

## Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent, March 6, 2023

Recommended readings: p. 478, “May 2020”, pp. 479-80, “Progress Report”, pp. 8-17, “Democracy” (part 1)

Nikole Hannah-Jones starts her essay “Democracy” recounting her confusion and even embarrassment at her dad’s patriotism after a lifetime of abuse, segregation, discrimination, harassment, and devaluing at the hands of his nation. But she admits, “Like most young people, I thought I understood so much, when in fact I understood so little. My father knew exactly what he was doing when he raised that flag. He knew that our people’s contributions to building the richest and most powerful nation in the world were indelible, that the United States simply would not exist without us.... That Black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation’s capital, are this nation’s true founding fathers. And that no people has a greater claim to that flag than we do.”

*Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham, yet you look for an opportunity to kill me because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father’s presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.” They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does.”*  
(John 8:31-41)

What does it mean to be American? What does it mean to be a disciple of God? Both questions are often answered based on the origin stories we tell ourselves. The Jewish leaders conversing with Jesus claim they are disciples of God because they are descendants of Abraham, one of God’s chosen people. Nikole Hannah-Jones describes how as a younger person she trusted origin stories that suggested the “true” Americans were those who descended from the “founding fathers” of European descent—origin stories that populate most of our history books, especially here in Florida. And yet Jesus suggests our true identity and true freedom are connected to our trust, commitment, and submission to God and God’s vision of the world, far more than to our bloodlines or our connection to national heroes.

### Prayer

God of mercy and love, forgive us when we cling to stories and visions rooted in separation, sin, and violence. Wash us and cleanse us, drawing us into your radiant vision of freedom and love for all of your beloved people. Amen.