

**Sunday, March 21, 2021**  
**Sermon: Jesus the Activist**  
**Amira Stanley, Minister of Justice & Witness**  
**Clackamas United Church of Christ**

*Today's sermon by Amira Stanley, CUCC Minister of Justice and Witness*

When I started to do my research on today's scripture, John 12:20–33, what really stood out to me was the parallel to activism and how unaware my generation is of the fact that Jesus was an activist. And perhaps that's because even our parents fail to recognize this as well. He cared about people. He cared about community. He cared about the marginalized. In verse 24, it states that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies then it bears much fruit.

John 12:27-28 states, "Now my soul is troubled, and what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." You see, anything worth fighting for will eventually come to an end. And even in that, we activists keep bringing awareness, we keep marching, we keep chanting, we keep learning, we keep doing these things because we are all part of the collective. We do it knowing that we have paved the way for others to pick up where we've left off.

In our history, those who have been bold about speaking up and out to end oppression have continued to be targeted. In fact, just a few days ago I was in a committee meeting with a group of people that are helping me plan a future event titled, *End White Supremacy by Way of Black Excellence Through Art, Storytelling and Community Action*, and in that they're planning some things that we want to make known and the question was asked, "Amira, do we put your name into this and do we put the location now?" I said, "Yeah, sure put my name, I don't care." Then I decided to ask the gentleman that's going to be helping us with safety what their thoughts were and, again, they reminded me of the safety risk of putting my name out there too soon because the event is not for another month or so.

What I realized in that question was that quickness of saying, "This is me, this is who I am and what I'm doing," I do recognize that it's a bit naive in certain situations. But I say this to tell you that I'm not afraid to die. I am afraid, though, of living on this earth now that I've been awoken to systemic racism and white supremacy without doing every single thing I can to change this world so that a black, transgender, woman can feel safe one hundred percent of the time and loved in an environment or certain circumstance. I hear them say that would be a success. The day that we can protect black, transgender, women as a collective, if we can do that, we can save everyone else. Every marginalized human being would be safe if we thought of it in terms of how can we keep every black, transgender, woman safe and loved, that our mind can open up into a different realm and we can all feel safe and loved.

When I watched the movie recently Judas and the Black Messiah, a story about Fred Hampton, a 21-year-old leader of the Black Panther Party started in the '60s, I noticed he often said throughout the movie, "I live for the people and I'll die for the people." I mean he said it and he repeated it and the way that he said it and the conviction in his voice gave me goosebumps. He knew that what he was doing could cause him death. It blew me away at his dedication to bringing food and healthcare and safety to his community but the powers that be were so incredibly threatened that they took his life. But I know that he knew it was a real possibility and he did not care. It did not stop him from doing the right thing. Death can be perceived as bad, or death can be perceived as life-giving and a chance to pick up where Jesus would want us to.

That ends our sermon for today but I wanted to wrap up with a little bit of grounding and sending you off with love and light. If you want to place your hands up like this (palms out) and just hold whatever you want to give to the collective, out and to the forefront of your mind. You can close your eyes if you'd like. Allow us to take a breath together. May we continue to go out there and cause good trouble. Amen