



## Grain

“My goal in life is to be endlessly altered.” –Holly Near

### Field John 3:1-3, 16-21

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.<sup>[a]</sup>” ... <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

### Thoughts

In the television series, “Succession,” Logan Roy, a wealthy CEO, overwhelms everyone in his path. His children are constantly entangled in their father’s world, trapped by his manipulation and their own obsession with his approval. Who would Roy choose to take his place someday? Each child competes for the prized position which is tied to their craving his affirmation. At one point, Roy sums up his philosophy saying that life is like the stock market and people are economic units. It is curious that later, when his children are in a picturesque spot in Norway for an extended period for business, no one comments on the scenery. What would another way of envisioning life put at risk? What was at stake not challenging their learned way of perceiving?

In the show, I liked the obviousness of the characters’ flawed world views; we don’t always have such clarity about our own lives. But also, whatever is in our bank accounts, who can’t relate to wanting someone’s approval and getting caught in unhealthy aspects of family and societal systems? Many young spiritual seekers find something missing in this sort of striving or materialism and search for a glimpse into God’s world. As we get older, we zig zag around trying to be faithful. We may learn to depend on God’s grace more deeply as we make mistakes. We can also gradually confuse God’s world with human systems without noticing it.

Nicodemus was a well-established religious leader, the sort of person positioned to impart wisdom while enjoying his status. He may have had a very good life, but something was missing. Did Nicodemus notice a yearning in his heart before witnessing the expressions of God’s love through Jesus, or did Jesus’ presence and signs stir in him that realization? However the light exposed the crevices in his life, Nicodemus was willing to risk looking like a seeker rather than someone established with all the answers, in order to engage with Jesus.

Jesus spoke about already belonging. “For God so loved the world he gave his only son.” But Jesus was that only son, challenging power structures that Nicodemus and his colleagues were intertwined with. Nicodemus must have been in a crisis. The darkness that the light shone upon and those rejecting it were close. When are they close for us? Later in John’s Gospel, Nicodemus is at Jesus’ crucifixion and assisted Joseph of Arimathea to take away Jesus’ body. Joseph was a secret disciple. Nicodemus had gone to Jesus at night. So much was at risk. In their crises, they could carry with them, “For God so loved the world...” Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy