



St. Joseph's
Episcopal Church

Jesus and the Disinherited

by Howard Thurman

Tuesday, February 15
Chapter 4





COURSE NORMS

JOIN FROM A QUIET PLACE

Be sure you can hear us, and that we can hear you by joining us from a room with a closed door, without the TV or another device on.

MUTE YOUR MICROPHONE

Keeping your microphone muted when others are speaking helps reduce background noise and allows everyone to hear better.

TURN ON YOUR CAMERA

Please turn on your camera, so that we can speak with each other and participate fully in this experience

BE RESPECTFUL

Please be mindful of your fellow participants' feelings as we discuss topics integral to our faith.



THIS IS A SAFE SPACE

- * This is a space for learning and discussion.
- * No question or answer is stupid.
- * Your thoughts are valid and important to this experience.



AGENDA

Opening Prayer

Recap

Chapter 4 | **Hate**

Closing Prayer



Opening Prayer

Ever present God, you called us to be in relationship with one another and promised to dwell wherever two or three are gathered. In our community, we are many different people; we come from many different places, have many different cultures. Open our hearts that we may be bold in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of diversity among us. We pray in faith.

— *Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Recap





Recap

- Howard Thurman was a prophet-mystic who was deeply influenced by his grandmother, a formerly enslaved woman who, while illiterate, was a firm believer in Jesus Christ.
- Thurman wrote his work during the time of segregation and Jim Crow, the Great Migration, WW II, and the Decolonization Movement.
- His intention for Jesus and the Disinherited was to explore Jesus' teachings and what they have to say to the oppressed, those "with their backs against the wall."



Recap

- Modern Christianity is not the religion of Jesus Christ because it is often used by the powerful to oppress the disinherited.
- Jesus was disinherited. He was a poor Jew in a land occupied by the Romans. He was a radical genius who understood being oppressed and taught us how to rise above it.
- In America, today's disinherited are Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, disabled and those with mental illness, HIV+ (stigmatized diseases), compromised immune systems, non-Christians, women, immigrants and refugees, prisoners, homeless, food-insecure, and the forgotten



Recap

- Jesus' solution was for us to follow his teachings that we are all part of God's divine creations as "the kingdom of God is within." We must abandon fear and love God, ourselves, and each other.
- Fear and the threat of violence is a tool of strength against the weak. It encourages the weak to create coping mechanisms to avoid violence. The use of fear results in segregation. However, fear becomes a burden on oppressors as well, as they need fear to provide a reason for their behavior.
- Jesus' antidote to fear is that *man is a child of God, the God of life that sustains all of nature and guarantees all the intricacies of the life-process itself.*



Recap

- Deception is a natural means of survival of the weak against the strong, however, it is not a sustainable tactic because both parties are aware that each is deceiving the other. Once a person starts lying to themselves, they lose their moral path. Jesus' solution was honesty. Thurman suggests that once the disinherited speak truth to power, it will start a movement that begins a wave of change. Speaking truth to power creates equality between oppressor and oppressed—where we can see that we are all humans.

Hate





Aspects & Conditions for Hatred to Grow

There is a conspiracy of silence about hatred, its function and its meaning...Hatred cannot be defined. It can only be described.

Hatred often begins in a situation in which there is contact without fellowship, contact that is devoid of any of the primary overtures of warmth and fellow-feeling and genuineness. It is easy to have fellowship on your own terms and to repudiate it if your terms are not acceptable.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 75-76). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



How does a lack of genuine fellowship contribute to creating hate?



Aspects & Conditions for Hatred to Grow

Much of modern life is so impersonal that there is always opportunity for the seeds of hatred to grow unmolested...contacts without fellowship tend to express themselves in a kind of understanding that is strikingly unsympathetic

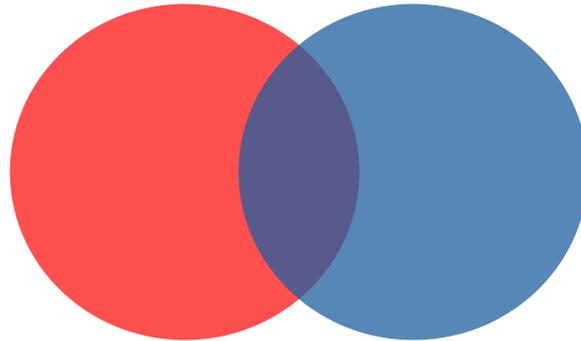
Unsympathetic understanding is the characteristic attitude governing the relation between the weak and the strong.

I can sympathize only when I see myself in another's place.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 76-77). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



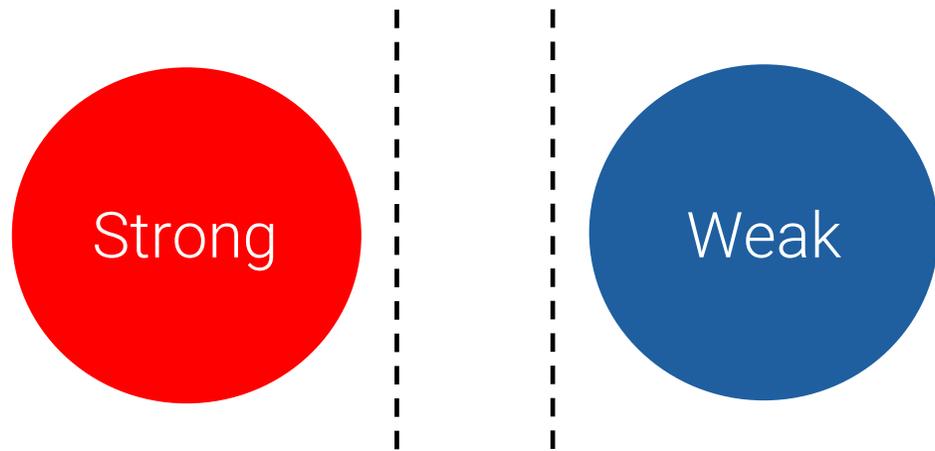
Aspects & Conditions for Hatred to Grow



Sympathetic Understanding = Empathy



Aspects & Conditions for Hatred to Grow



there is an understanding that is hard, cold, minute, and deadly...it is an understanding that one gives to the enemy, or that is derived from an accurate knowledge of another's power to injure...it is an understanding of another's weakness, which may be used as a weapon of offense or defense.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 76).
Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



How can understanding be hard, cold, and deadly? When have you experienced that happen?



Have you fostered relationships across color lines? If so, how has that changed you?



Aspects & Conditions for Hatred to Grow

In the third place, an unsympathetic understanding tends to express itself in the active functioning of ill will.

In the fourth place, ill will, when dramatized in a human being, becomes hatred walking on earth.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 77-78). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



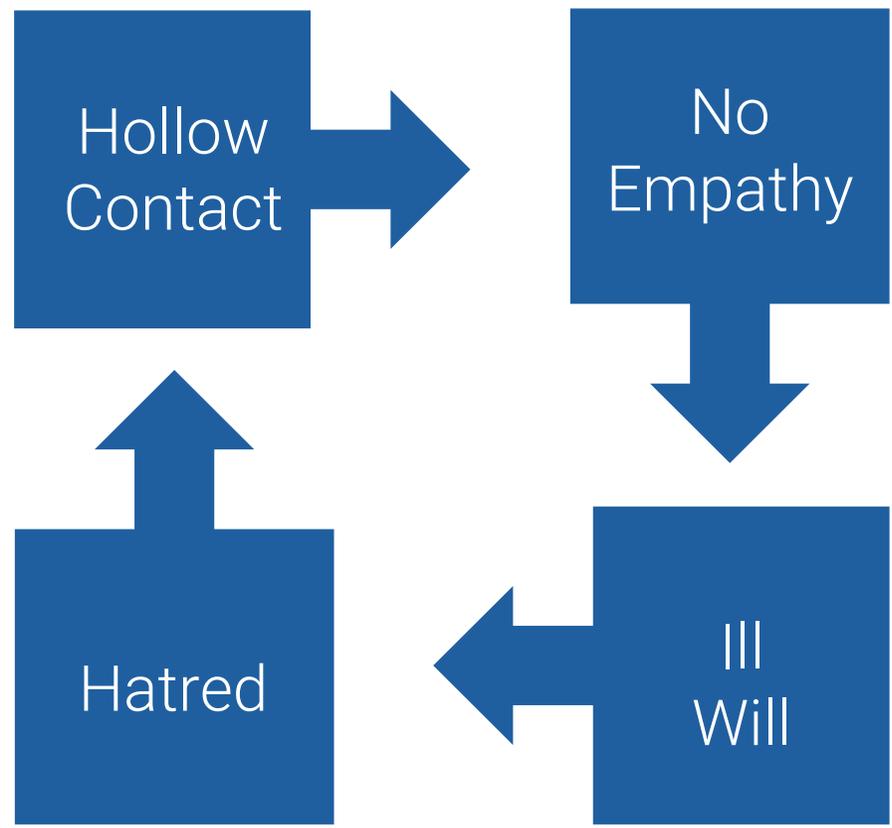
Hatred Outlined

The outline is now complete and simple—contacts without fellowship developing hatred and expressing themselves in unsympathetic understanding; and unsympathetic understanding tending to express itself in the exercise of ill will; and ill will, dramatized in a man or woman, becoming hatred walking on the earth.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 78). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Thurman illustrated the growth of hatred as a straight line. Could it be cyclical?





Hatred and the Disinherited

Hatred, in the mind and spirit of the disinherited, is born out of great bitterness—a bitterness that is made possible by sustained resentment which is bottled up until it distills and essence of vitality, giving to the individual in whom this is happening a radical and fundamental basis for self-realization.

Hatred becomes for you a source of validation for your personality...hatred gives you a sense of significance which you fling defiantly into the teeth of their estimate of you.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 79-80). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Hatred and the Disinherited

As they [the disinherited] look out upon their world, they recognize at once that they are the victims of a systematic denial of the rights and privileges that are theirs, by virtue both of their being human and of their citizenship. Their acute problem is to deal with the estimate that their environment places upon them...because they are despised, they despise themselves.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 81). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Hatred and the Disinherited

The relationship between the strong and the weak is characterized by its amoral aspect. The logic of the strong-weak relationship is to place all moral judgement of behavior out of bounds...there are but thin lines between bitterness, hatred, self-realization, defiance, and righteous indignation...to take advantage of the strong is regarded merely as settling an account. It is a form of the old *lex talionis*—eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 82). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Bitterness and self-hate are signs of hatred within the disinherited, what are some examples of self-hate in the Black community?



How have we seen bitterness and hatred in the form of *lex talionis* within a disinherited group play out in America?

A riot is the language of the unheard.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



How have Black people resisted the lure of *lex talionis*?

Why was it the case that Black folk did not create a Black version of the Ku Klux Klan?

— Cornel West



Hatred and War

During times of war hatred becomes quite respectable, even though it has to masquerade often under the guise of patriotism.

He does to other human beings what he could not ordinarily do to them without losing his self-respect. Hatred becomes a device by which an individual seeks to protect himself against moral disintegration.

Anger serves as a protection of their finer sense of values as they look you in the eyes and say things, which under ordinary circumstances, they would not be able to say.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (pp. 74, 83-84). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Thurman says that war makes hatred respectable and that it is often masked with patriotism. What are some examples of this?

Can patriotic hatred exist without war?



Effects of Hatred

Hatred cannot be controlled once it is set in motion...hatred is death to the spirit and disintegration of ethical and moral values.

Thurman, Howard. Jesus and the Disinherited (p. 87). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Jesus and Hatred

Jesus rejected hatred. It was not because he lacked the vitality or the strength. It was not because he lacked the incentive. Jesus rejected hatred because he saw that hatred meant death to the mind, death to the spirit, death to communion with his Father. He affirmed life; and hatred was the great denial.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited* (p. 88). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.



Currently, our lives are bombarded by hatred which Jesus rejected. What are ways that we can follow this lesson?



Thurman said that Christianity is not the religion of Jesus. How have Christians used hate to perpetuate oppression?
How can we change that?





O God, we offer our thanks to thee for sending thy only Son to die for us all. In a world divided by color bars, how sweet a thing it is to know that in thee we all belong to one family. There are times when we unprivileged people weep tears that are not loud but deep, when we think of the suffering that we experience. We come to thee, our only hope and refuge. Help us, O God, to refuse to be embittered against those who handle us with harshness. We are grateful to thee for the gift of laughter at all times. Save us from hatred of those who oppress us. May we follow the spirit of thy Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

— From *The Oxford Book of Prayer*

February 22nd

Chapter 5 | Love
& Epilogue



Enslaved

