

The Desperate Non-Conformity Of Love

By Ken Woodley

“Do not be conformed to this world.”

Seven words.

Eight syllables to live by.

Paul’s advice, delivered in his letter to the Romans, is as important today as it was 2,000 years ago. Perhaps, even more so, as one looks around at the state of the world in which we live.

Seriously, checking out the daily news headlines and soundbites, who would want to be conformed to any of that?

But, as soon as we’re born, the world tries mighty hard to achieve that goal. Almost like some military bootcamp aimed at squeezing out our unique personality traits so that we’ll obey orders without thinking.

“Conformation” classes begin almost immediately and the conformity blues play its tune right on along the rest of our lives, trying to coax us into thinking like everyone else, believing like everyone else, dreaming like everyone else, shopping like everyone else, voting like everyone else, eating like everyone else, dressing like everyone else, shaving, smelling, driving, you-name-it like everyone else.

Oh, and there’s surely one more: Hating like everyone else.

Mass individuality.

Uniform distinctness.

Fighting to wade ashore against the riptide of conformity to find our own grains of sand with which to build dream castles is a difficult, ongoing struggle.

The temptation to fit snugly into a comfortable and desirable profile or demographic is powerful. We want to belong to something bigger than ourselves so that we don't feel so terribly small.

That's one reason history is littered with dictators who found it so easy to manipulate populations, to conform them.

Assimilate them.

Force them into capitulation by tricking them into believing the choice was theirs.

That's why Jesus is so wonderfully dangerous.

Not for us, but for the powers that wish to conform us to this world.

Jesus was—and is—the ultimate non-conformist and his path of non-conformity is open wide for us. So wide that it's not even a path. So wide that wherever each of us goes individually the path of non-conformity exists.

Cross the road like the non-conformist Good Samaritan.

Turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

Move a mountain.

Plant a mustard seed.

Be a mustard seed.

Turn someone's water into wine.

Touch a leper.

Enter through the narrow gate because the other side brings you to a place that is not the least bit narrow at all and wide open to every possibility.

Believe in love.

Not cookie-cutter love.

Not conformist love.

Not one-size-fits-all love.

But love.

The actual thing, itself.

The living, breathing holy presence that is God among us.

Unconformable.

Waiting for us—longing for us—to become something bigger than ourselves:

LOVE.