

selfishness

Selfishness. I know...this is an odd word to read and talk about on the most celebrated and joyous days of the Christian year, but it is also a very important word. If you are like me, detecting selfishness in others is very easy. When someone is being small-minded, short-tempered or unreasonably demanding, it is not hard to accuse them of being selfish. And again, if you are like me, when I am the one being accused of selfishness, I respond with excuses of exhaustion, stubbornness or the need to "take care of myself". If we were all honest, I am sure we could think of ways we have acted selfishly, putting our needs above others, but this is not necessarily the kind of selfishness I want to talk about today.

The kind of selfishness I mentioned above was more about moments of being pig-headed and thick-skulled, but what I want to talk about is much harder to detect.

For weeks, both Jamie and Travis have been reading and preaching from Acts, often challenging us to be bold and courageous and making ourselves uncomfortable for the sake of the Kingdom, for the bigger story. They have been reminding of us of some crucial beliefs and practices that every Christian must carry with them, but I have to ask, do you really believe this story? Are you a true believer of the story of who God is and what he is doing in this world? Are you living in a story of sacrifice, purpose and character, or are you living a much smaller story, one that is only about yourself, your life and only made up of things you can see?

Being desperate for God's answers, timelines and definite maps, not wanting to put full trust in Him, having a faith based on results and even wishing for our old lives back, can be ways of living a smaller story and in selfishness. A life lived in the smaller story can be easily angered or disrupted, dependent on situations or others for happiness, and often resistant to even good change. I must admit, I spend a lot of time living a smaller story. In a story focused on my life, only the people I care about & already know and in the safety of who I have been, but I have recently realized this way of living feeds a self-focused and self-centered life that I do not desire. But this selfish way of living is hard to detect, because even while reading of miracles and prophets, praying fervently, sitting in church and begging for God's direction in life, if under those actions and intentions is a rocky layer of faithlessness, fear and selfishness, the true transforming power of the bigger story doesn't have a chance. (Niequist)

So let's make this our confession, that we want to live in a new way, a way we have always believed to be true, but have lost sight of temporarily. That we would be true believers of the gospels' "ultimate story that shows victory coming out of defeat, strength coming out of weakness, life coming out of death, rescue from abandonment. And because it is a true story, it gives us hope" in the bigger story (Keller, 230).

(In reflection of Niequist, Shauna. "A Smaller Story." Savor: 365 Devotions. 69. & Keller, Timothy. "After." King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus. 230.)