



The Harder Work

May 27, 2020

Rachel Yates

One of the COVID changes in our household is that my husband does the grocery shopping. I haven't been to a grocery store since mid-March. I create a list, and he braves the store.

I am amazed sometimes at how little he knows about me after 32 years of marriage. For instance, raisins. I really, really don't like raisins. I enjoy grapes and even other dried fruit on occasion, but not raisins. Accordingly, when I asked my husband to buy cereal at the store, I never expected he would buy raisin bran. My shopping list was admittedly non-specific about the cereal, but *raisin* bran?!?

I had a choices. I could toss the whole box out; I could eat cereal with raisins (ha!); or I could pick out the raisins. I chose the harder work.

Lately, I've been thinking about the challenges facing all of us: logistical, emotional, practical, moral. We've never experienced this type of global public health crisis; we have no experience on which to draw. We don't know when it will be "over" or even how that will look. Life in a pandemic is exhausting and unremitting.

So, it's tempting to take the easy way out of challenging situations. If a relationship is frayed around the edges, I could just let it go, with the rationale that I'm not going to be able to see that person for a long time anyway and they're just not worth the drama right now. The harder work would be to mend the relationship.

When we receive requests for help, our choice could be to say "no," rationalizing that we're already uncertain about our financial security, or we're too busy, or we're afraid, or we've got other priorities, or....The harder work is to discern the Spirit's prompting and whether responding to that plea is our highest calling in this moment.

As we hear stories of churches reopening for in-person worship around the country, the easy option is simply to join them. The harder work is to plow through the reopening guidelines published by the Presbytery or the CDC's guidance in order to make that decision. I give thanks to God for the ruling elders and pastors of our congregations who have committed to doing the harder work out of love for their members and community. I spend my days picking raisins out of cereal; you are saving lives.

In choosing to follow Jesus, you'd already chosen the more difficult path. You've always known that. Now, in a time when the whole world is in distress, we are not allowed to discard all that we've strived to model. The harder work is given to us as Christians because it is the better work. The joy of mended relationships, selfless compassion for those in need, and fierce love of neighbor await us. May we choose well.

