



Grain

“Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. –Alan Paton
Submitted by Vernita Kennen, Roseville, MN

Field

¹⁷He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people... ²⁰Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²²“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. ²⁴“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. “Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. Luke 6:17-19; 20-26

Thoughts

In the Middle Ages, the church taught that giving to the poor was a way to climb a ladder into heaven, which was a perspective issue. Along with that way of thinking came a rationalization for holding people down. You are blessed as the poor, and I’m blessed helping you. Luther looked at that system, first claiming that we are actually saved by grace, not by our works. The young monk found lasting peace in his revelation about grace and already belonging to God, but was also unsettled by injustice. He pointed out the obvious - being hungry is a problem. Let’s not romanticize poverty, but in response to God’s grace, really address it by continuing to feed people in immediate need and creating just systems that eradicate hunger.

The Beatitudes are about God’s immense love for us and also our call to respond with restlessness about what is not working in the world. Be at peace and be restless. Jesus challenged notions of who was entitled to be blessed and where God dwelled. On level ground, Jesus was with people estranged, economically disempowered, and socially ousted. He wanted his disciples to see past the assumptions of what community should look like according to their culture into the scenery of blessedness.

Recently, local ELCA World Hunger leaders, restless to connect about addressing hunger when so many in-person connections have been limited during the pandemic, organized online networking sessions. They wanted us to learn about one another's food ministries, including work on systemic change, in Wisconsin and the UP. It was striking how often the word, “community,” arose. There was visible joy in people responding to God’s love in community that drew unlikely groups of people together. Maybe in community, whether we are the ones currently hungry or have more to give, we realize our own hungers as children of God. May the peace and restlessness of God be with you. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy