



Grain

“The quality of mercy is not strain’d...it is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

— William Shakespeare

Submitted by Deb Martin, Oshkosh

Field

“...13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; 16 I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." 17 So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored.” Acts 9:11-18

Thoughts

Ananais was right to question being called to engage with Saul, who had ravaged churches and then locked up the members. Saul approved brutal executions and even stood guard over the coats of the ones who martyred Stephen. I’m glad Ananais was at first reluctant; we don’t have to worry about his being drawn to people who were abusive in an exercise of wishful thinking to convince himself they would change. But do we need to be concerned that he wouldn’t be open to being surprised by how and through whom God could work? With faith in how he was being moved by Christ, Ananais went to Saul and greeted him as “Brother.” Scales fell from Saul’s eyes. Everything changed.

After Jesus’ resurrection there was still evil in the world, but also many signs of the resurrection that taught people about a particular way of suffering that resists evil. So much in our work as advocates and in other ministries is about disappointment and surprise as we work with people who can be vastly different than we are, and at times face antagonism.

As a seminarian, I did Clinical Pastoral Education on a forensic unit with men who were receiving psychiatric care rather than a prison sentence. I was warned that some of the guys were sociopathic and would try to manipulate me. It was a time to be on alert and occasionally confrontational. One day, a man who had burglarized and caused upheaval in a lot of people’s lives wanted to talk. His eyes were moistened and hands shaky. He had just been evaluated as not being mentally ill enough to remain, and was being transferred to prison the next day. “I’m scared.” He began to cry. This was real. We prayed in silence and then I said a prayer similar to many others I had before, but when I looked up at him his face was bright. He was still crying but with a look of calm and even a smile. God seemed to flow through him. There is a time to be on guard, and to be surprised. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly recommended.

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy