

The Wired Word

Student Handout - *Additional Discussion Materials*

Sunday, January 17, 2021 --- from 9:00-9:45am

Zoom *ONLY*

Meeting ID: 860 8980 7220 --- Passcode: 195152

Dear Class Member,

Additional optional discussion materials are provided for this Sunday, in addition to the primary materials. In these additional materials, we read about the actions of Rep. Andy Kim to help clean up the mess left behind by rioters in the Capitol. The incident provides us with the opportunity to discuss God's response to our own messes, our reaction when other people mess up, and Christ's invitation to his followers to serve others.

How To Participate:

We are offering *The Wired Word* class live via Zoom. *The Wired Word* Zoom discussion will be from 9:00am-9:45am on Sunday mornings. You can also use these resources to reflect or study on your own, with your family/friends, and/or with your Abide Group.

Until further notice, there is NO in-person Sunday school due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

You can participate in *The Wired Word* virtually by Zoom on your computer or smart device at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86089807220?pwd=eStWa0ZZK0hOTVdwU0pjZlMrdk5ydz09>

or by telephone (land line or cell phone) by calling: 1-301-715-8592

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For other learning opportunities through St. Paul's UCC go to: <http://www.sprucc.org/classes.html>

To subscribe or unsubscribe for the **free** weekly mailing of *The Wired Word* student handout, please contact the church office at Office@sprucc.org.



Congressman Kneels to Clean Up Mess After Capitol Riot

The Wired Word for the Week of January 17, 2021

In the News

"I've spent a lot of time in Afghanistan and Iraq, I've been in war zones where I've had to shelter in place, but I never would have imagined that this would happen here," said Andy Kim, the U.S. Representative (D) from New Jersey's 3rd congressional district. "It was a terrifying experience."

Kim, 38, was describing his experience last Wednesday, January 6, when a mob stormed the Capitol in an effort to circumvent the process of confirming the election of Joe Biden as the next president of the United States. The lawmaker spent about six hours in lockdown in his office in the Rayburn House Office Building, wondering if he'd ever see his wife and two young children again.

In the wee hours of the next morning, after Congress certified the vote of the Electoral College, Kim stepped into the Rotunda to survey the damage the rioters left behind. What he saw broke his heart.

"Trash and debris over the statues, the floor, some of the benches were askew, and there was a lot of broken furniture, broken American flags," Kim said. Others reported tattered Trump flags, pieces of body armor, broken glass, cigarette butts, urine and feces. Those who ransacked the Capitol lacked the "humility that we need to have," Kim deduced.

"I was just overwhelmed with emotion," Kim said, calling the Capitol building "the temple of our democracy" and "the most beautiful building in the country." To him, "the Rotunda is sacred ground ... literally the heart of this country."

In the mayhem of the preceding hours, those hallowed halls had been desecrated, the work of democracy disrespected, people killed. Kim felt he had to act.

"When you see something you love that's broken you want to fix it. ... I just felt compelled to do something. ... to try to play a role in just fixing this mess that had occurred. I instinctively just started cleaning up. I wanted to leave the room in a better condition and treat it with the respect that it deserves," he said.

Kim approached police officers who were cleaning up some of the debris and asked for a plastic bag. Moments later, Tom Malinowski, another member of the New Jersey delegation, found Kim on his hands and knees, picking up trash, and didn't recognize him.

"It was for me the most poignant moment of the long night," Malinowski said. Mopping up messes left by a mob isn't really in the job description of a congressional representative, but that didn't stop Kim from spending the next hour and a half cleaning the Rotunda, the National Statuary Hall and the Capitol crypt on the floor below.

Only the second Korean-American ever elected to the House of Representatives, Kim has worked on health issues, national security, economic development, fair law enforcement policies and practices, reduction of corporate influence in elections and other concerns.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy tweeted a photo of Kim kneeling on the floor of the Rotunda, calling him "a true public servant who makes us proud every single day."

When a photographer inquired why he was doing the work of a janitor, Kim said a sudden wave of patriotism swept over him. "What else could I do?" he asked.

"I would never want to do this job [his congressional duties] if it's just about attaining power," the legislator said. "It's really a question about what you do with that power."

Kim is a Presbyterian. Although we can't say for sure, Kim's Christian faith, a faith in which Jesus models servanthood, may also have motivated him to take on the role of a servant.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[A Congressman Got on His Knees to Pick Up Trash Left After the Deadly Capitol Riot. CNN](#)
[Behind the Viral Photo of Rep. Andy Kim Cleaning Up at Midnight After Riots. NBC News](#)
[January 9, 2021: Reps. Andy Kim and Tom Malinowski \(Audio 39:38\). New Jersey Globe](#)

Applying the News Story

This news raises the question of what to do when people create messes that become problems for others. Some messes are of our own making, and others land in our laps, even though we didn't create them. Some messes we can clean up, others are beyond our power to handle.

Parents of new babies know that they can't change diapers once and expect the baby to stay clean. At first, babies must depend totally on caregivers who are willing to clean up messes the children make.

On the other hand, we doubt whether most people would choose to have children if they thought they would have to change diapers for more than a few years. Under normal circumstances, parents expect that children will gradually assume responsibility for cleaning themselves.

Spiritual infants likewise initially need help learning how to avoid moral filth and how to cooperate with God's repetitive, ongoing work of cleansing, through our confession of sin and acceptance of responsibility for our actions. But God doesn't expect us to remain spiritual infants forever. God expects us to grow up, to begin to take responsibility for not making messes and for cleaning up after ourselves when we do mess up, with God's help, of course.

Jesus went to the cross to clean up the mess our sin creates. In one sense, that work is finished and complete. We can add nothing to it to improve on God's work of justification through Christ.

But we recognize that the work of God to clean up our mess is also an ongoing work of sanctification. As long as we live in this world, we feel and perpetuate the effects of the Fall, even while God is at work in us to will and to work out our salvation for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13), even as God transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Big Questions

1. When have you made a mess for others to clean up? Why didn't you clean it up yourself?
2. Would you say that you typically take the role of a mess-maker, a cleaner-upper, neither, or something else? Why do you assume that particular role? What do you get out of it? Do you ever tire of the role you tend to choose? What would it take for you to assume a different role?
3. When might cleaning up after others be needed and warranted? When might it actually be unhelpful, or even harmful?
4. What is God's response when we mess up?
5. How does our faith motivate and prepare you to serve others?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Isaiah 1:16-17, 25-27

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;
cease to do evil, learn to do good;
seek justice, rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan, plead for the widow. ...
I will turn my hand against you;
I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.
And I will restore your judges as at the first,
and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness,
the faithful city.
Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by righteousness. (For context, read 1:16-20, 25-27.)*

The book of Isaiah opens with Isaiah's vision about Judah's rebellion against God and complete corruption (vv. 1-6), followed by the nation's dissolution into chaos and ruin (vv. 7-10). God complains about Judah's ostentatious religiosity (vv. 11-14) meant to paper over the violence and injustice of the powerful toward the widow and orphan (vv. 15, 21-23). The chapter closes with God's vow to destroy rebels and sinners (vv. 24, 28-31).

The prophet tells God's people that it is their responsibility to "wash themselves and make themselves clean." But the cleansing is not so much of the physical body, as it is of the way they behave and what they do. They are to stop doing evil, and learn to do good. That will involve seeking justice, rescuing the oppressed, defending the orphan, and pleading for the widow.

Then in verse 25, God promises to "smelt away" the people's "dross as with lye and remove all [their] alloy." Here he uses the process of cleansing metal by removing impurities with fire and lye as a metaphor for the cleansing of those who repent of their unrighteousness, unfaithfulness and injustice.

Questions: Whose job is it to clean up the messes we make?

Consider the verbs used for actions God says the people need to take: cease, learn, seek, rescue, defend, plead, repent. Which do you think is harder: ceasing to do evil, or learning to do good? What does that suggest to you about the effort required to stop doing the one and to learn to do the other?

In contrast, what is God's role in cleaning us up? How does God "smelt away" our "dross" and remove our moral impurities?

Matthew 23:11-12, 25-26

[Jesus said,] "The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. ... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean." (For context, read 23:1-12, 23-28.)

In this discourse, Jesus advises his listeners and his disciples not to imitate the religious leaders, who do their "good deeds" to be noticed and honored. Instead, they are to remember that they are all students of the Messiah, and all children of one Father in heaven. Rather than exalting themselves, they should humble themselves and become servants to one another (vv. 11-12).

It does no good to present a pious front, when behind the curtain is greed, self-indulgence, filth, hypocrisy and lawlessness (vv. 25-28). Jesus compares that kind of behavior to washing the outside of a cup, but neglecting to clean the inside, and to whitewashing a mausoleum, which may look beautiful on the outside, but nonetheless is still full of dead bones!

Question: What is the relationship between service, humility and a clean heart?

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ... (For context, read 3:1-9.)

Ephesians 4:13-15

... until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ... (For context, read 4:11-16.)

We share these passages together because of their common theme of growing to spiritual maturity. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Paul wrote that the believers in that church behaved like spiritually immature infants who couldn't handle solid spiritual food. He explains that their jealousy, quarreling and factionalism demonstrated their lack of readiness for anything more than spiritual pabulum.

In Ephesians 4:13-15, Paul describes spiritual maturity as a kind of measuring up to the full stature of Christ. Of course, he isn't talking about Jesus' physical height, but about growing into the consummate nature of Christ, which is characterized by truth-telling and love.

Many people who saw the photo of Andy Kim kneeling on the floor of the Rotunda as he picked up trash said they glimpsed a kind of maturity missing from the rioters who had ransacked the Capitol hours before. Any child can throw a tantrum and break windows. It takes a real adult to be willing to clean up messes other people left behind.

Questions: What is required to become a mature adult physically? Spiritually? What do you need to do to grow more mature in Christ?

John 13:13-17

[Jesus said,] "You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." (For context, read 13:1-17.)

As the hour of Jesus' death grew near, he thought not only of himself, but of his followers. How could he prepare them for the shock and trauma the next few days would bring?

So he "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Philippians 2:7), and began washing his disciples' feet. Peter was shocked by the unconventional way Jesus took on the role of the lowest slave performing the lowest task. Somehow, he seemed to sense that if Jesus turned the accepted caste system on its head for himself, it wouldn't be long before he would expect the disciples to behave in a similar fashion. That was unacceptable to Peter.

John Christopher Thomas, in his book, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, stated that there is no recorded instance before Jesus of a person of higher stature washing the feet of someone of lesser stature. Jesus erased these distinctions.

But when Peter objected, Jesus responded that if Peter wanted to be part of his band of followers, he had to allow Jesus to wash his feet. So Peter relented.

Questions: How does the fact that Jesus, the disciples' teacher, Lord and master, washed the feet of his students and servants, relate to his incarnation as God in human form (John 1:14)? To his death as "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19)?

Since footwashing was not merely a way to clean one's feet, but also was a gesture of hospitality and welcome, what would it have meant to the disciples to have their feet washed by their Messiah who was ushering in the kingdom of God?

What principle was Jesus trying to teach his disciples by washing their feet, even though he was their superior in every way? What is the lesson we should take away from Jesus' act as we seek to follow his example in 2021?

For Further Discussion

1. Read [this excerpt](#) from the classic allegory, *Hind's Feet on High Places*, by Hannah Hurnard. The poem, "The Water Song," contained therein expresses the joy of a waterfall always seeking to go lower, to serve those in the valley. (Please note that there is a typo in line 10, which should read "Calling us to come away.")

What can we learn from the waterfall? When have you experienced the happiness of going low, as Hurnard defines it in this poem? Why does going low in this sense produce happiness? What makes "going low and rising again" the "sweetest urge, sweetest will, and sweetest pain"?

2. Compare "The Water Song," in discussion item #1, with the Shaker folk song, "[Simple Gifts](#)." What does it mean "to come down where you ought to be"? Why is doing that "a gift"? Who bestows that gift? And who is the intended recipient of that gift? Why does "coming down to where you ought to be" lead to "the valley of love and delight"?

Define "true simplicity." When might we experience "bowing and bending" as a source of shame? What transforms "bowing and bending" into something we experience as glory, honor and ecstasy? What is the "turning" that leads to us "coming round right"?

3. Kim says he didn't think, he just responded because it was so tragic to him that a place he so reveres was trashed. Trauma workers (physicians, military, etc.) are given repetitive training so that they develop reflexes to respond quickly and appropriately. How can we develop strong spiritual muscles so that we respond appropriately in a crisis almost without needing to think? What repetitive Christian training might help us build up Christlike reflexes?

4. Respond to this, from TWW team member Mary Sells: "God cleansing the sinner, cleansing the world. We're gonna need more supplies!"

5. Consider this from backwoodsman Daniel Boone: "The religion I have is to love and fear God, believe in Jesus Christ, do all the good to my neighbor and myself that I can, do as little harm as I can help, and trust on God's mercy for the rest."

Responding to the News

Consider what you need to do to clean up your own messes, to the extent that you are able. What do you need to do about messes you have made that you are unable to clean up?

Prayer Suggested by Psalm 51:1-7, 10-19

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love;

according to your abundant mercy blot out our transgressions.

Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin.

Help us to know our sin and guilt.

Help us to embrace the truth about who we are, and teach us wisdom.

Purge us and create clean hearts within us.

Deliver us from the hatred and anger that leads to bloodshed;

Fill us with genuine sorrow over our sin,

that we may offer you our contrition as a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to you. Amen.

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