



Grain

“We live in a society that criminalizes the poor, who are often the same persons who lack sufficient food. –Courtney V. Buggs

Field

7Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, 2they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; 4and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) 5So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” 6He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; 7in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’ 8You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.” 14Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: 15there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.” 21For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, 22adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. 23All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Thoughts

Have you ever been so hungry that you grabbed too quickly for food in a public setting or did something else that you hoped others hadn't noticed? Or maybe you forgot to wash your hands before eating? You wouldn't want someone pointing a finger at you spouting off a lesson on table etiquette or cleanliness.

In St. Mark's Gospel, it is so provocative to reflect on Jesus' words about what defiles coming from the inside rather than the outside, it is easy to not consider the disciples' hunger. Courtney Buggs in her commentary for “Working Preacher” said, “In the other feeding narratives, the hungry crowds are fed; in this one, the hungry disciples are critiqued.” That caused me to reflect on why the disciples hadn't bothered to wash their hands, which would not only have given them, well, clean hands, but would have aligned them with their religion's purity codes. I wonder if some of the disciples did not bother to wash their hands because it was inconvenient, especially if their stomachs were growling.

The institutional leaders' intention was to trap Jesus, but they also put the disciples on the spot. Jesus redirected judgement of the disciples back at the ones who sought to publicly embarrass them. When do we feel tempted to humiliate rather than feed people who are hungry or at least just let those experiencing poverty be?

When do we tear away at public policies that help to feed people in exchange for unnecessary bureaucracy that over legislates and humiliates people who need to be fed? When do we advocate for policies that express our love in public?

During this voting season, remember a time when you were hungry and those who are experiencing hunger now. Recall God's grace and love. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy