



Grain

"We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

—The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Field

1 Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you people from far away! The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. 3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Isaiah 49:1-2

Thoughts

The coffee shop was almost empty but my favorite comfortable chairs were occupied. Rats! I tried not to stare at them from the other end of the shop, where I sat a few feet from a young man. But after about five minutes the good chairs opened, and I dashed over for one of them. However, when I looked back at the young man, who happened to be black, a story I heard a black Lutheran pastor tell at a conference about 25 years ago popped into my mind. It was one of those stories that stays with you.

The Lutheran pastor talked about how his wife told him that she loved him before he left on a trip. When he sat next to a white woman on his plane, she asked if she could change seats. He kept thinking about what his wife had said about loving him. That and God's love carried him through his flight.

I wondered, Should I say something to that young guy? But my intentions weren't bad. Why should I bother? I just wanted one of my coveted chairs. And yet it felt right to go back over and say, "I didn't mean anything personal when I dashed off. It's just that those are my favorite seats. I was watching for one to open. I'm kind of obsessed." He thanked me, but I wondered if he was just being polite to an odd stranger who told him something totally unnecessary. A few minutes later, he bothered to walk over to express his gratitude again and chat. Haywood's hopeful attitude, which I'd later see was contagious, interrupted my uneventful day and sense of uncertainty about I how might have just annoyed him. I was grateful that he bothered. He then asked a barista to take a photo of us to post on his Facebook. That night, I easily found him on FB. I was surprised by the comments on his post about our encounter in the coffee shop. So many years after the black pastor's experience, here was this engaging young guy along with some of his friends still being impacted by the same history. A small example of how far we still need to go.

Why bother? Whatever my own intentions, we are ingrained in systems that have done great harm. But we are also part of a history in which we can build upon the goodness of God working through God's prophets. Hear the words of Isaiah reaching outward to community. As Isaiah, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. always harkened back to God and to his faith. And like the prophet, he would not see his dream fulfilled in his lifetime. Why bother? Or rather, what might we be graced to learn from one another? What results of our actions don't we ever see? Have faith. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy Crane