

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

Isaiah 58:9b–10



Today, we find ourselves back at Isaiah 58, which serves for me as a summary of the entirety of my faith. After probing the depth and authenticity of performative faith, the prophet Isaiah lays out what God considers true religion. God states, “If you offer your food to the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom be like the noonday” (Isaiah 58:10).

Over the centuries, scholars and theologians have made many efforts to spiritualize such simple and direct language. In the second and third centuries, some Christians reinterpreted “the hungry” to mean “the spiritually hungry.” Whereas Scripture speaks directly about the hardships of the poor, “to remove the yoke” became a metaphor for any form of relief.

As beautiful as this spiritualizing tradition can be, it is also vital to consider hunger, poverty and hardship in concrete terms. During Lent, let us ask ourselves these important questions: Am I adding to the burdens of the poor, or am I helping to remove the yoke? Am I sharing my food with the hungry, or are my meals kept to a closely knit circle of family and friends? What is the connection between my life and the needs of the afflicted? Through Isaiah, God urges us to make this connection and to become more generous and satisfy the needs of the afflicted so that our light will shine in the darkness and our gloom will be like the noonday.

Today's readings

Psalm 86:1–11 | Isaiah 58:9b–14 | Luke 5:27–32

Giving regularly to Episcopal Relief & Development is one of the ways in which my spouse and I strive to “remove the yoke” from people experiencing poverty. We especially enjoy supporting Moments That Matter®, a program partnership of Episcopal Relief & Development, which helps children up to the age of 3 reach their fullest potential. What is one concrete way you can help “remove the yoke” today?