

# *Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims*

## Introduction and Chapter 1

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, as we start this new series, we pray that you'll lead us to greater awareness of the plight of scapegoats, both past and present. In your Son's holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Jennifer Garcia Bashaw bio**

- Grew up Southern Baptist in Texas
  - Called to ministry: Southern Baptist choice was between missionary and children's director
- BA from Baylor (1999)
- MDiv from Truett Theological Seminary (2002)
- PhD in NT from Fuller Theological Seminary (2012)
- Ordained American Baptist minister
- Associate Professor of New Testament and Christian Ministry at Campbell University
- Campbell University
  - "An inclusive Christian University"
  - Associated with Baptist Church, supportive of LGBTQ+
- Lives in Raleigh, NC

- **Video** [[YouTube NABF Book Conversation - "Scapegoats" by Jennifer Garcia Bashaw 0:00-13:47](#); up to the point where she says "...to make sure that those voices are heard."]

- Alternate videos
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0sMe8IU-8M>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLU6pe5gEBU>
- Comments?

- **Introduction**

- What goes through your mind when you hear of shootings like the 2019 El Paso one Bashaw recalls?
  - Can you see her point about the dominant social group needing to scapegoat immigrants?
  - Bashaw was crying in church "because no one else was"
    - Have you ever felt that way when sitting in the congregation?
- Bashaw outlines how she reads scripture:
  1. Approaches it as inspired literature and a way to understand God and humanity
  2. Authors influenced by their culture and time
  3. She has a vast array of Bible study tools
  4. She's a teacher
  5. Loves the church
- What are the elements that influence you as you read the Bible?
- 4 Goals of Book
  1. Introduction to scapegoat theory
  2. Examine Jesus's ministry with reference to victims
  3. Survey scapegoating in church history
  4. Suggest ways for Christians to end scapegoating
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 1 – Scapegoats and Scapegoating**

- Read Leviticus 16:6-10 in The Message
  - This is the Jewish practice of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

- Holiest day of the year in Judaism
- Azazel – desolate place, later known as a fallen angel introducing humans to forbidden knowledge
- Older English versions translate Azazel to scapegoat
- What Christian practice is like Yom Kippur? *Lent*
- Why do you think Yom Kippur and Lent are so important to Jews and Christians, respectively?
- [3] Tom Douglas identifies 4 reasons people scapegoat others:
  1. Extreme dislike
  2. Fear
  3. Ignorance
  4. Displacement of blame from the powerful to the weak
  - Which of these reasons do you think is most prevalent today?
- Provide modern-day examples of 1-on-1, 1-on-group, and group-on-group scapegoating
- René Girard (1923-2015)
  - French historian and philosopher
  - Most of his career in the US (taught at Duke, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford)
  - ~30 books
  - Main contribution in the area of *desire* – human desire functions imitatively (mimetically) rather than individually
  - Desires are bound on the same things. When these things can't be shared, it leads to conflict and violence. The solution to community violence was assigning blame to one member of the group (scapegoat mechanism).
  - Myths are generally written with the community depending on the guilt of the victim
  - Reveals the Bible as written with God as the victim, allowing the church to identify and avoid scapegoating
- [15] "The gospel story, then, is a story *about* a victim, written *by* victims, and *featuring* victims. It is good news for victims; it is a scapegoat's gospel."
  - In what ways does this alter the way you read the Gospel?
- Other reflections?

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- [\*Scapegoats: Small Group Study Guide\*](#)

*Italics* imply important points or example answers the leader can convey

## Chapter 2

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, open our eyes to the scapegoating of women in the Bible, in our history, and in present-day. Help us to hear Jesus' message to end their victimization. In His name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 2 – Women in the Christian Past**

- Why have women historically been targeted as scapegoats?
- In Genesis, what things support Bashaw's claim that Eve was a scapegoat?
- [23] Bashaw capitulates that early Christians went along with their religious leaders since they relied on them to read and interpret the Bible
  - To what extent does this apply to modern-day Christians?
- [24] Hypatia was a learned mathematician in the Roman Empire whose teachings were deemed anti-Christian by Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril incited 500 monks to brutally murder her.
  - What do you think drove Cyril to this heinous action?
  - Who are the Cyrils of today?
- What do you recall as to the treatment of women in the New Testament?
- When Constantine endorsed Christianity in Rome in the 300s, he allied church and state and thus doomed female leadership.
  - In what ways does this apply to our political climate today?
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 3

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, open our hearts to a new perspective on the Gospel stories of Jesus and the women with whom he interacts. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 3 – Mary the Mother, Mary the Prophet**

- How important is Mary's story to Jesus' story?
- In what ways could Mary be described as a victim?
- [33] "Since women are the ones to carry the physical evidence of conception in their bodies, they are also the ones who face the consequences of illicit conception."
  - How can society counter this victimization?
- Bashaw notes that Luke reverses Mary's shame, highlighting her value in Jesus' story.
  - Might Luke's success in canonizing Mary in some way contribute to our failure to see her as a victim?
- How, if at all, has Mary served as a discipleship role model for you?
- Read Luke 1:46-55 (The Magnificat)
  - What is Mary's message to scapegoats?
  - Why might this scripture speak differently to Christians than similar messages in Psalms?  
*Consider the speaker is a victim herself*
- [39] What did you think of Bashaw's retelling of Mary's story in the first person?
  - [41] "As I carried a baby inside me, conceived in a way that no one would accept, I felt exiled, separated from home and people."
    - Do you see how Mary might consider herself a scapegoat?
  - [42] In the midst of labor, Bashaw's Mary reflects "Our love for one another and our faith in God provides those times of respite when we thrive despite the labor pains of life."
    - Share an example from your life when you've fallen back on such love and faith to provide respite from your labor pains of life.

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## Chapter 4

- **Opening Prayer**

Dear Lord, we thank you for making women so important in your ministry on earth. Help us to find ways to honor and express our gratitude for this gift. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 4 – The Widow and the Whore**

- [45] Bashaw points out society's tendency to "downplay female complexity and individuality by implying that women are interchangeable."
  - What are the stereotypes society attaches to women?
  - *Luke combats this by including 42 passages about women, 23 of which are unique to his gospel.*
- Bashaw notes that after his first two chapters, in which he describes Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna, women are essentially presented as nameless figures. She provided different reasons (e.g., adopted the misogynistic attitude of the times vs. opened the door for readers to more easily identify with these characters)
  - Why do you think Luke left out the names of these women?
- Read Luke 7:11-17
  - What do you think was going through the mother's head at this time?
  - In Bashaw's first person retelling of the story, the mother reflects that "the spectacle surrounding me was a farce. It did not bring peace and comfort to a grieving mother"
    - What practices have you witnessed that \*were\* effective at bringing peace and comfort to someone grieving?
  - What might be Luke's intention in including this story of Jesus healing the mother's son?
- Read Luke 7:36-38 – \*\*\*Imagine yourself in the party seated at the table witnessing the event\*\*\*
  - What is your reaction?
- Continue reading Luke 7:39-50 – \*\*\*still imagining yourself in the dinner party\*\*\*
  - What might you say to the person seated next to you in response?
  - *The "sinful woman" becomes the hero of the story, modeling behavior which Jesus applauds*
- Bashaw covers several other stories which break female stereotypes:
  - *Jesus healing Simon's mother-in-law*
  - *Jesus healing bleeding woman*
  - *Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from the dead*
  - *Mary choosing the "better part"*
    - Bashaw highlights Martha's "diaconate" service – used for ministry of apostles and deacons – and Jesus' issue not being her service, but the distraction it is bringing her
      - When have you found yourself falling into the trap of your service getting in the way of your focus on the "better part" [i.e., Jesus]?
    - Bashaw sees Mary as adopting the role of disciple before her rabbi, who then becomes a rabbi herself
      - In what ways do you see Mary as a minister and teacher?
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 5

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, keep us from falling victim to mob mentality that creates scapegoats, and rather to fight against victimization as a whole. In Your name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 5 – The Woman Saved from Stoning**

- Read John 8:2-11
- [66] How would you respond to the questions Bashaw poses:
  - Why did the scribes and Pharisees bring an accused *woman* in their test of Jesus?
  - Why choose the sexual act of adultery over a religious crime like blasphemy?
  - Why isn't the associated adulterous man present?
- Here are the titles for this passage in various translations:
  - NIV: <no title> [notes that the earliest manuscripts omit this passage]
  - CEB: Pharisees test Jesus
  - The Message: To Throw the Stone
  - RSV: The Woman Caught in Adultery
  - Good News: The Woman Caught in Adultery
  - KJV: nothing <no titles at all in KJV>
  - NKJV: An Adulteress Faces the Light of the World
  - NASB: The Adulterous Woman
  - Holman Christian Standard Bible: An Adulteress Forgiven
  - International Children's Bible: The Woman Caught in Adultery
- What do these titles say about the editorial boards who chose them?
- What "test" do you think the scribes and Pharisees are posing to Jesus?
  - How do you think they expected Jesus to respond?
- Bashaw highlights "changes in posture" taken by Jesus:
  - Bending down to write on the ground
  - Standing up
  - Bending down again
- Do you see how this, as Bashaw writes, could be an effective way to draw attention away from the woman?
  - If so, why did Jesus find it important to draw attention away from the woman?
- [75] *Two Lessons for Us*:
  - *Focusing blame on rightful object deescalates mob violence*
  - *Scapegoating doesn't occur among people who find each other equals*
- Jesus removes the opportunity for mimetic escalation by eliminating an initial stone thrower – no initial thrower means no one to copy
  - Could a similar strategy have worked to diffuse the January 6<sup>th</sup> riot in D.C.?
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 6

- **Opening Prayer [or Closing Prayer]**

[Use *A Prayer of Repentance and Hope* at the end of the chapter]

- **Chapter 6 – Women in the Christian Present**

- Where have we made strides in raising women onto equal ground as men?
  - Where do we continue to fail the most?
- [80] Complementarianism – relegating women to “traditional” roles in family and the church
  - Can you provide examples of this which you’ve witnessed first-hand?
  - What advantages might proponents cite, especially female proponents?
- What are your experiences with the teachings of Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, or Phyllis Schlafly (or their related organizations like the Moral Majority, *Christianity Today*, Focus on the Family, and STOP ERA)?
- How would you define “traditional values”?
  - *John Wesley included Tradition in his Quadrilateral.*
  - What are the benefits vs. disadvantages of emphasizing tradition?
- [85] *Bashaw provides average pay numbers of men vs. women as of 2020. The numbers as of 2023, per AAUW (American Association of University Women) vs. white non-Hispanic men:*
  - *All: 83%*
  - *Asian American: 94%*
  - *White: 80%*
  - *Black: 66%*
  - *Latina: 58%*

*North Carolina has the 7<sup>th</sup> smallest pay gap (86.9%)*

- How have you experienced inequity in pay based on gender?
  - How did your experience with deciding to have children play into this pay inequity?
- [87] *“economists predict that [COVID] has set women’s progress back a whole generation” due to:*
  - *High percentage of women in service & hospitality*
  - *Prohibitive cost of childcare for single women*
  - *Women more likely to adjust work schedules to take care of children*
- What examples can you remember of Jesus treating women as equals to men? *Woman at the well, appearing to women first after his resurrection, including women as disciples (Mary M., Mary, Martha), healing of women (Peter’s mother, woman with the flow of blood, Jairus’s daughter)*
- [92] What efforts have you witnessed which attempted to shame girls out of sexual activity?
  - Have you experienced anything similar for boys?
- Where have you seen the expectation that a woman’s role is in stabilizing civilization by taming men?
- What might a new reader of the Gospels draw as far as direction for gender roles?
- What steps have you found to be successful in fighting the scapegoating of women?

*Bashaw offers:*

  - *Inform ourselves about scapegoating history and sexual abuse*
  - *Use gender inclusive language*
  - *Support women leaders, especially in church*
  - *Instill confidence in girls about their societal value*
  - *Listen to women of color*
  - *Expose political organizations promoting gender order*
  - *Support organizations like Christians for Biblical Equality and Baptist Women in Ministry*
  - *Pray*
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 7

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, forgive us for ignoring and oppressing both the infirm and the poor. Open our eyes to our failing to follow your Son's lead, and compel us to provide the support you expect from us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 7 – The Poor and Infirm in the Christian Past**

- In what ways have you witnessed the scapegoating of the poor or infirm?
- [103] Can you remember childhood experiences which underscore Girard's observation that children innately "pick off the 'weakest' member of the herd"?
  - What were the characteristics of the childhood victims?
- Bashaw discusses the early church caring for the sick as opposed to the pagan practice of exiling them.
  - She then highlights the turn the church has taken to scapegoat the infirm
  - How do you see our church today falling into this trap? *Example: seeing disability as a punishment from God for sin which requires repentance for healing*
- Read Deuteronomy 28:15-29
  - What relevance do you find in these verses today? *Serves as a contrast with Jesus' ministry/message*
- Read John 9:1-5
  - What does this say about Jesus' approach?
- What other scripture passages come to mind when you think of the infirm and their treatment?
  - *Ten lepers healed by Jesus (Luke 17:11-19)*
  - *Crippled man lowered by friends through roof (Luke 5:17-39)*
  - *Blind men healed (Matthew 9:27-31, John 9:1-41, Luke 18:35-43, Mark 8:22-25)*
  - *Peter heals lame beggar (Acts 3:1-10)*
- [105] "the point of Jesus's healing ministry was not to place blame on someone for his or her illness but to communicate that the whole community suffers from wrong choices and priorities. Sickness is a result of the fallen state of humanity; all creation is to blame, not the individuals with infirmities."
  - What do you think of Bashaw's point here?
- What are your experiences with "faith healing"?
  - How might this practice be damaging?
- Bashaw parallels the church's treatment of the poor with its treatment of the infirm – at a point pivoting to only helping those deemed "deserving" as opposed to "lazy."
  - In a capitalist society, we continue to struggle with this segregation of deserving from undeserving poor
    - When have you seen the church fall into the same struggle?
    - What are your experiences with the "prosperity gospel"?
- [115] "People who aspire to wealth or value their lives of comfort usually do not dismantle systems that would benefit them. They also tend to have less compassion for people with economic needs."
  - To what extent does this statement apply to you?
  - How do we combat this selfish tendency?
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 8

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, help us to affirm the infirmed in our midst and show us how we can apply your healing grace to disability in our community through compassion and inclusion. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 8 – Jesus, Illness, and Disability**

- [117] Bashaw notes that the majority of sermons, devotionals, and curriculum rarely touch on healing.
  - Has that been your experience?
  - Why do you think this might be the case?
- What disabled historical figures come to mind? *FDR, Stephen Hawking, Helen Keller, Michael J. Fox, Stevie Wonder*
- What friends come to mind?
- Do you see any character traits that these disabled persons have in common?
- To you, what are the most meaningful or impactful of Jesus' healings? Why?
- [120] Bashaw discusses the danger of labeling people by their illnesses or disabilities, something done in Mark's Gospel.
  - How has the lack of these names influenced your reading of the Gospel?
  - [122] Does this agree with Bashaw's claim that this focuses the stories on Jesus' compassion and inclusion?
- [127] What is your take on exorcisms...
  - Superstitious explanation of illness?
  - Literal possession by demons?
  - Something else?
- Read Mark 5:1-20
  - What strikes you about the possessed man?
  - What strikes you about the demon?
- [137] Jesus' physical touch in healing is one of inclusion and compassion.
  - When have you witnessed such physical inclusion and compassion?
- Read Mark 2:1-12
  - What message do you draw from Jesus' action being motivated by seeing "their" faith?
  - [141] *Bashaw notes that this story breaks the connection between sin and sickness since the man is healed of each in separate commands.*
- Read Mark 8:22-25
  - Why do you think the blind man's healing is in two stages?
    - What do you think of Bashaw's explanation that it is intentionally sandwiched between his disciples' demonstrated failure to see, despite brief moments of awareness (Peter's answer that Jesus is the Messiah)?
- [149] "Mark has highlighted the model responses of those whom Jesus healed"
  - Peter's mother
  - Gerasene man
  - Woman who touches Jesus
  - Two blind men (2-stage healing in Bethsaida and beggar Bartimaeus)
  - Have you witnessed similar responses to healing?
- [151] Bashaw outlines our call in dealing with illnesses and disabilities:
  - Bring awareness and affirmation
  - Participate in their healing (especially treating disability as a community problem)

- Integrate them into our communities
- Provide practical examples of how you've seen each done, or how you envision them being done.
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 9

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord, open our minds to the plight of the poor, and help us to fight against their oppression. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 9 – Jesus and the Poor**

- How would you define being poor?
- [158] Bashaw cites ~90% of people in the Roman Empire were “barely surviving” or “suffering” poor
  - What percentage of the US live below the poverty line? *11.1% in 2023 as measured by the federal government as income less than need. 18% in 2025 using Global measure. Highest poverty rate among 26 most developed countries.*
  - What percentage of Africa live below poverty line? *Ranges from 4.8% (Morocco) to 82.3% (South Sudan) with the majority of countries above 40%.*
  - *We're not as poor as those in Jesus' time.*
- Matthew 5:3 – “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”
  - What do you draw from this verse?
- Do you have any reflections on Bashaw's interpretation of The Beatitudes from the disciple's perspective?...
  - *Poor in spirit had more potential to recognize God's work in Jesus*
  - *Mourners experienced the comfort of the divine presence*
  - *Righteous will witness justice*
  - *Merciful make forgiveness, mercy, and love their daily language*
  - *Pure in heart show loyalty to God's priorities*
  - *Peacemakers act this way during conflict*
  - *Persecuted keep their eyes on the kingdom rather than suffering on earth*
- What are the teachings of Jesus which come to mind when you think about money?
  - *Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*
  - *Widow's mite (two copper coins)*
  - *Three servants entrusted with 5, 2, and 1 talents*
  - *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's*
  - Which of these teachings on wealth do you find the most challenging?
  - How would you put the gospel message about money into your own words?
- Read Luke 12:16-21
  - What is the lesson for you?
  - How do you balance saving up for a rainy day with providing for the poor?
- [174] Bashaw highlights the “reversals” Jesus preaches in Luke 14, and then discusses Zacchaeus and the poor widow putting in two coins at the temple.
  - Do Jesus' teachings strike you more as:
    - Less applicable to our American cultural context, or
    - Commentary on how our cultural ideals are backward
  - How does a capitalistic society embrace Christian ideals?
- [183] James Truslow Adams coined “the American dream,” but observed “the way that goal had been interpreted and attained throughout American history caused a reversal of equal opportunity and resulted in a betrayal of just and egalitarian ideals.”
  - How do you see the American dream at odds with the very equal opportunity it preaches?
  - How does scapegoating of the poor factor in here?
- 5 Objectives of MLK's “Poor People's Campaign”

- 140 million poor are no longer ignored
  - Non-partisan moral fusion movement to build power and activism
  - End systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism, and religious nationalism
  - Challenge the lie of scarcity amidst abundance
  - Vision that poverty can be abolished
- 
- Where do you see our biggest failures and successes are with these objectives?
- Other reflections?
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## Chapter 10

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord, keep us from adopting practices that isolate and cast blame on those who are not “like us.” Help us to recognize and combat this behavior in others. In Christ’s holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 10 – Outsiders in the Christian Past**

- Who were the “outsiders” when you were growing up?
  - Were you an outsider yourself? If so, what put you in that category?
- [194] Bashaw points out that Jews were scapegoated as Christianity separated from Judaism
  - To what extent does this scapegoating persist today?
  - Do you witness Christianity today as blaming Jews for Jesus’ death?
    - Is there something more recent for which they are blamed?
- How do you explain the contradiction between historical Christian scapegoating of Jews and current Christian support for Israel?
- [196] Jews were accused of abducting, killing, and drinking the blood of Christian children.
  - What parallels do you see with modern-day QAnon [cannibalistic child molesters running a global child sex-trafficking ring]?
  - Why do people fall for these fantasies?
- Other reflections?

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# Chapter 11

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus. Help us embrace his example of reversing the roles of outsiders and insiders in our society. In His name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 11 – Revealing and Reversing the Scapegoat**

- [201] Bashaw describes Matthew's "fulfillment motif" with several parallels between Jesus and Moses. [optional] See if people remember the Jesus parallel when given the Moses story below:
  - Moses escapes Pharaoh / Jesus escapes Herod
  - Parting of the Red Sea / Parting of heavens at Jesus' baptism
  - 40 years of wandering / 40 days of fasting
  - Sermon on the Mount / Ten Commandments
- What impact, if any, does this parallelism have on you as a modern-day Christian?
  - Do you agree with Bashaw that they depict the kind of welcoming community that Jesus came to form
- When you think of the Gospel stories, what are the ones that come to mind where Jesus welcomes outsiders?
  - *Samaritan woman at the well*
  - *Zacchaeus*
  - *Good Samaritan*
  - *Little children*
  - *Centurion's servant*
  - *Canaanite woman's daughter*
- *Observations on Matthew's genealogy*
  - *14 generations each, starting with Abraham, David, Babylonian exile, respectively*
    - *14 = David's name in Hebrew numerology (D+V+D or 4+6+4)*
    - *Sandwiches David in between two periods of Hebrews being outsiders*
  - *Women referenced (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, wife of Uriah, Mary)*
    - *All outsiders except for Mary*
  - *Interesting because Matthew was primarily written for Jewish Christians*
- What things have you read that encourage American Christians to be more welcoming of outsiders?
- Bashaw spends a good part of this chapter describing how Jesus came not just to save us, but to turn the world upside down.
  - How has Jesus turned your world upside down?
- In what ways did the church positively and negatively react to COVID?
- [214] "...Trump is a master at creating scapegoats"
  - What scapegoats have you seen him create?
- Other reflections?

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## Chapter 12

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, help us to see “outsiders” as you see them. Thank you for accepting us just as you accept them. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

- **Read John 4:1-30,39-42 as a script**

- Volunteers read the parts of Jesus, the woman, and the narrator
- Skip the small phrases which indicate who is speaking (e.g., “The Samaritan woman said to him” and “Jesus answered her”)

- **Chapter 12 – The Woman at the Well and Jesus**

- [219] Bashaw points out that John 4’s story of the woman at the well is Jesus’ longest conversation
  - What is most significant about this to you?
- Samaritans were enemies of Israel whom Jesus frequently portrays as heroes
  - Who might be branded as modern-day Samaritans?
- How does the suggestion of Jesus also being an “outsider” change the way you view the story?
- How would you characterize the Samaritan woman?
  - [229] Bashaw notes that negative connotations of the Samaritan woman are misguided as she would not have been the initiator of her divorces nor the reason she wasn’t married
    - How does this change the way you view the woman, and her treatment by Jesus?
- Why might Jesus have chosen this conversation as the only time to reveal his Messiahship in John’s Gospel?
  - What elements of conversation prompt \*you\* to reveal personal details?
- [235] Bashaw parallels the Jewish-Samaritan dynamic with Christian-Muslim, especially after 9/11.
  - Do you see this divide widening or narrowing?
  - What could help us bridge this divide?
    - Could the church play a role here?
- [239] What reforming theses, ala Martin Luther, might you nail to the door of our church?
- [241] *God works through us much more easily when we choose humility over pride and confession over condemnation.*
- Other reflections?

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References for material:

- [Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims](#)  
(page numbers from the text are noted in brackets [#] preceding quotes or relevant passages; note that e-book page numbers can differ from hardcopy books, but should be close)
- [Scapegoats: Small Group Study Guide](#)

*Italics* imply important points or example answers the leader can convey

## Chapter 13

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, help us to be more sensitive to the historical and contemporary struggles of our Black neighbors. Help us to embrace all your children in love. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 13 – Simon the Cyrene and the Black Scapegoat**

- *Mark 15:21 – “A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.”*
- *Cyrene was in northern Libya so Simon was African*
- What has your impression always been of the man who carried Jesus' cross?
- [246] Bashaw proposes that Mark included this Simon as a “closing parenthesis” to Simon Peter's failure to accept Jesus' mission.
  - Why do you think he was included in the story?
- Bashaw discusses Mark's political undertones, and the emphasis on non-violent resistance
  - Do you think non-violent resistance is still an effective tool today? Why or why not?
- What resistance to Black oppression have you personally witnessed in your lifetime?
- [252] Bashaw notes the importance of Simon the Cyrene in the Black Church as he exemplifies their conscription and oppression
  - Why might American slaves have been drawn to Christianity (besides those who were forced to convert)?
- What experiences do you have with Black churches?
- [255] *Bashaw points out that black scapegoating was rooted in the three deadly sins of colonialism: greed, lust, and envy. The white colonists projected their own sins on Blacks and sent them out into slavery.*
- Where are the most prevalent situations you see Blacks as being oppressed today?
- [259] *Historians proposed several reasons for why Christians didn't stand up against lynching:*
  - *Nascent Fundamentalism that focused on violent theology of the cross [what is meant here?]*
  - *Nationalism over love of neighbor*
  - *Family tradition*
  - *Cultural pride*
  - *Ignorance of Jesus' message of peace and liberation*
  - *Christians had become expert scapegoaters with other outsiders [added by Bashaw]*
- In what ways do you see parallels in slavery of yesterday and mass incarceration of Blacks today?
- [263] “The appeal of color-blindness is that it projects as moral what is not; by refusing to see and act on the reality of continued discrimination, the color-blind can project themselves as above the fray, unsullied by manipulations of color.”
  - How have you witnessed this?
- [267] “The cross represents the power that denigrates human bodies, destroys life, and preys on the most vulnerable in society. As the cross is defeated, so too is that power.”
  - Does this add perspective to your view of Jesus's crucifixion?
- Other reflections?

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# Conclusion

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, as we close our study of *Scapegoats*, help us to retain what we've learned and to put our insights into practice as we make amends for society's and our personal scapegoating of others. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Conclusion**

- Read John 11:45-53
  - [272] Clear call to scapegoat Jesus
  - How would you characterize Caiaphas in this situation?
    - Why does he say "You know nothing at all!"? Isn't he taking the same position as the people?
- As you hear the passion story each Good Friday, what examples of "mimetic contagion" come to mind?
  - *Judas turning against Jesus*
  - *Peter's 3-fold denial*
  - *Chief priests and elders stir up the crowd to free Barabbas*
  - *Soldiers mocking Jesus*
  - *Passersby hurling insults at Jesus on the cross to save himself*
- How do you think early Christian converts reacted to the Gospels' emphasis on Jesus being innocent?
- [276] "Jesus willingly becomes a scapegoat to draw attention to the scapegoaters; he submits to death on a cross to draw attention away from the scapegoats [women/disabled/outsideers]."
  - How successful do you think Jesus is in each of these aspects?
  - How does Jesus's dying as a scapegoat align or conflict with the traditional Christian view that he died to take away our sins?
- [277] Bashaw notes that after his death, Jesus entrusted his mission to societal scapegoats – first to women and then to poor fishermen and outcasts.
  - How does this impact your perspective on the Christian faith?
- Bashaw closes with the need to recognize our alignment with the powers who scapegoat and that "Jesus's work on the cross, then, does not save us from God's wrath or Satan's control; it saves us from ourselves."
  - In what ways have you fallen into scapegoating?
  - How can or have you attempted to free yourself from this practice?

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