



Grain

“The work of God is in our hands. To ignore that is to ignore the very fullness of life. Every prophet contemplated the price of life. Every prophet contemplated the price of the risk and went on regardless, calling to the world to become its best self, and so must we.” –Joan Chittister

Field

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: 68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on^[a] his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a mighty savior^[b] for us in the house of his child David, 70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High... Luke 1:67-76

Thoughts by Reverend Peter Heide, Baraboo

When I was in seminary, one professor said, “When you are translating, do not forget to translate the names.” Note from this week’s Gospel lesson: Zechariah (God remembers), John (God’s grace), Israel (the one who wrestles with God), David (blessed), Abraham (father of nations).

I hope that we can see ourselves in Zechariah’s prophetic words. In what was a time of change, Zechariah denies the grace of God, choosing his own way, and finds himself unable to speak God’s words of hope and promise. It is not until God’s grace is fully recognized and Zechariah acknowledges God’s grace (John) in his midst that Zechariah is able to speak the words of his remembrance and proclaim that God has not forgotten the people who wrestle with God. Indeed, God is actively engaged in redeeming God’s people. God is showing mercy and remembering God’s covenant made with the father [sic] of the people who wrestled with God.

In these days of darkness and change let us lean on John and hear Zechariah’s words to him, the nascent grace of God, and to us as bearers of God’s grace, “And you child, will be the prophet of the Most High...to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins... [and] the dawn from on high will break upon us...”

This can only happen if we engage the wilderness work before us in these days in the portending shadows of death in Gaza, Israel, the Ukraine, Russia, Iran, Sudan, Lebanon, and wherever we may be. Let us proclaim the light from on high and Grace of God (God’s undeserved love) and the assurance of God’s mercy and forgiveness for all people advocating (speaking out) for rights of all people.

As we continue to wrestle with God in the world, let us also wrestle with laws of oppression. Let us speak against Christian Nationalism, against those who make Christ’s words and deeds of redeeming wholeness into judgment and division. Let us proclaim that we are not the one who saves but only point to the one who saves.

Fear, self-interest, and doubt make silence seem safe, but may we have courage to speak in our words and actions for Christ’s sake. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Peter