



Wednesday Prayer

6th Sunday after Epiphany – Accountable to Community

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.

Matthew 5:21-22

This Gospel moves from the grave sin of murder to sins of anger and insult as additional forms of violence against another. And then into broken relationships, objectifying another, and the commitments we make to one another as the community of God. I’ve always found this to be a very challenging Gospel, thinking of all the ways we hurt one another, break each other’s trust and fail to be compassionate.

I was listening to a radio program this week with a chief of police talking about the severe beating of Tyre Nichols by five police officers in Memphis, TN on January 7 resulting in his death. He spoke of how these officers did not see the humanity in their fellow brother. They violated the values of trust and compassion at the utmost level. I’m reading *Becoming Wise, An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* by Krista Tippett. In this passage she’s interviewing Buddhist preacher and scholar Joanna Macy, about the sense of grief in how we take in news. Joanna shares,

“that dance with despair, to see how we are called to not run from the discomfort and not run from the grief or the feelings of outrage or even fear. If we can be fearless, and be with our pain, it turns. It turns to reveal its other face. And the other face of our pain for the world is our love for the world, our absolutely inseparable connectedness with all life.”

We are in a time of so much fear and grief, seeing this play out in streets across the country, in young people’s lives, in families, in marriages, and in how we’re interacting with one another. Jesus seeks to bring us back into relationships of trust and compassion, living in communities of belonging and love for one another.

God we pray that our fear and grief can be turned toward love and connectedness with one another. May we see the humanity in all our siblings in Christ as we work to build safe communities for young people and all your children. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

**An opportunity to support our work in these winter months:*

Join us from wherever you are for a [Cherish All Children Winter Walk](#) anytime February – March! We’ll send you a Cherish All Children beanie or baseball cap with your donation of \$25 or greater, and you’ll be supporting our work to keep children safe from exploitation.