

Volunteers in God's Garden

Scripture Reading — Luke 9:43-50

"We tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." — Luke 9:49-50

In our garden in the springtime, plants come up that we did not plant. We call them "volunteers." Along with the beans or cabbage we have planted, we often will find a tomato plant or a squash vine in a strange place. The temptation is to weed out the "volunteers" and make the garden more orderly. This past year, I resisted the temptation, reasoning that we would have a greater harvest by letting the "volunteers" grow.

The mostly clueless and competing disciples of Jesus reported that they saw a "volunteer" driving out demons in Jesus' name. They had followed their impulse and tried to remove him from their company. But Jesus' perspective is more expansive. He tells his faltering followers to let the "volunteer" keep working.

Perhaps you have faced a similar dilemma when observing Christ followers who may think, talk, and act differently from the way you do. The style of their service may not suit your tastes. But if they bear fruit in Jesus' name, you need to heed Jesus' words of correction: "Whoever is not against you is for you."

A good next step might be to explore ways to work together with this "volunteer" in the kingdom garden.

Prayer

Jesus, may your Holy Spirit move us to embrace and serve with followers who may minister in ways that are different from us. Transform our minds and warm our hearts toward all who serve in your name. Amen.

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