

The Gospels are populated with a cast of marginal women and men.

When the marginalised have a voice they challenge the powerful to re-define truth.

Outsiders learn to think from two perspectives (unlike insiders who don't need to):

That of insiders, since the insiders create the rules of the game

That of the outsiders, since that is what they suffer, cf Paul.

Jesus as Outsider:

Origins in national and world history

Death as an outsider

Departure from work and village

His marginalised place when in Jerusalem

Non-traditional source of his teaching

Anti-establishment views

Poor

So he evaluated the world from a different standpoint.

Examples of Exclusion:

The Poor: Pleading Widow (Lk 18 v1-8)

She understands what it takes to get a hearing from the insider (disturbing peace)

Lazarus pleads that rich don't understand but God does not accept the excuse.

The Ill: Woman with haemorrhage: (Mk 5 v25-34)

Man could not touch her even family.

He makes her one of his household (my daughter)

Religiously Excluded: Syro-Phoenician woman (Mt 15 v21-28)

She stretches his thinking 'dogs at table' and heals her daughter.

The Women: Genealogy (Mt 1 v1-17)

women foreigners (sinners) in Jesus' family tree.

Politically Excluded: Woman at the Well (Jn 4)

Rarely does one suffer a single form of marginality:

(race, gender, marital status, religious exclusion)

In John's Gospel the Word in John enters into 'dialogue' – table fellowship etc.

Vulnerability

But this brings awareness of dependence and interdependence

They know that self-centred life is an illusion. (Rich Fool Lk 12 v16-21)

Identity comes from God's unconditional acceptance & being part of whole.

Jesus helps them see new values & personal worth and reintegrates some into society.

The Christian must never quite give up outsider status.

Virginia Wolf: A Christian's spirit must be free from servitude to the desire to be a Society of Insiders who have the answers and no longer need to look at the world from a vulnerable position.

As insiders learn to enter into conversation with outsiders they too may find God present again in their midst.

(Outsiders in the Gospels: Marginality as a Source of Knowledge: Jane Kopas)