



Grain

“A contemplative posture faces reality and sees the presence of God.” –Richard Rohr

Field

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. ²¹After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. Luke 2:15-21

Thoughts

The Christmas story is particular and cosmic. Our Biblical characters were drawn to a concrete place, Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth. Shepherds journeyed in response to agents of God directing them. They were so deeply moved they had to proclaim publicly what they had witnessed. Mary responded with contemplation, pondering everything about God immersed in their small setting in her heart.

The child born would have a divine connection, being named Jesus, meaning Yahweh saves, but he would be raised in a very specific culture and religion. Jesus was circumcised as a Jewish boy. When engaging with the tension between the vast universality of God and God’s working in concrete history, Christians have sometimes diminished the Jewishness of Jesus and his family and disciples. Instead, the Jewishness of those who crucified him, though Romans killed him too, has been the focus. Of course, the people who stayed with Jesus, the ones who repented after deserting him, and those who betrayed and killed him were all from the same small geographical area. So it is kind of remarkable that we would pluck out the cultural and religious background of some and not others in the life of Jesus. Throughout history, attaching theological truth to what we decide to notice and not notice about the Gospel characters’ ethnicity has often made life dangerous for our Jewish neighbors.

As we continue to celebrate the birth of joy and freedom into our world, let us resist diminishing or exoticizing anyone in the name of God. May we all experience and respond to the love of God immersed within our settings. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy