



Grain

“The command of Jesus is hard, unutterably hard, for those who try to resist it. But for those who willingly submit, the yoke is easy, and the burden is light.”

–Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Field

¹⁶“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ¹⁷‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” ²⁰Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you...” ²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mt. 11:16-21, 25, 18-30

Thoughts

When looking at someone’s resume, you usually notice how long the potential employee worked in other locations. Does the person have a history of popping in and out of their workplaces? Unless a pastor is an interim, do you want to call someone who hasn’t lasted long in other churches? It depends.

Jesus would have had a sketchy resume if he were employed in the towns that he pronounced “woe” to in the verses left out of next week’s Gospel text. But then, we remember that John the Baptist, with his ascetic practices that contrasted with Jesus’ way of engaging community, was rejected. Perhaps another question to ask potential employees is how long they stayed in their previous workplaces in comparison to their predecessors and successors. Does everyone trying to do their job get booted out? Is there a systemic problem? Maybe not, or maybe.

The most significant Jewish religious leaders were second class citizens in their own country, occupied by the Roman Empire. On some level, they resisted or simply tried to ignore their occupiers. But those same religious leaders could use and misuse God’s law to restrict their own people and maintain unhealthy hierarchies. What could go wrong confronting that reality? Plenty. But the law’s message of God’s love and mercy was sorely needed.

Citizens experienced work under an unfair tax system imposed by the empire, probably a sense of never getting ahead, and bias and exclusion within their own religion. How did they manage? Jesus confronted systemic sin while promising the weary profound rest. He does the same for us when we need forgiveness for our collusion with abusive power and rest from burdens. May the nonrestrictive love of God break through our egos, lighten our burdens, and give us a voice. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy