When I read the Children a Bible story on Wednesday it was the story of Abraham and Isaac, pretty heavy for very young children..I mean it’s heavy on adults also…I wanted to tell the children some good news so I told them about Isaac and Rebekah getting married and that they loved one another. This may be the only time in the bible where marriage is referred to as a relationship between two people who love one another. Marriage was a largely transactional proposition back then. Even in this story you can see that Isaac waits until he is 40 to marry because Abraham wants him to get a wife outside of Canaan where it is said that sinful things were happening. The way in which Rebekah was found is told in story form here. The servant of Abraham prays that the right woman will come to the well and offer water in the right way and then will say yes to his invitation to marry a man who lives in a completely different place, that she has never seen. Rebekah it turns out is a rare woman for her day. She is independent and has a voice and a choice. She agrees to not only go back with Laban but to do it immediately. The prayer is answered. I love this part because I think we all have been graced by meetings like this through the grace of God. We’ve all had chance (or perhaps God given encounters) that changed our lives in significant ways. We have all had encounters with people that were blessed and sanctified by a God who loves us deeply and wants us all to encounter meaningful relationship that embody God’s love for us. I invite you to take a moment this week and remember some of those times when people have blessed your life, whether as an answer to prayer or through the grace of God. Juxtaposed to this wonderful meeting of Rebekah and Isaac is Paul’s thoughts on humanities’ sins vs. the law. His language can be hard to grasp. We don’t know if Paul is struggling with his own sins or with the sins of the community. Our country is going through a time when the corporate sins of the nation have been highlighted in an alarming way. Perhaps so blatantly that we can no longer ignore them. When we see a nation that is going through a pandemic that will cut off healthcare to its most vulnerable citizens that’s sinful. When we live in a country that is the richest in the world but the only wealthy nation that does not provide healthcare to all its members we know that we have gone astray. We may be law abiding citizens but are part of a a system that is truly sinful. We follow a God who values loving relationships and equitable distribution of resources to all. This is how we make the yoke easy on everyone and ease the burdens of all. Our Holy Troublemaker today is Gustavo Gutierrez. Guitierrez is a priest in Lima, Peru, near the Andes Mountains. As a young priest, Gutierrez asked himself how he could tell people who had no food, or adequate shelter and children who were suffering, that God loves them. He said that it felt like the opposite of love. Guitierrez followed God’s call much like Abraham, Rebekah and Isaac and he helps the people living in extreme poverty, especially the indigenous people. Peru, like many other countries was colonized and its indigenous peoples were left destitute. The European colonizers felt native people were less human, less deserving. That’s how we justify corporate sin isn’t it? Gustavo saw the disparity between the lighter skin Spanish and the darker skin mixed and native peoples and understood that this can’t be the will of a loving and just God. A sentiment we have all likely been feeling in this country quite a bit lately. Guiterrez understands that God’s preferential love for the poor was special because they have more needs. He carried this through to all people who were cast aside from mainstream society…LGBTQ, disabled, indigenous and people of color. Guiterrez answered a call to follow Jesus in trying to right these unjust and unfair systems. He started a movement now taught in seminaries all over the world called Liberation theology. How appropriate for us to think about today on this Independence Day weekend. We were founded on the belief that a person can come here with nothing and build a good life. Guiterrez advocates for the rights of the poor and he educates the rich and advises them to live by or near poor people so they understood what it was like to live without. The more understanding people have in what this world is like for the least of these the more likely we will fight to make change happen. When we saw George Floyd get lynched in a public street we understood that this is not a new thing. This has been a public sanctioned event that happened in a broken society where blacks have been oppressed since this country began. When the pandemic came and has stayed because we don’t even care enough about are fellow humans to wear a mask we can see that something in this system is broken. As we hear in the gospel: Jesus said to the crowd, “To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

As a country we are not mourning the thousands of people who have died from covid. We can’t even have a funeral for them, at least not a public one. We don’t need anything except a willingness to say yes to God’s call to us. There is no amount of wealth that would make us more desireable to God. God wants us just as we are. Rebekah took that leap of faith to leave her family and her country behind and follow this call from God. Guiterrez heard Gods call from the poorest of the poor in Peru, and from the indigenous peoples who had lost everything after colonization. We too must hear God’s call from Jesus: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”. We are a broken nation. We are a people separated yes by social distancing, and zoom but also by vast disparities and inequalities that can and should be changed and made right. We don’t have to invent a new theology to do our part to right these wrongs. As long as any live on the margins and don’t have enough we must strive to provide opportunities and necessities that make God’s love for all apparent. Our faith depends on it. Guiterrez said: [Faith is not limited to affirming the existence of God. No, faith tells us that God loves us and demands a loving response. This response is given through love for human beings, and that is what we mean by a commitment to God and to our neighbor.](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1336995)