



Grain

“It takes a rare thing, a turning point to free oneself from any obsession, be it prejudice or hate or even love.” –character from “Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson

Field

38Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:...⁴“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone ⁷when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? ⁸“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— ⁹when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, ¹¹and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped’? Job 38:4-11

Thoughts

Crises and tragedies interrupt our ordinary lives. A car accident, a tornado, a war, etc. can change almost everything. Job could be a book about how not engage with someone experiencing trauma, but also about turning points in our suffering. Job lost his family, health, and property. Why was a holy person of God experiencing such hardships? His friends offered disappointing answers that only exacerbated his suffering. Job continued praying. In chapter 38, there is a turning point in how Job viewed his suffering in light of a God greater than anyone's definition of the holy or their understanding of God's solidarity with us.

The novel, “Snow Falling on Cedars,” by David Guterson came to mind when recently reading Job. It is not a religious book but the main character, Ishmael, had suffered due to circumstances outside of his control. He eventually let go of a reality he couldn't alter. Ishmael was a white American in love with Hatsu, a Japanese American, with whom he grew up. The setting was in Washington during and just after WWII. They secretly became boyfriend and girlfriend as teenagers, but Hatsu was haunted by her mother's words, “Don't marry a white boy. Meet a nice Japanese.” Hatsu later ended the relationship. Ishmael internally repeated the words from her last letter while he was at war and lost his arm in battle. Before that, Hatsu and her family were sent to a Japanese internment camp. Injustice seemed everywhere.

Hatsu married a Japanese American man, but Ishmael still clung to her. Back home after the war, Hatsu's husband was charged with a murder. During the trial, anti-Japanese rhetoric was used to try to prove his guilt. Ishmael had evidence of her husband's innocence but held on to it the way he did to Hatsu. Ishmael finally revealed what he knew, also releasing his personal obsession. Justice was served in a community rife with anti-Asian biases. The older attorney, who defended Hatsu's husband, recognized Ishmael's suffering and invited him into his home after the trial. Showing Ishmael compassion, the attorney said, “It takes a rare thing, a turning point to turn to free oneself from any obsession, be it prejudice or hate or even love.”

When have we experienced turning points in our lament as we accept a reality that needs to be grieved rather than altered or judged? Job went through a long period of suffering. God was in solidarity with him all along, transforming his suffering in a way that would inform his future relationships of love and justice (read about how he treated his daughters as equals to his sons). Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,
Pastor Cindy