



Wednesday Prayer

Baptism of our Lord Sunday – The remarkable power we're given

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. Isaiah 42:1-3

This weekend I visited a church, speaking with a group of deeply engaged adults concerned for the safety of children and youth in their families and neighborhoods. I shared tools for parents, grandparents, and other community members to engage with young people in their lives to support their healthy development, to help them stay clear of potential harm and exploitation. One woman shared her very real and serious worry about gang members standing outside her grandchild's school just waiting to recruit boys and young men. We talked about sexual predators recruiting young people at places they hang out, whether in person or online. The promises they make to fill whatever void may be in that young person's life.

How are we to combat that kind of power?

We remember that God's power is within us.
We are the servants.

"In the midst of those times when chaos is rampant, when we are weighed down by the forces that seek to destroy life as we know it, we need to accept the fact that we often are no more than "bruised reeds" and "dimly burning wicks." However, because of God's spirit that works through him, the servant will not be broken or quenched, rather he will faithfully continue his mission."¹

We continued our conversation talking about how each one of us can make a difference to fill a void in a young person's life that may make them vulnerable to exploitation or recruitment into a gang. It's not easy, and we may feel our wick is dimly lit compared to all the societal and cultural influences young people face. But staying present in the midst of all this, assuring them they are valuable and loved, is a remarkable power we have.

Dear God of power and grace, help us to stay present in the lives of young people, especially those who may be more vulnerable to exploiters or gang recruitment. When we feel powerless, remind us that through you we have been given the greatest power to be your servant, providing never-ending love and compassion. Amen.

¹Julianna Claassens, Professor of Old Testament, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa