



### Grain

“Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount can balance their worth. Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; and those who fear the Lord will find them Sirach 6:14-16 (part of the Apocrypha scripture)

### Field

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit... Jn 15:9-16

### Thoughts

Many of us have been using social media to announce when we’ve been fully vaccinated as a way to encourage others to do the same. I posted about receiving my second vaccine last week. Quite a few of my FB friends had already done the same. Vaccines have been abundant in Wisconsin and throughout the U.S. But a friend from Tokyo commented, “I don’t know anyone around me who’s been vaccinated. Continue to stay safe.” I was surprised. Earlier in the pandemic, we supported each other virtually, oddly sharing the same threat over an ocean apart. Japan seemed ahead in taking precautions. Now, parts of the country are in their third emergency shutdown. Also last week, ELCA colleagues living in India discussed the devastating impacts of COVID in their country. The problem of vaccinations not being easily available, whether it is because of a country’s bureaucracy or lack of wealth, suddenly felt closer and the need for our world to work together, greater.

Jesus draws us into community with a vision of mutuality. He called his disciples "friends." The Book of Sirach (Wisdom) goes into details about the meaning of friendship. The writer warns us to test a friend and not trust too hastily. Be alert to those who are fickle and will betray you. So much can go wrong, but what great value there is in a faithful friend.

During the pandemic, which faithful souls have you drawn from your past and present for shelter? What new people have you noticed? Whose well-being have you mutually been concerned about?

The Gospels don’t go into details about friendship, but we see Jesus living out the ancient ideal of laying down one’s life for a friend, something a person with a different model of immersed in privilege would likely not have done for a subordinate. And yet Jesus didn’t have a flawless model for whom he called friend. He forgave those who denied and betrayed him.

There is immense grace in finding a friend in Jesus, who calls us to love one another. Happy Monday!

### Share

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy