

March 13, 2022

2. Recognizing Other Disciples along the Way — **Mark 9:38-50, NRSV**

“Questions about our urge to pray for peace—or not”

On February 27—at the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine—our congregation hosted a community prayer service. We were shocked at the brutal violence unleashed on civilians by a powerful nation deciding to take over its neighbor.

It was right that we gathered. We felt spiritually compelled to plead to God for peace, for protection, for miracles to thwart violent leaders, for righteousness to prevail.

But we also had to confess. We had not felt called to pray together for other known and ongoing violent situations. As we gathered, organized terror and violence continued in Yemen, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Tigray, Nigeria, Mexico (cartel-related), Central African Republic, and the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. We also hadn't gathered to pray after thousands of deaths of so many of our Black and Brown sisters and brothers in the US by gun violence.

Checking our bias for spiritual impetus, I must also confess that the seed for this confession of our partiality of concern came from an online Russian disinformation source. It simply mapped airstrikes in the past 48 hours. Wikipedia documented the list of broader conflicts.

- Can we acknowledge a God-truth from such sources?

—Greg Bowman, GMBowman33@gmail.com

Looking back over world history, we find this thinking regarding colonization: “If I want it, I take it. The ends justify the means.” People whose lands were taken, who were displaced and erased, were People of Color. Why? Because of different lifestyles, methods of worship, and how their communities worked, wars ensued. But it is not so in God's view, where human flourishing looks so different.

The fake outrage, the media spin, the war in Ukraine is deceptive. I ask myself, *Why is it so traumatic when White people kill White people? Why is it so easy to dismiss the humanity of People of Color and take from them their land, their resources, and their culture?*

Adding the salt of righteousness leaves a flavor. The storm is *the fire that adds saltiness*. Those who follow the ways of God leave an aura and aroma. Can I always recognize the aura, the Spirit, the presence of God? I can only realize this when I set my sights to search for God.

- What do I do when others suffer?

- Why am I quick to dismiss others' pain?
- Can I see my storm as the fire that gives saltiness?

—Greg Battle, battlegregory1@gmail.com



Gregory Edwin Battle is a 66-year-old Black American elder and AV minister at Lee Heights Community Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He is a proud father, son, husband, brother, uncle, and neighbor. Greg's favorite Scripture is Micah 6:6–8 and his favorite saying is, "Everything I know is subject to revision, especially what I know to be the truth" (*Narcotics Anonymous* textbook). We do recover.



Greg Bowman and his wife, Ellen, live as active retirees in the northeastern Ohio community and congregation where they were reared. Previously living in other rural, suburban, and urban communities has humbled and challenged Greg as to God's ways of working in and beyond "the church." He is alert for God's transforming moves in his community as he keeps on gardening.

Resources for this session

Salt & Light Videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each weekly session. Melody Pannell of Harrisonburg, Virginia, is the presenter for unit 3. The videos are now closed captioned, free, and available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#).