

February 2021

Beloved,

In the weeks since Mike and I have purchased our retirement nest, I made two discoveries: 1. I don't always have to choose neutrals, and 2. HGTV. The latter is my sister's fault, actually. She got me to watch with her when I would stay the night when we were tending to my mother the months before she died. And then, our house happened, and BOOM—totally addicted.

This could sound like an exaggeration, but did I tell you that I bought a bright blue sofa? (I did! Really!) I immediately had buyer's remorse, until I saw it in our new living room. I am in love. Sigh.



Anyway, one favorite show features Ben and Erin Napier from Laurel, Mississippi. They are re-vitalizing their community one house at a time by renovating neglected, historical homes that “just need a little love.” Their project has made a huge shift in the energy and vitality of this small southern town. Erin and Ben choose two homes for prospective buyers to look at. They take a tour of both homes and then the family or individual decides which home suits them the best. The homes, however, are not exactly turnkey ready. The looks on folks' faces as they get their first look at chipped paint, dated colors, and renovations gone wrong can be priceless. The part I love, though, is when Erin tells them, “don't look at what this looks like now, imagine with me what it can be.”

That phrase just doesn't get old for me. Don't just look at what the scars. Don't just look at the wounds and neglect and broken dreams—look with me at the possibilities. Wow! That, my friends, will preach. It seems to me that God is constantly inviting us to see our world, our community, our relationships in this way. I can choose to see the brokenness, the fatigue, the conflict, the damage—or I can see the hand of God, leaning in, waiting for us to catch a vision of what is right there in front of us—if we will take the risk.

It makes me think about Jesus and his first followers. I have no idea what Jesus saw in those guys. I do know they had stories before the day Jesus invited them to be part of his crew. They had been bumped around by life, their emotional and spiritual paint was likely more than a bit chipped, there was bound to be some crooked floors as well as crooked hearts (some of them definitely had foundation issues.) But, somehow, Jesus could see all of that, and still invite them to create something new and beautiful. Renovation started early in the process, and is still in process.

When I was young, I found a home in the church. It wasn't a perfect home—I could see flaws and inconsistencies in my community, and I know for sure they saw the work that needed doing on me. But, for all its imperfections, the community of faith has continued to draw me in. There are times when they have lifted me on the wings of eagles, and other times when I was pretty sure they dropped me on my head. I keep coming back because, for all our imperfections, God is still present. God says we have promise. And there enough times when I catch a glimpse of it, that I just have to stick around to see what happens next.

There is work to do. There are people who are waiting. We call them by a lot of different names—the lost, the lonely, the hungry, the frightened, the sick, the prisoner, the misguided, the forgotten. The only way to do this work is to start small. One person. One conversation. One moment of grace. One act of courage. One moment of imagining how glorious it will all be when God is finished.

Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr wrote: “God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is.” Maybe you need to hear those words today. Maybe there is someone needing to hear them from you. Happy renovating.

*Blessings, Pastor Nancy*