Scripture

Zechariah 7:8-11

8 The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying: 9 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; 10 do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. 11 But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear.

Questions for Reflection

1. In this episode, Chris Sikkema visits the Rev. Becca Stevens at Thistle Farms in Nashville, Tennessee. Thistle Farms is a nonprofit social enterprise dedicated to helping women survivors recover and heal from trafficking, prostitution, and addiction. The organization provides them with a safe place to live, a meaningful job, and a lifelong sisterhood of support, all based on the belief that love is the most powerful force in the world. For both those who give and receive in Thistle Farm programs, there is an aspect of “turning” involved. Each person must choose – within one’s own heart – to reorient one’s life around love, and to serve and receive from a place of forgiveness. When have you chosen to turn away from bitterness or defeat, and to turn toward love and forgiveness? What changed because of this turning?

2. “Turning” is not always easy. Becca makes the observation that no girl or woman lands on the streets or within an abusive situation all on her own – broken communities are involved, including broken families, broken churches, and broken people – which is why she believes that it takes healthy, whole, loving communities to welcome these women and help them heal. Becca says, “When the community can turn and provide the time and the space needed, it allows the women to be able to turn.” At Thistle Farms, they ask for the story of each person. Instead of asking, “What did you do?” they ask, “What happened?” When has a community that you have been a part of “turned” in order to bring about healing? What did you learn about turning from that experience? Have you ever benefited from a community helping you to turn? Share that story with someone this week.

3. As Becca states in her talk with host Chris, “Turning isn’t always starting something brand new. Sometimes, turning is simply living into something old and beautiful.” The Way of Love practices are all ancient; our faith ancestors have been practicing them for 2,000 years and more. These practices are meant to bring us closer to God and to each other. While we are not all called to create an organization like Thistle Farms, we are all called to forgive, to listen, to love, and to reorient our lives to the way of Jesus. This week, what is one action you can take to “turn”? Is there a conversation you need to have, a spiritual practice you need to dig into, or a behavior you need to reexamine?

Prayer

God of forgiveness, and mercy, help us remember that when we turn to you, we will find freedom, joy, and wholeness. Help us to choose each day to reorient ourselves toward your love, following Jesus, and accepting his gift of abundant life. May we share the practice of turning and forgiveness within the communities we have chosen, and the ones you are calling us into. Amen.