



Grain

“We will heal only by rejecting the sacredness of that unsacred system (referring to the caste system).” –Rev. Chandran Martin

Field

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money^[a] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.... ²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,^[d] ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Mark 10:17-22; 30-31

Thoughts

The seeker of eternal life in this story was shocked when Jesus told him to give up his possessions. The man walked away grieved. Was his reaction a matter of math, of not liking the deal being handed to him? Subtracting from his possessions equaled inheriting eternal life in a quid pro quo deal with God? But I imagine his grief surfaced from a deeper place. Jesus challenged his worldview and way of being with God and his neighbor. We don’t know the details of the man’s life. We can’t tell if he followed all of the laws but simply happened to be a person of means, or if he consciously or without noticing used his wealth in a way that harmed others. Or perhaps he equated his material well-being with his standing with God. Regardless, the Kingdom of God wasn’t exactly what he thought.

When have you discovered that God’s love was not what you expected, or cherished truths were not completely true? Recently, Rev. Chandran Martin, ELCA Regional Representative for Asia, talked about how Indians have viewed the caste system as sacred. He gave an example of how recently a family of the Dalit Caste, the lowest caste in India, was charged for allowing their son to run into a temple. “Untouchables” are not permitted on certain sacred grounds. He discussed this in the context of a book study on “Caste,” led by Judith Roberts, ELCA Sr. Director for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. “Caste,” by Isabelle Wilkerson, draws analogies between the blatant caste system of India, Nazi Germany, and the visible and invisible lines drawn between races in the United States.

What is sacred and good? Jesus said only God is good; that was an equalizer. What are we investing into systems that elevate us above our neighbor? Jesus leans toward us with love, as he did to the man in the story, and helps us to realign our worldview when it is needed. The view God provides is always better, always richer. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy