



Grain

“Being free is living in reality.” Shigeto Oshida

Field

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. 31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." 34 ..., "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Mark 8:27-34, 34b

Thoughts

Shortly after I started my call to the ELCA, I ran into a chaplain I used to work with. When I told her about LOPPW's work on anti-human trafficking, she surprised me with stories about her past as a foster mother for sex-trafficked girls. She mentioned that not everyone should attempt that kind of care. Welcoming deeply traumatized teens into one's home requires specialized skills. A look of grief formed on her face as she recalled a few girls she couldn't help. I marveled at how many youth she nurtured away from their former lives of abuse and with whom she still had contact as adults.

I remember the chaplain's story about one teen who had gotten away from her trafficker but went back to him. The average number of times a victim of sex trafficking returns to their trafficker is about the same as it is for spouses of domestic abusers. Many trafficked can't physically get away at all, and some who do, struggle to leave a life that despite the exploitation, has become ingrained and familiar. In the case of this girl, one time when she had a new opportunity to escape while she was literally sitting in the gutter, she said that she remembered Jesus. Her faith gave her an extra nudge to try to leave again. It wouldn't be easy emotionally, but the trafficker who claimed he was her family was a dead end. She didn't know where she would be going this time. Nothing was easy.

Perhaps the kind of God Peter leaned toward in Caesarea Philippi was a God of glory, one who was evident in a life of comfort. Jesus burst out, "Get behind me, Satan." We have a God present in the deepest of human suffering, promising new life and new community as we take a difficult path that may cause us to feel alone and on the outside for a time, but that is real. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly recommended.

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy