



Grain

“Love is what we long for and were created for—in fact, love is what we *are* as an outpouring from God—but suffering often seems to be our opening to that need, that desire, and that identity.”

—Richard Rohr, OFM

Field

⁵Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5:1-8

Thoughts

Several months into my internship, I was feeling distraught about a parishioner suddenly lashing out at me for not preaching against immorality, a subject we didn’t completely agree on. When I talked to my supervisor about it, he laughed and said, “That’s good for you. It’s Lent.” He had good timing, with a response that was playful and had lightened my mood. But his words also pointed to what’s basic about our faith. We more easily turn or are turned to the cross when we are unfairly judged, when our ego takes a hit, or when we experience other challenges.

“Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” These are beautiful words but not when they are misused. There is a thread of Christian thinking that celebrates suffering too much, that tempts us to feel guilty for not being happy when we are not happy, or that causes people to quietly endure abusive relationships and systems.

Paul, who was himself a bully at one time, spoke up to the Roman Empire and its bullying power. His own conversion and his voice countering the empire were connected to his dying to himself. He wasn’t saved by his perfection before or after his conversion or ability to change others, but by love. Jesus helps all of us to understand that our lives are about love, love, and more love. “Suffering often seems to be our opening to that need, that desire, and that identity,” and I would add, our action. What does that mean for you? Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy