

**Word Shatters Stone**  
Genesis 18:1-14  
Matthew 10:1, 5-10, 16  
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Robert R. Howard  
Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tempe, AZ

Since he was young, RJ and I have loved to play “rock, paper, scissors.” You know, you make a fist, shake it up and down three times, and show either a fist (rock), flat hand (paper), or two fingers spread (scissors). Paper covers rock. Scissors cut paper. Rock smashes scissors. It passes the time. But after a while, RJ and I would start . . . wandering from the approved items, rock, paper, scissors. One of us would show a bomb, with our upraised thumb as a fuse. Or a saw. Or quicksand. Or a massive flood. Or a meteorite. Or a quantum shift into another dimension! And so on. We would get creative with our game. It was great fun to see what we’d come up with. He’d come up with some I’d have to write down! I think Jesus might have understood that expanded version of “rock, paper, scissors,” as he was sending out those disciples to continue his ministry. I think, just before He ushered them out the door, He might have started his own wandering, by promising, “Word shatters stone.”

Well, God has been in the game-changing business from the git-go. Way back when, Abraham is resting his elderly bones by the altar set up by the Oaks at Mamre – which sounds like a fine name for a resort, right? There he is, when three strangers wander up. Or, three-in-one, you might say. Ever the consummate host, Abe serves them hors d’oeuvres. After the finger-bowls, one of the visitors ups and asks, “Where is your wife, Sarah?” Apparently innocent of the flat creepiness of this request from a total stranger, Abe points, saying, “over there, in the tent.” And one of the three-in-one voices of God says, “Oh, and you can expect a baby-bump any day now.” And Sarah, overhearing from behind the flap of said tent, erupts a guffaw of disbelief. “Riiiiight,” she thinks, “me, crowding 90. Like I’m going to send maternity ward charges to Medicare?” But God, who pretty much misses nothing, counters, “Why did you laugh, mother-to-be Sarah? Is anything beyond God’s ability? A bouncing baby troublemaker you shall have!” On their journey of faith, Sarah and Abe just encountered the game-changing God. Several weeks later – okay, centuries – Jesus is pointing his dozen disciples down the road, sending them out, with mystifying instructions: “Take no cash, leave all the credit cards at home, no suitcase, no backpack, no extra change of clothes, no hiking boots, no walking stick. None of it. Nada. Zilch. What you *will* take with you is this: ‘Heaven’s reality has come near.’ With that word alone, you will do what I do: heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead. Now get going.” Silence. That’s it, Jesus? You’re sending us out with words alone? I mean, have you not been paying attention? Those dozen bewildered disciples have just met the same game-changing God, up close and personal. From the git-go, God has been in the game-changing business.

And, beloved, our God is *still doing the same thing!* We follow in their uncertain footsteps, trying to live into that promise. In every case, in every case, God is saying to those who try to follow God’s way, time to update your software, buckaroos, with this promise, straight from the justice of God: *Word will shatter stone.* 2000 years before Christ. In the days when He walked the stony hills

of Galilee. And now, during this coronavirus. Now, when the streets are filled with marching feet, with voices raised for racial justice. Yes, even now, God is changing the game. Do you see it? Laugh if you want, powers, but those racist policies *will* change! God is giving birth to new, more humane policies. And what will force the change? A thousand thousand voices, voicing the vision of God's New Reality, ushering a tectonic shift in human societies. That's the promise. Will it just happen on its own, like magic – Shazaam? Rarely. Listen to Jesus, handing out a dose of reality. There *will* be opposition. Entrenched power doesn't give up easily. Setting on peaceful crowds with tear-gas and rubber bullets. Oh, yes, said Jesus, don't be surprised. But neither give up. A new world is coming. Can you see the baby-bump? God is at work – here and now. Count on it.

What we have is our words. Words carried on fragile breath over vibrating vocal cords, emanating from fragile bodies. But, as Ibram X. Kendi learned, “the power of the spoken word is in the power of the word spoken.”(1) So we will speak *up*. We will speak *out*. We will speak words that carry the power of an idea deep into souls: “Black. Lives. Matter.” “Black lives *matter*.” “*Black* lives matter.” And the words will take root in the secret depths of the soul, and grow, until they burst the stone prisons of hate. “Black lives matter.” Did we say, “*Only* black lives matter?” No! But, in a world whose every square inch proclaims black lives matter less than white lives, we snap back, “black lives matter, too!” In the words of Chris Glaser, “Black lives matter when there is equal access to prenatal and postnatal care, preschool, decent housing and nutrition, education, healthcare, employment, promotions, advancement, economic opportunities, voting rights, justice in the courts, representation on school boards, law enforcement agencies, city councils, state legislatures, congress, corporate boards, and executive positions in business and government—to name some of the things routinely denied.”(2) In our racist society, “all lives” *won't* matter, until *black* lives *do* matter. Until housing policies show that black lives matter. Until labor hiring shows that black lives matter. Until wages show that black lives matter. Until water quality shows that black lives matter. Until access to healthy food for impoverished neighborhoods shows that black lives matter. Until policing policies show that black lives matter. Until education funding shows that black lives matter. Until corporate boardrooms display that black lives matter. Until bank loans show that black lives matter. *That's* why we will put up a Black Lives Matter flag on our church tower this Friday, on Juneteenth. To speak the Word of God's invincible love, that will shatter every boulder of hate. We've been talking about antiracism, white privilege, for several years now, before I ever showed up at Community. Conversing to discern God's will for our community about putting up a Black Lives Matter flag. Now is the time. And when we hang that flag, please remember that our doing so is only the first step. We've come a mighty long way, and we have more to go. But we will walk God's holy highway of justice for *every* person made in the image of God. All beautiful hues of the rainbow, all sexual orientations, all gender identifications, seeing clear with the outer eye, or seeing more clearly with the inner eye, hearing with ears or with eyes, those not physically mobile, and those temporarily physically mobile, and on and on, the whole range of humanity, gathered together under God's endless love. Precious in the eye of God. We will speak in council meetings, we will speak on the street, we will speak with our friends, we will send emails to our congress-people, using our *words*. Words filled with game-changing promise. Words that carry the sweet freight of God's love for all. Words that have divine power to shatter those boulders of hate. That flag is a battle cry to fight the fight for justice, until black lives *do* matter, in *every* hamlet, on every street, in every board room, in the halls of justice, and the halls of congress, and from row-house to

White House. That flag is a promise that God struggles with us until that day. So we shall step into the promise, using our words.

Friends, God is in the game-changing business. Always has been. And today Jesus is saying, “I am sending you out ... to the streets of Minneapolis ... Seattle ... Atlanta ... Singapore ... Phoenix ... Tempe. Your *words* will shatter the hardest stone of racist policies. So use your words. Let them be not only life-giving, but life-*changing*! Say it loud, say it proud: black lives *matter*! Tell them, Heaven’s promise has come near!” “It’s been a long, a long time coming, but I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will.”(3) Do you see – do you *see* that baby-bump? Amen.

### Notes

- (1) Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 167.
- (2) “Black Lives Matter,” by Chris Glaser, ProgressiveChristianity.org, 2/12/20; accessed online on 6/11/20 at <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/black-lives-matter-2/>
- (3) Sam Cooke, “A Change Is Gonna Come,” 1964.