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April 5, 2009

## **What Jesus Sees**

Mark 11:11

The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus is not impressed with the parade which brings him to the gates of Jerusalem. In Mark's narrative the jubilant crowds which welcome Jesus are outside the city walls. There is no celebration going on within the city. Inside the walls Jesus will meet controversy and hostility. He is fully aware of this fact as he leaves the parade behind and walks silently through the city to the temple. Mark writes that Jesus "went into the temple; and when he had looked around...he went out to Bethany with the twelve (Mark 11:11)."

What does Jesus see when he walks into the temple? He sees a religious institution which has lost its way. It is well designed to play on the dreams of the people for a messiah who would restore Israel to a place of political and economic prominence. But it no longer addresses the spiritual needs of the people. The temple no longer helps people to see themselves as they really are—fragile beings in need of grace. The temple no longer confronts the structures of injustice which devour ordinary people. What Jesus sees in the temple are the signs of the brokenness and evil which can only be addressed by the cross.

Jesus' visit to the temple is a reality check which counter balances the celebration outside the city walls. Jesus understands that confronting the reality he sees in the city will require everything he has to give. To prepare for that he withdraws from the city and goes to Bethany where he will be surrounded by people who love him.

The leader of the Reformation in Strasbourg was Martin Bucer. After a long and successful career as a preacher and theologian in Strasbourg, a dramatic shift in the political winds forced him into exile in 1549. He spent the last two years of his life teaching theology at Cambridge University in England. He arrived in Cambridge burdened by grief and struggling to adjust to a culture and climate that was very different from what he had known. But he was sustained by his marriage to an extraordinary woman. Wibrandis Rosenblatt made a career of marriage to Reformers. Bucer was the third high profile reformer to be her husband. She married Johannes Oecolampadius, the leading reformer in Basel, in 1528. He was much older than her but was so pleased with the marriage he wrote his good friend and fellow reformer Wolfgang Capito in Strasbourg to praise Wibrandis. Soon after that Oecolampadius died. Not long after that in 1532 Wibrandis was on her way to Strasbourg to marry Capito. In 1541 the plague swept through Strasbourg taking Capito's life. The next day Martin Bucer's wife called Wibrandis to her deathbed and begged her to marry her husband. She then summoned Bucer and instructed him to marry Wibrandis.

Wibrandis bore children by all of these men. In the Bucer home there were little Oecolampadiuses, little Capitos, and little Bucers running around. She skillfully ran their households which were in fact hotels for visiting friends and refugees. But most of all she supported their ministries. She was one of a handful of women who invented the role of the pastor's spouse.

When Bucer was forced to leave the city Wibrandis traveled back and forth to settle their business affairs and complete the family's transition to England. In the process she bore the brunt of those in Strasbourg who wanted to do her husband harm. One of her letters to Bucer from this time survives. The letter was written from the spa town of Baden where she had gone with a group of women to enjoy the baths. This was her time in Bethany when she could retreat from the hard realities of Strasbourg and be surrounded by friends who loved her. Her letter shows that she saw clearly the ugly truth that confronted her. She wrote:

When I came back to Strasbourg, everyone was saying that you also had returned. Then the Papists got together and held a council as they wanted to scare you, and have it let out that they want to confiscate my property. Many have come to warn me. But I haven't burdened myself with the matter and have replied: Let them come. I'm not afraid of them.

Something else happened. On the day before St. John's Day, someone named Velsius summoned me to appear next Thursday before the ecclesiastical court. The messenger announced the summons to [son-in-law] Christoph who answered that we will not appear, we are citizens, and if Velsius has a claim against us, well, there is a good public court here. So, he sent him back. He didn't tell me about it until he was already gone because he was worried that I might let fly some angry words, as, in fact, I might have! I've traveled to Baden and have directed Christoph that he shouldn't answer them until I return. In the meantime ...Mr. Kniebis has counseled me that I shouldn't worry. So I haven't. I leave it to God. He will help me. Keep your chin up!

You're faithful wife,  
Wibrandis Bucer

(From *Frau Wibrandis: a Woman in the Time of the Reformation*, by Ernst Staehelin, translated by Ed. L. Miller, pages 43-45).

Jesus departs from his spa at Bethany seeing clearly the ugly truth of human brokenness in the face of evil. But he is ready to leave it to God. He goes back to Jerusalem where he breaks bread with his disciples and breaks his body for the world.