



Grain

Christian nationalism “co-opts Christian language and iconography in order to cloak particular political or social ends in moral and religious symbolism.” –Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry

“Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America’s constitutional democracy.”
–Christians Against Christian Nationalism

Field

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Matthew 16:13-18

Thoughts by Rev. Jim Lynch, Town of Dunn, WI

We are in an identity crisis in this country within the 2,000-year-old Jesus movement. More accurately, we are in the midst of a battle for the heart and soul of that movement, a battle that we can’t afford to lose. Christian nationalism, which often overlaps with and is a cover for white supremacy, is pushing hard to co-opt Christianity for its own purposes that often run counter to what Jesus had in mind for his brothers and sisters, for the world that God sent him to redeem and change.

Identity questions are key in this passage from the gospel of Matthew and are possibly even more critical today. Jesus asks his closest followers who the people say that the son of Man is. In other words, am I reaching them? Is my message getting through? Where do we need to do more work? How can we help them get to where they need to be?

A prominent evangelical pastor, Russell Moore, a former high official in the Southern Baptist Convention, has said that parishioners in several congregations have challenged their pastors over Jesus’ teachings, including the central Sermon on the Mount, calling them “weak.” If key teachings from the founder and central figure of our faith, are seen as “weak,” then what is our answer to be when we consider the question who do people say that we are?

The ELCA, among other denominations, is working with Christians against Christian Nationalism to counter the idolatry of Christian nationalism, to reclaim the identity of the church as followers of the Jesus who fed and healed and loved, who made room for everyone, who did not seek earthly power, who never intended to use force or shame or belittlement or hatred in his ongoing fight with evil, the Jesus who identified with the least, the lost, the little, the last, whose identity, at the heart of it all, was wrapped in that of the needs of humanity. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Jim

For more, see www.ELCA.org and www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org