



22 FEBRUARY 2018

FULL OF GRACE AND POWER

Acts 6:8 “Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly instigated some men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” 12 They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. 13 They set up false witnesses who said, “This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us.” 15 And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”

Does Jesus bring change to religious customs and belief? Luke 6:14 suggests that some believed that Jesus “will change the customs that Moses handed on to us.” Yet Matthew 5:18 records Jesus saying he did not come to change anything: “not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” The truth is that Jesus did not come to change the law of God but to fulfil it.¹ He came to help people understand faith as God originally intended it – and to rescue the faith from the twisted religious complexity that confronted the poor, the marginalized and the generally sinful.

Stephen grasped the essence of the Jesus-project...and suffered at the hands of the religious bigots who wanted to keep God as their private preserve. He is the inspiration for every Jesus-follower who would pursue the essence of a Godly life while avoiding the religious trappings that stifle faith. Let us commit ourselves to living an authentic faith, even if we risk condemnation of the religious experts.

For Thought

Ours is a simple faith
Life is a short embrace
Heaven is in this place
Every day

Trust is an open hand
Making an honest stand
Rooted here in the land
Every day

lyrics from song composed and sung by Mustard's Retreat

The Second Sunday in Lent

The Cost of Discipleship

The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Reuben Job and Norman Shawchuck, *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants*, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 112.

This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day.

¹ Matthew 5:17