



Wednesday Prayer

Reformation Sunday – Truth Telling

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:31-32

In her book *Snake Oil: The Art of Healing and Truth-Telling* (2013, Jericho Books, New York, NY) the Rev. Becca Stevens, an Episcopal priest, writes a blend of memoir, the craft of healing oils, and a passionate theology of justice. She starts with her own story of abuse and need for healing, and how that led her to founding Magdalene, a community of survivors of trafficking, prostitution, and addiction. Thistle Farm is an accompanying business in which the women find healing and a viable means of support in making healing balms and lotions to offer for sale to others. All the oils are prayed over as they are blended, bottled and packaged. In praying for the healing of others, the women making them find healing for themselves. Their business name comes from the thistle, a prickly weed with a beautiful center that grows with tenacity in farm fields and the cracks of urban sidewalks, and symbolizes the choice to love the condemned and forgotten parts of creation.

Throughout the book, Stevens weaves in the importance of sanctuary, of being a safe place in which the women of the Magdalene community can speak their truth without fear of judgement, while also experiencing God’s grace, feely given. On page 44, she writes, “When we opened our first home and invited five women who had been on the streets or in jail for years to live there, we began with a premise that we wanted to be a witness to the truth that grace offered freely could heal some of the deepest of wounds of the world.” As the women heal through speaking their own truth, they also hear and experience the truth that will make them free.

Reformation, healing from the pains of the past, is not a day or event for an institution, but a journey for individuals, for every one of us. Reformation happens in layers of healing, when we both continue our own healing and offer healing to others. Reformation happens in layers of truth-telling when we can safely share our own truths as well as hear and extend the truth of the free gift of grace in all that we say and do. And when we continue in God’s word of grace, we will know the truth and it will set us free.

God of grace and reformation, we give you thanks and praise that you continue to gather the thistles into your community. As we heal, grant that we are also healers. As we speak our truths, grant that we speak and live out your truth of grace freely given to all who need to hear it. Amen.

Written by Kay Kinkel, MSW, LICSW, Behavioral Health Professional with LSS, member of the Cherish All Children Advisory Board, and a member of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa.