



Grain

“Faith in a holy cause is to a considerable extent a substitute for the lost faith in ourselves.” Eric Hoffer
Submitted by Pete Gasper, North Readfield, WI

Field

“7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’”
Mark 6:1-111

Thoughts

When talking about Karl Marx’s criticism of religion being “the opium of the people,” a religion professor I had in college pointed out that we can learn from our critics. It made me wonder, when is religion like a drug that cradles us outside of reality? When is it a healthy path toward living in truth? The intellectual and writer, Eric Hoffer, was not exactly the same type of critic that Marx was, but he recognized how we can lose ourselves in a cause as a result of losing faith in ourselves. I would add, putting all our faith in a cause can lead us to forgetting ourselves and need for reflection.

I personally have witnessed the temptation to lose oneself in a cause, without reflection, more in the secular world. A political party, charismatic community organizer, or a mission can consume a group’s focus so that we excuse bad behavior (of some), are quick to judge, and we stop listening to others and to our own hearts. The drive for perfection in these settings runs high, but lifting someone besides God up as perfect can be like taking a drug that will leave us crashing at some point. This happens in religious movements too; the ones that crusade to exclude others in the name of God, backed by legal sanctions, seem particularly addictive and laced with self-forgetfulness.

I love the faith-based advocacy we’re involved with because in constantly reminding others, I remind myself that God is at our center; we don’t have to take ourselves and our mistakes dead seriously. We are vulnerable and in need of God’s grace as well as one another in this work. In Mark’s text we find a curious thing about discipleship; it involves the disciples’ reliance upon hospitality. Jesus sent the twelve into the world with instructions about staying in other people’s homes; that means they wouldn’t be completely in charge. Maybe the love through humility and reciprocity they’d experience as guests were ingredients for a healthy religion. Being drawn to a cause in response to God’s expansive love for us, is another one of those ingredients. Just a few things to remember as we lift our voices boldly and quietly, and if we forget, well, there is grace to bring us back. Happy Monday!

Prayer

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy