



Grain

“There is no time left for anything but to make peace work a dimension of our every waking activity. –Elise Boulding

Field

¹⁵“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”
Matthew 18:15-20

Thoughts

Is there room for Jesus in your troubled relationships? When responding immediately to harm someone has inflicted or strategizing ways to deal with problems in our families, congregations, and beyond is there room for Jesus? When we fail after doing everything possible to find peace with others or fumbling along imperfectly looking back at what we might have done differently, is there room for Jesus? What about when we succeed? Let us make room for Jesus in our individual and group Christian consciousness because Jesus is already in the room, and we need God’s help.

Christ is present when we are in the middle of conflict and also cares about our seeking reconciliation. In Matthew’s text, Jesus even offers a model for engaging with someone who has committed an offense against us; the approach can also be very useful for engaging with disagreements in general. Of course, the Gospel model for addressing another person’s harmful behavior isn’t a one-size-fits-all conflict resolution model, especially when power imbalances are involved. In the spirit of Matthew’s text, we explore ways to find reconciliation and justice.

Today is Labor Day. Some people are trying to rest not only from their labor, but from workplace tension caused by conflict, workplace bullying, or overt and covert discrimination. We give thanks for leaders in our history who have advocated for and implemented laws that help employees to voice grievances and experience fairness in the workplace. We know our advocacy is not finished.

I am not as tireless about peacemaking as Elise Boulding (the quote under Grain). But remember that where two or three are gathered amid the mildest and most tumultuous conflicts, there is Jesus. Whatever the outcome of our struggles, God graces us to do the holy work of following or creating models for seeking right relationships. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy