



### Grains

“Yet the presence and promise of God’s reign makes the church inevitably restless and discontented with society’s continual brokenness and violence. We are called to work for a better world.” [Draft Civic Life and Faith Social Statement](#)

### Field

<sup>6</sup>“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup>for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup>I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. John 17:6-8; 12-15

### Thoughts

Imagine sitting close enough to Jesus to hear him pray for you and your protection from the world. That is what the disciples experienced. Jesus was getting ready to physically leave them. He prepared by taking actions such as asking the disciples to love God and one another and promising to send an advocate in the Holy Spirit, who would end up unleashing a new power to create church on Pentecost. Jesus also prepared by praying for his disciples’ protection from the world. But wait, I thought God loved the world. “For God so loved the world...”

Many people go through periods of bewilderment about how to engage with the world as a Christian; I have. Do we withdraw and only have Christian friends? Members of some religious groups limit their participation in civic life. Should church only be about worship? What about society beyond church walls? Jesus engaged with others in the thick of society. In the Gospel text, “the world” signifies everything dangerous and antithetical to Christian life. We find that same meaning for “the world” in several other places in scripture. But how to engage with society varies in scripture. In the Old Testament, we find divinely ordained leadership and also prophets intensely calling out the ones in charge. In the New Testament, government may be good in one place and referred to it as a beast in another. Jesus said to render unto Caesar what was his and to God what was God’s but also died as a political criminal.

If we go to verse 20 in the Gospel lesson, we find Jesus prayed not only for his contemporaries, but also future disciples. He didn’t pray that we be taken out of the world, but protected from what is evil. What do Biblical messages about the world, society, and government mean to us today? In an age of Christian Nationalism and out-of-control negative social media campaigns, let’s become clearer about how we as people of faith with Christ at our center engage with civic life. We have an excellent draft of a social statement on [Civic Life and Faith](#) to help us hold discussions and for which the ELCA is asking for your feedback. As people prayed for by Jesus and loved by God, how do you respond to the world? Happy Monday!

### Share

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Many blessings upon you,  
Pastor Cindy