

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 26, 2021

“For the one who is not against us is for us.” (Mark 9:40)

Jesus is moving out into the world, doing good, preaching, teaching, healing, and exorcising demons as his disciples move with him. If they are going to follow Jesus, they have to follow him in doing good. If any of you have genuinely tried to do good, you know that doing good is not just a matter of good intentions. Not only are we called to serve others in need, but we are to do good work in Jesus’s name. And the disciples of Jesus find out it can be a challenge.

Jesus’ disciples come to him saying, “We saw this unknown guy casting out demons in your name, and we told him to stop because he wasn’t one of us.” And Jesus responded, “Do not stop him. Even if he is not part of our little group, he’s doing good, and that’s good enough for me.”

Sometimes we find our good work seems not to be good because it is so “small.” It is not “big” like demon possession where even unknown exorcists could help with such a big problem.

Jesus is not only concerned about the needs of those closest to him. He came to save the whole world. He is concerned not just with what’s troubling our hearts, but also with what’s troubling our world. When we work on the world’s problems, when we think big and tackle huge challenges, we are seeing Jesus’ larger picture.

There are some spectacular encounters with demons. Jesus shows that he understands the mysterious and powerful forces of evil. Jesus does not just minister to individuals and their personal needs; he engages and overcomes evil in whatever way it shows up.

Jesus also calls his followers to minister in less dramatic acts of mercy like a cup of cold water offered to a thirsty person, a considerate phone call, or a caring text sent to someone who is having a rough day. We are not to belittle these small acts of kindness when they are offered in the name of Jesus.

Some of us are good at working in large areas of ministry. Others of us have gifts for the smaller and more personal gestures. Whatever gifts Jesus has given you to help others, use them for his glory. Let us move out into the world in his name to do his work in the world. Amen.

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