

Christ on the Psych Ward

Week 4: Sufficient

- Mental illness is often not how those on the outside might picture it, especially with the words we use (e.g., depression and anxiety are concepts that don't capture the whole of the diagnoses by those names). Often, the mental trains of thought can be both repetitive and confusing (59-61)
- "Even for a relatively well-informed patient such as myself, it's a complicated matter to put words and labels to complex inner experiences such as mania" (63)
- The urge to self-harm often came on David when he felt "out of words." One night, instead of cutting himself or writing self-deprecating messages, David found himself writing a message from 2 Corinthians on his arm: "My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness." (63-66)
- Grace has been central to the Christian faith for some time. David is particularly attracted to the "weakness of grace - its tentativeness." (67)
- Enough seems like a weak word, especially compared to "abundance" and "healing." But it is an especially powerful in a culture (or with mental illnesses) where we often feel "Not ____ enough." (68)
- An old lesson on "enough" is found in Exodus 16, the story of manna from heaven. David finds personal parallels between the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, searching for an elusive promised land, and his own journey with mental illness searching for "feeling better." "My grace is enough" takes on new importance when grace is the manna by which we live. (69-70)
- "Perhaps we are all struggling, longing for an abundance that seems always out of reach, missing the manna collecting at our feet." (71)
- 'Enough' can also mean letting go, as in "that's enough!" (71-72)
- Sometimes the most grace-filled response is to be honest about our ignorance, rather than trying to make up an answer to satisfy the situation. This is especially true when the seemingly harmless answer can lead some to harmful conclusions. (73)
- One Christian practice that communicates the "enough-ness of grace" is Communion/Eucharist. It is a small act that, on its surface, seems to be too ordinary to be transformative. Yet we trust that it points to something bigger, that it aligns us just a little bit more to God's vision for the world, and so like grace we trust that it is enough. (74-75)