



Grain

“Jesus didn’t die because he wanted to die. He died because he wanted to live.”
–Dr. Carolyn Osiek

Field

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. John 12:20-26

Thoughts

“Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Does that mean Jesus hated his life on this earth? He spent years engaging with a wide variety of people, loving and healing, attending celebrations, and developing deep bonds. Earlier in the same chapter of our Gospel reading, Jesus had dinner with some of the people he was closest to, including Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. At dinner, Mary poured expensive ointment on Jesus’ feet and then wiped them with her hair. Human warmth and the scent of perfume permeated the room. Everyone’s life was filled with love, well, except for Judas. Judas was part of a larger group effort to contain Jesus’ voice and bring him down. In the verses immediately preceding our lesson, John said that when people learned Jesus was in town, a large crowd went out to see him and Lazarus. But the authorities wanted to kill them both.

Jesus seemed to relish life. Loving God, ourselves and others makes up a healthy spiritual life. But Jesus wouldn’t be able to continue as he was, confronting injustice and loving people beyond their label levels without being arrested and put to death. That was the reality. Let’s imagine Jesus found a way to not get killed. Wouldn’t he have needed to change who he was and the way he exercised power? I think he hated the self that clung to a fantasy of how things could remain or to a status forged solely by circumstances. He valued his identity grounded in the Holy, not bound by how he would be defined externally.

When is our core identity as people centered in God in balance or out of balance with our other identities based on our families, political parties, job titles, etc.? In the study on the draft social statement on “Civic Life and Faith,” the writers talk about mega-identities, which take political partisanship to new levels and are reinforced by social media. “The result is that loyalty to hyper-partisan identities becomes absolute.”

What kinds of shared identities influenced people to kill Jesus? Which ones drag us down today? We pray for the grace to always return to the core of who we are in relationship with God, which sometimes means dying to ourselves - a way of thinking or behavior. It’s all part of loving real life. Happy Monday!

Share

Send any quotes you’d like to share with our network to cynthia.crane@elca.org

All Monday Quotes found under the Resources & Advocacy Tools tab at www.loppw.org

Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy