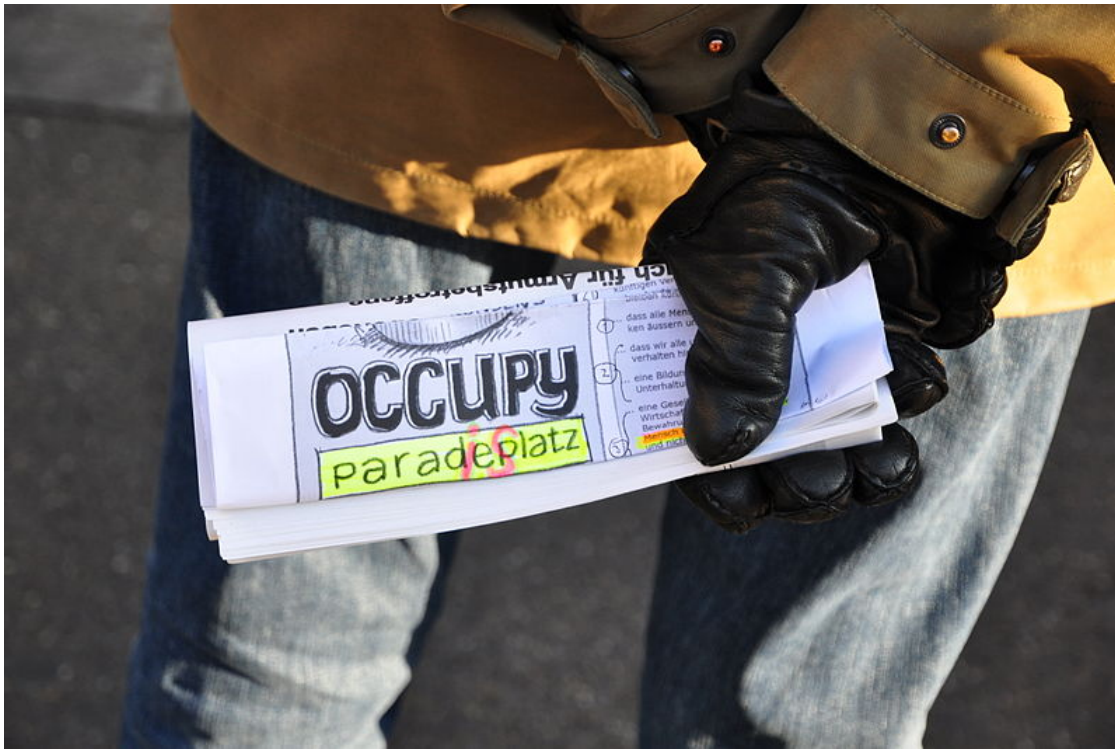
Here, the Occupy Movement and Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees intersect in a modest, yet relevant way. It's almost the same story, only two thousand years later. Jesus protests ancient money changers; the Occupy Movement protests the modern money changers. Jesus does not preach hatred towards the money changers, but rather their way of thinking and behaving. Similarly, the Occupy

Movement does not preach hatred towards individuals, but towards the affects of corporate greed that the college students who started this movement have already seen greatly impact their lives.

Before we jump to the conclusion that the Occupy Movement offers no real contribution or relevance to our own lives, we may want to consider what these young individuals are protesting against. As a college professor who has spoken with and listened to their concerns, I can tell you that they are first and foremost concerned with what the future holds for our youth. They refuse to accept that there is no alternative to the present than what either political party offers. They recognize that the world has become about self interest rather than about principles. They understand that corporate greed, especially found in today's financial institutions, will make it impossible for them to afford to live or raise children and that the chasm between the extremely wealthy and the poor will keep growing.

I have heard many write off the Movement's goals to change the world as unrealistic and Utopian. Jesus calls us all to strive for sainthood while living in this world. Does knowing that this call is unrealistic for most, cause us to abandon our faith and keep us from striving towards our goal? Of course not, because we realize that the process begins here and now.

Jesus came into this world to help us find our heart in a heartless world, and also, to transform the world, which I believe, no matter how unorganized, misguided, random or naive the Occupy Movement may seem is at the core of their protest. I have to admire this kind of hope and optimism, particularly coming from the voices of our youth from all around the country, and now around the world.



Although as Orthodox Christians we may not agree with the way the Occupy Movement as been carried out or how they have represented themselves thus far, we have to agree that our quests are not that far apart since we too are all called to help others find their hearts in a world that has become obsessed with seeking joyless pleasure.