

Holding On and Letting Go  
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I'll be honest with you: a majority of the time, I don't watch the news. I sincerely cannot remember the last time I sat down on my couch and turned the channel to the news and watched it. I, like a majority of my peers, get most of my news from twitter. I go to the "trending page" and see what people are talking about and normally I can get the gist of what's happening because of the fact that people can only use 140 characters or letters to explain what's happened. There's no fluff—just the facts. Or at least that's what I tell myself, hahah.

And the longer that I've been on Twitter, the more I see people's names—famous, well known, all over the map people—people you probably love and adore—trending on twitter. And if they are, it normally means one or two things: they've either died or they're "being canceled."

What does that mean? Cancel culture is the idea of basically turning out the lights and boycotting someone's work, YouTube channel, movies, tv shows, etc, after they've said or done (or not said or not done) something that "the people of Twitter" (whoever they are) have seemed controversial or bad.

I'll admit it. It's fun. The gossip is juicy. You see someone's name trending and you click and sometimes it's their former assistant coming out and saying how bad of a boss they were. Or sometimes it's an old interview where they used a term we deem inappropriate now. Sometimes it's something so trivial that I roll my eyes at. Other times it's so serious that I feel the need to "cancel" them too.

This week, a bunch of white authors published a public statement denouncing cancel culture, where, as a reminder, we boycott someone in one big shaming swoop, deeming them and their work valueless. And if you are familiar with that letter, I don't agree with the victimization that that letter perpetuates where incredibly wealthy people complain about being "canceled."

But I do agree that cancel culture isn't the work of God. God calls us not to cut off relations with the people we disagree with, deeming them valueless, but instead calls us to disciple our enemies, to love them, to tell them to do better, and to help them on the road to becoming a better person, friend, and ally. As much as it feels good to "cancel" a racist, canceling them doesn't cancel racism. It's still alive.

So what do we do when someone in the public sphere messes up? I think this text speaks perfectly to today's culture of a quick cancel. The enslaved people in this story notice the wrong and call it out. This is the first difference. The people in power and privilege are not the ones to be pointing the finger, but we are to listen to the people who are the actual victims of what is being called out. If we are a person of privilege and power in this country, we should hear their voices of concern and calling out.

And then we should call them out. We should name them as weeds in our wheat. We should tell them that they are entangling our good crop. But instead of going in and pulling them out and losing our humanity, too, we should give them a chance to change. We should give them space to grow.

In 2016, I feel like I had a second awakening to the fact that there are, in many ways, two different America's. There's the America that I, as a white person live in. And there's an America that every other oppressed group in this country has to maneuver, plan, and strategize how to live in. I was talking to a friend of mine at the time, Melva, and I said: why don't we just get rid of all of them? All the problematic people in our government and

world, just pick them off and then we'd be good? Why is this happening? Why is racism popping up now in the public sphere? And can't we just wrangle up all the racists and put them out of power?

Melva said, you know sometimes you've been sitting lulled to sleep in the dark so long that things have gotten dirty. And now you've gotta turn the lights on so you can see the cockroaches. You know, sometimes you gotta let the crop grow so you can see where the weeds are.

I didn't know she was referencing this story but she was. I thought we could just round up all the "bad guys" and we would be back to this perfect world. And what I realized is that the good guys and the bad guys share the same roots. We all live in this soil that was built off of enslaved people and figures new ways to oppress people who are not white, cis, heterosexual, male, wealthy or any connection of two. We all participate in a bad system that we can't just root out the weeds and everything will be okay again. We are connected to those weeds by systems that my people created to keep certain people at the top and certain people at the bottom. And sometimes, even the weed and the wheat are the same person. In fact, I believe we each have a little bit of weed in all of us.

And so I have a problem with "cancel culture." I leave that judgement, the judgment that someone is so far gone that they are not worthy of reexamination or anything of their life or work is of value, I leave that to the balance of God's justice and grace. That's God's work.

But we are called to be like the workers of the field: to see the weeds and to call them out. To sit with our siblings and family members who we have deemed "too far gone" and be in relationship with them. To talk to them. To do the work of opening others eyes. To do the mission of Jesus Christ. To bring the kingdom of God just a little bit closer today.

We are so quick to create binaries: we love them. We love to label good and bad. Us vs them. Progressive vs conservative. Valued and worthless. Rich and poor. Smart and foolish. Safe and the bad side of town. Wheat and weeds.

But maybe God is telling us this morning that those binaries aren't helping anyone. And that we're more connected than we think. And to leave the judgment up to Her. And to get to work on what we're actually called to do: love. sure, that might mean a little tough love for some. but meeting each other's faults with our hearts before our shameful finger pointing, not turning our heads to injustice but meeting it with a dollop of grace before canceling a weed that is one of God's children on the road.