



Grain

“Everything is Grace. Our salvation is Grace. Our holiness is Grace. Giving us Grace, He bestows on us more than what we merit.”
–Pope Francis

Field

⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty....

Thoughts

We don’t hear much about dialogue between religions before the modern age. Even in recent centuries, when leaders from various religions sat down to learn from one another, it could be with competitive, superior attitudes, especially when the dialogue revolved solely around doctrines. In the 1960’s in Japan, a handful of Christians and Zen Buddhists began exploring dialogue based on experience. For example, they asked if there was any common ground between deep silence in Buddhist meditation and the stillness in Christian prayer? How does our shared humanity lead us to advocate for a better world? Dialogue is exciting, but there can be the temptation to find common ground by naming aspects of each religion as being the same when they may not be, or of losing the identity of one in the other. Finding respectful ways to be in dialogue with other religions or even within Christian denominations or Lutheran synods can be an exercise in deepening our own faith, and deepening our own faith can help us to understand other religious perspectives.

Jesus engaged people from religious sects other than his own. His longest conversation in the Gospel was with the Samaritan woman at the well. She is part of a religious sect that claimed to guard the real meaning of the Torah. From the Samaritan’s perspective, the Jewish people minimized the significance of the holiness of Mt. Gerizim and made the mistake of building their temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish people also held a superior posture toward the Samaritans. Jesus begins his conversation with the woman by acknowledging her personal experience. He helps her to recognize what she really thirsts for. And then, without demanding she abandon her culture or religious sect, he asks her to broaden her vision of how the Spirit works. Before meeting Jesus, she likely would not have imagined an encounter with a Jewish teacher at all, or that such an encounter would shower her with grace. She didn’t interfere with that grace by debating over Mt. Gerizim. For that moment, the place at the well was holy. Where might it be holy for you next? Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy