



### Grain

“In a world without caste, being male or female, light or dark, immigrant or native-born, would have no bearing on what anyone was perceived as being capable of. In a world without caste, we would all be invested in the well-being of others...”

–Isabel Wilkerson

### Field.

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” <sup>46</sup>Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” <sup>48</sup>Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” <sup>49</sup>Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” <sup>51</sup>And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” John 1:43-51

### Thoughts based on a Monday Quotes reflection from 2018

Years ago, on a Saturday evening, I was at a friend’s going away party in Minnesota. Someone sitting next to me mentioned she was from Madison. I told her that I grew up in Milwaukee until age 14 and then went to high school in Adams. She let out a gasp. “Can anything good come out of Adams?” The gasp was mutual. Really, you talk to people that way? John 1:46 was obvious to recall, but the passage felt distant. The woman next to me said her mother was writing about murders that had taken place in the town years earlier; that became our conversation focus. Now, you may wonder if this is turning into a convenient tale, but I swear that the very next day in church, the Gospel lesson was the one above. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” I laughed, feeling vindicated. When are we taking ourselves too seriously and limiting one another when we answer “No” to questions similar to Nathaniel’s? But it is more difficult to get to the laughter when we are trudging through barriers that we impose on one another and heap upon targeted groups over time.

Many churches will use St. John’s lesson next Sunday, the day before our nation commemorates the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a giant in breaking through systems of racism that the best of us have participated in without thinking. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Can anything good come out of groups of people who don’t fit the majority (for now) and have been discriminated against for generations? The No in response to the question is one that Dr. King and many others inspired our country and world to overcome. With the society we have inherited, we are still trying to change the No into a Yes, so that we may live in a nation in which all people “will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” But why is the No so insidious?

Isabel Wilkerson in her compelling book, “Caste,” talks about our country’s unspoken caste system that defines inherent inferiority. One of the eight pillars of the caste system she describes is that the system is part of divine will. We have several examples in history of the Bible used to justify slavery and group inferiority. The No is baked into our history. The lies of the No have been huge, but so have the efforts for justice and grace to counter it within and around us.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Yes. Come and see. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy