

What Would Jesus Cut?

Sojourners, under the leadership of Jim Wallis, is challenging current budget proposals from the House GOP and the White House by raising the question, What would Jesus cut?

It's hard to imagine Jesus as President, or Congressman. The American people would never elect someone who called for love of enemies and rejected the use of violence.

But Jesus was an astute commentator on human affairs, especially as reflected in various economic arrangements. Moreover, insofar as you can tell what really matters to people by consulting their checkbooks, you can also tell what sort of a government we've got by its fiscal and spending practices. If Jesus had any say today, I'm confident he would make some very different cuts from those Obama and the GOP have proposed.

To begin with, he would slash the monstrous military budget – which, by the way, counts for about half of all discretionary federal spending. We cannot come close to balancing the budget without cutting military expenditures to rationally defensible levels. If Egypt can move toward democracy despite our thirty years of lavish support for Mubarak's repressive torture regime, think how much we might save by shutting down our 700 plus military bases in other countries, closing out our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and getting out of the way of other peoples yearning to be free.

I know, it's not that simple, we cannot just abandon other countries to their own messes and those we've imposed upon them. And we would run the risk of losing access to cheap resources, cheap labor, and cheap food, if we gave up our political-economic-military hegemony. But nobody ever said that Jesus' way was easy.

It's hard to say what else Jesus might cut. Certain healthcare costs excepted, we're hardly overspending on those goods and services needed for health, welfare, and safety. Oh, he'd surely cut back on prisons and put the money into jobs programs, addictions services, mental health, child welfare, and the like. He decidedly would not continue cutting taxes on the wealthy, who are now getting a lot more out of the system than they are putting back.

The GOP wants to cut spending where it will hurt the most and do little to improve our human lot. Obama's proposals aren't quite as bad. But the only people being called to make sacrifices are those on the margins, and those unborn. Woe be unto us!

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