

## Monday Quotes



### Grain

“‘Believing’ entails making a decision about what kind of power is legitimate.” –Stan Saunders.

### Field

23 When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" 24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

### Thoughts

In the documentary, *The Social Dilemma*, tech experts who formerly worked for Internet and social media companies talk about how effective those companies are at directing us to data. Google can give people different search results for the same word according to where a person lives and what algorithms have determined will be appealing to a particular individual. If someone from another state and I type in the words “climate change” we might receive a completely separate set of links to click on to. Unlike a tool, such as Wikipedia that waits to be accessed, social media and Google demand and manipulate our attention. But I thought, don’t people operating social media have to make a living and ad companies need to sell their products? Afterall, we get a lot of helpful information online without paying for the platforms. However, as great of a tool the Internet is, there are hidden costs.

The film draws correlations between increased depression, anxiety, and self-harm among youth and the use of social media. And it also claims that fake news is clicked on to six times more frequently than real news. The goal is to get clicks, not to offer the most beneficial information. As a result, conspiracy theories and hate campaigns have recently grown via the Internet in ways that have disrupted nations. Some are saying, Wait a minute. So much power to influence is being wielded by small group of people and algorithms that have taken on a life of their own. Let’s pause.

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus points to the nature of divine power that is different than the kind exuded by a narrow group of people in his society. The elite elders and chief priests did not represent the people, but tried to manipulate them, as Saunders points out in *Working Preacher*. The authority of Jesus debunked powers that went too far in being self-serving and left others empty.

We’re always discerning power and demands on our attention. I’m not ready to give up social media, and appreciate the connections it provides. And if I wanted to judge people I’m not even sure where to point my finger, but wait a minute. What are ways social media influences youth to feel inadequate? How are we so divided? What if we had conversations about what we are pushed to click on? Differences cry for our attention. Increased tribalism seems to help a narrow group of people get richer. What are ways we can resist and love with a greater authority at our center? Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy