



Wednesday Prayer

7th Sunday of Easter

What about the girl?

As we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. Acts 16: 16-19

What about the girl?

Bishop Jessica Crist, Montana Synod, ELCA, asked this question in her Wednesday Prayer reflection on this lesson in 2016. I still wonder about this question, "What about the girl?" Do we ever swoop in thinking we can "save or rescue" without a plan for what happens next?

In this story, the girl is not given a name or an identity of her own other than "slave-girl." Paul intervenes to free her of her spirits, as she has been following him around for days annoying him. Now that she is of no use to her owners, what will happen next? It seems Paul did not consider her fate once her economic value was gone. We know the owners are angry, but the story doesn't go in this direction. We're left to reflect and think about how this might have played out then, and now in today's society.

We don't have to look far to see injustices all around us. In the work of prevention, we can step in early on to support young people, especially those who are marginalized or oppressed in our communities. For those who have been exploited, sold and trafficked, we can support organizations that operate with trauma-informed practices in place to bring healing and safety to individuals. We can lobby for legislation to fight against exploitation and trafficking. Find out how your state is doing passing laws to fight sex trafficking by going to Shared Hope International's Protected Innocence Challenge. And then determine how you will act to make a difference.

God, open our eyes to the full story of a person, that we don't rush in for what we think is a quick fix. Help us understand what it means to be free, and do the long-term work for lasting change. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.