



Grain

“Do not make a religion out of your better moments.
–Jacob Needleman’s quote of an Eastern Orthodox priest

Field

17Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” Matthew 17:1-9

Thoughts

Have you ever visited a beautiful area and wondered how much it would cost to live there? Let’s say it is a remote place in the mountains or deep in the woods near a lake where you ventured off to when you needed to let go of stress. Like Jesus, you moved from a crowd, where misunderstandings were starting to fester, to a handful of people you interact with daily, to a few people with whom you leave town. Your thoughts calm and focus on what is important beneath the noise. It was wise to get away. You meditate, pray and spend time with a few family members or friends. You are graced with a sense of God’s presence. And then you wonder what it would be like to build a cabin nearby. But if you did that, would the mosquitos start bothering you after a while? And what about the community?

In one of her books, Kathleen Norris talked about how, as a Protestant, she gained a lot from taking retreats at a local monastery. One time, she asked a monk from her ideal spiritual oasis what the most challenging thing was about living there. He responded, “Other monks.” Indeed, the monk may have felt called to be there, but not as an avoidance of his humanity, or he would have left.

When the disciples experienced not only a view from a mountaintop but a brilliant physical glimpse of God’s presence in the world through Jesus, they had reason to want to stay. I imagine they profoundly benefited from recalling the transfiguration as a spiritual exercise and prayer. But the mountaintop was not where they were called stay. Just as they would have found imperfections on the mountain, they would experience God’s presence in the valley of human relationships, where we deny, betray, get hurt, and are also forgiven and seek justice for our neighbors.

Wherever we are called to dwell or move around at a particular time in our lives, Jesus gives us glimpses into God’s presence in our moments removed from our daily lives, and also in the thick of the world where Jesus died and resurrected. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy