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## Gospel Is Good News for the Poor

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The 1960s generation is often held accountable for the moral decline of the United States and typified as spoiled, relativistic, and unpatriotic. My spirituality was forged during the era of Vietnam and civil rights' marches when we were challenged to see the Gospel as an alternative history that is good news for the poor.

The Gospel is an alternative vision of life to the "The American Dream," a dream harmful not only to the rest of the world, but also spiritually stultifying to those who live in that dream world. The Gospel is a proclamation of grace to those who would be graceful, of mercy to the merciful and of community to those who open their hearts to all. It is a call to live in the hope that the "Peaceful Kingdom" proclaimed by Jesus is a reality in which we can live now and a call to create that kingdom in the world.

Faith leads me to understand the interconnectedness of things in a universe that is immense but also extremely personal -- a phenomenon which has been described by quantum physics. The movement of the universe is guided by an overarching will which, I believe, is both just and merciful. The alternative history of the Gospel reveals a God that is less concerned about the keeping of rules than the quality relationships -- with love, mercy and justice. This faith provides hope even while living in a broken world. It enables me to see more clearly the injustices I do to my neighbor, to ask for forgiveness and to work for restitution. It helps me to walk more humbly, and to be able to listen to, accept and love others; it enables me to accept life as a precious gift from a loving God to be shared in the community.

This is "bottom-up" theology - learned from people who have loved me and accepted me, despite my failings, and from people who are considered unacceptable (or see themselves in that light) by traditional religion from family, friends and parishioners. They reveal to me a God who is larger than anything I can imagine and is also more personal and intimate. A God who addresses me, holds me and challenges me through my faith community. A God who unites me with His sacraments to all people, who connects me to all of creation, and binds me to His over-arching will for creation.

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