



## Grain

There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard. –Arundhati Roy  
Submitted by Vernita Kennen, Roseville, MN

### Fields

9Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest<sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.<sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"<sup>5</sup> He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."<sup>6</sup> But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."<sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.<sup>9</sup> For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.<sup>17</sup> 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."<sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored... Acts 9:1-6; 8, 9, 17, & 18

### Thoughts

At a Bible camp where I would take confirmation students, the counselors led a very compelling game in which the youth would pretend they were early persecuted Christians escaping their oppressors, "the authorities." They strategized together and dashed around hiding as though their lives were in danger. The game seemed to create quick bonds. The injustice of their forced hiding was clear and the need to help one another, urgent. Years later, I worked with a Jewish woman who said that as a child she and her friends played a game in which they pretended to flee from the Nazis. People from other religions could have similar stories.

What is it like to be hunted because of your religious identity? When reading the story about Saul on the Road to Damascus, we may also ask what it is like to be the villain of our own story. As part of the majority in power, Saul breathed threats against people of the Way, a minority movement. Unless he was an all-purpose bully, Saul may have been civil in most circles but gave himself permission to feel contempt for the followers of Christ. That is what bullying can be, targeted contempt, even if the one bullying is decent and kind to everyone else. But something remarkable happened. Paul realized that embracing whatever lies he had to fuel his murderous behavior was also showing contempt for God. His conversion from exercising violence to embracing love was a public reversal. Followers of the Way, such as Ananias, perhaps were tempted by cynicism. Could an enemy really change?

Many of us wish Martin Luther would have had an additional grand conversion after the one that taught him about grace. If only he would have had a road-to-Damascus experience to lead him away from his contempt for Judaism. We face that painful history even though we cannot change the past. Which scales need to fall from our eyes in our own generation? At times, we may forge ahead thinking we know all the answers and who the villains are, and then are paused by grace, another way. Seeking justice, we stumble on a road where our vision is blurred and a time for reconciliation seems out of reach, but also where the beautiful is possible. Happy Easter season! Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy