



## Grain

“He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’” John 1:20

## Field

“The desire for one’s own honor hinders faith. One who seeks one’s own honor is no longer seeking God and neighbor. What does it matter if I suffer injustice?” -- Dietrich Bohoeffler, *Life Together*  
**Submitted by Rev. Susan Schneider, Madison, WI**

## Thoughts

Recently, I watched the movie, *Silence*, based on Shusaku Endo’s novel. I was reminded of when I lived in Japan how well known Endo was as a Catholic who described his country as a swamp, where ideologies could mix together and lose their identities. As many Japanese Christians, he struggled being a part of a minority religion. Did Christianity blend in and lose itself in other religious beliefs and philosophies in the East? When has Christianity been so entrenched in one culture that it was too rigid to reach people in new countries where it was introduced?

Later in life Endo wrote, *Deep River*, a novel about a group of Japanese tourists visiting India. One of the tourists was a woman who was cynical about religion but also was grappling with her own emptiness. She encountered an old classmate, now a Catholic brother, whom she used to make fun of in college. He was a gentle person and an easy target with few friends and a foreign god. During their encounter, he told her that when people go to die by the Ganges River, the dead bodies are gathered to take to a funeral pyre, but the bodies of the poorest are often left behind. He made it his job to carry the bodies of the poor to the pyre so they could have their proper Hindu ritual. Many thought he was Hindu, even an outcaste. “But the river accepts all. I’ve decided that my god lives in all religions not just European faces, but in Buddhism and Hindu faces.” What an interesting shift in Endo’s writing.

One of my mentors said, “We understand the great religions of the world by deepening our own faith.” There is a time to be with our own spiritual communities and a time to experience humanity in a stream of diverse beliefs and practices. However, turning our attention to the present world, there is never a right time for purifying society of all religions except our own just as there is never an appropriate time to take away rights of people because of their race, ethnicity, class, abilities, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression in an exercise of exclusion and superiority. None of us are gods. Be alert! Find your identity in bearing witness to our God who is greater than us all. John confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” John’s words laid the beginning of a path of love beyond what he could organize or imagine for himself. Happy Monday!

## Prayer

Highly recommended.

## Share

Send any quotes you'd like to share with our network to [cindyc@loppw.org](mailto:cindyc@loppw.org)

All Monday Quotes found under the Resources & Advocacy Tools tab at [www.loppw.org](http://www.loppw.org)

Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy