

Among the criticisms leveled against the Occupy Wall Street movement is that it's weird. There are some in our congregation who would go much further, decrying it as naive, pointless, unpatriotic, misinformed, unclear, overblown, faddish, futile and worse. Others in our faith community are passionately part of the movement. What is really weird is that all of us, positioned all across a wide spectrum of political opinion and commitment, gather in this same room, united as friends.

Another word for *weird* is *holy*.

Literally, the word *holy* means *set apart as separate, different*.

Holy means weird, and it is what God calls God's people to be.

The nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, often called "the holiness code" by biblical scholars, outlines the contours of a lifestyle that is strikingly unusual, different, weird.

*You shall not render an unjust judgment;*

*you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great;*

*you shall not go around as a slanderer;*

*you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor;*

*you shall not hate in your heart...or take vengeance or bear a grudge...*

*but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

This is not the way the world or the talk show circuit works.

Taking this seriously could grind the economy to a halt with no hope for a war to resuscitate it.

Such idealism is rare and strange and threatening in actual practice, and when the world encounters it, it is unprepared, disarmed, confused, and dismissive.

Behavior like that is weird.

Another word for *weird* is *holy*.

God calls us to be weird, explaining, *for I the LORD your God am weird.*

Elsewhere God informs the children of Israel, *the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.*

*It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that LORD set his heart on you and chose you--for you were the fewest of all peoples.*

*It was because the LORD loved you... (Deuteronomy 7:6-8)*

God rescued Israel from slavery and oppression in Egypt and brought them out into the middle of nowhere so that they would not be distracted when God told them who they were and who God was, and is, and ever more shall be.

*You shall be weird, for I the LORD your God am weird.*

Your life shall be guided not by self-interest but by love, not by gain or greed but by justice and by a concern for your neighbor equal to your concern for yourself.

You shall be a light to the nations, as odd as a candle in a dark room, a community that witnesses to me and to real hope for a better future by being and acting wildly different than everyone else, by loving your neighbor as yourself, by being refreshingly and restoratively weird.

It is a calling that is hard to maintain in a me-first world, almost impossible to uphold when all the cool kids are handsomely profiting by putting themselves first.

Israel was no more consistent at pulling this off than we are.

Even the leadership, the scholars and teachers of the law, are caught red-handed in this week's gospel, trying to trap Jesus and ultimately kill him because, let's face it, he was just too holy, too reliably and dangerously weird.

Like only too many of us religious leader types, they reduce God's hard, strange, life-giving word into a mousetrap to rid their own house of unwanted disruption.

But one of the many weird things about God is relentless resiliency and resolve.

When Jesus is finally trapped on trumped up charges and nail him down on a cross, he rises up from the grave, which is almost as unusual, as weird as forgiveness.

While the world dispenses death and fairness, God even more stubbornly insists on life and grace, and then sets us apart as God's people, whether in the wilderness of Sinai or the waters of baptism, to share that wondrous weirdness in a reluctant, recalcitrant world that continues to resist what it most desperately wants and needs.

It is hard and strange and urgent to love neighbor as self, to render justice and kindness.

It is weird to come together with others who disagree with us about everything but Jesus, and really to disagree about him too, yet to eat and praise and pray together.

It is weird to pledge offerings with a standard that the first ten percent of number one's income goes open-handed, no-strings-or-expectations-attached to a God we cannot see or touch or feel except as broken bread and fragmented community because that weird God is the real and the only number one, and the same weird God who gives 100 percent to us.

It's the kind of thing we can hardly explain to our reasonable friends because we can barely explain it to ourselves.

Worship is weird, the Bible is weird, the whole Christian tradition is weird, and love and real hope are weird, too, but through us and despite us, with us and without us, our weird and wonderful God is going to occupy this world and keep behaving strangely until what now seems so weird at last becomes the commonplace communion shared and savored and celebrated by the 100 percent.