

It seems cruel the text on fasting happens the week the smell of our pancake brunch lingers in the air, teasing our senses ever so slightly.

I used to think that God changed over time. That the God of the Old Testament was different than the God of the New Testament. And to some extent I still think that's true. I do think we can change God's mind, why else would we petition God in prayer? What I'm referring to is God's essence. What if, WHAT IF, it wasn't God that has changed, but simply our human understanding of God that has changed?

This text says that when you're depriving yourself of this physical need your body is craving, and turning to God to sustain you and feed you, don't let your outward appearance reflect the deprivation of that physical food. That part of the message we've got down. We're good at not showing our weaknesses. We're good at hiding our downfalls. How are you? Fine. You? I'm good. We've got the outward "don't let the things that are bothering us show" down pat. It's the second part to this message we simply don't abide by. Let's pause for a second.

And that's rest. We don't take a day of sabbath. We don't take time to simply be, to do nothing. We have an extra hour and we figure out how to best use it. We need to get something done, we just stay up and do it, forgetting the needed sleep our bodies desire. And what we don't realize is that we can't uphold the first part if we're not also upholding the second

part. We run ourselves thin and then wonder how come we can't accomplish all we want to do.

Yoke=Oppression

There's a Peruvian monk named Gustavo Gutierrez (Goo-tear-as). He is from Peru and is known for his theory on Liberation Theology. When he finished school, he returned to his home country to discover 60% of the population was in poverty, 82% of that 60% were in extreme poverty. He wanted to help and learned that people often could not understand the economic state their country was in until they looked at it through the lens of those in poverty. When they saw the world through the lens of the least of these, they were able to see the injustices of the world like they had never noticed them before. He was addressing a population that had already been through the roughest of times, and he wanted to help them rebuild their country.

This past Wednesday night, at the Billy O Phillips Park, or as many of our children refer to it, The Blue Park, our ELL teachers put on a picnic for all of their Somali students. Travis and I stopped by for a moment and as we were driving past the pavilion to turn into the parking lot, we saw this beautiful assortment of Somali and American people laughing and playing together, all ages, all mixed in, all with these joyous faces. It truly was eye-catching. We joined them briefly to discover that many of the Somali students did not know each other. This picnic, that was for fun, for

celebration, was in fact so much more. Yes, the students and teachers had fun. Yes, the each celebrated their friendship. But these Somali ladies and children got to know each other. Through food, through games like corn hole and the hokey pokey, they laughed together and joined in fellowship, in community. After going through really hard times, some of them spending 15 years in refugee camps, they're in a new land trying to figure out how to rebuild, their families, their life, themselves.

These Judeans Isaiah is speaking of, in chapter 58, the ones that have been through the pain and suffering and tearing down of their culture, their life. This is the time for them to rebuild. This is the time for them to figure out how to do life together. How to live as God's called people.

Jerusalem wanted to rebuild... we get excited and build things quickly... we don't rest... we don't often know what we're doing... we aren't our best selves...

Where are all the oppressed that are around us? There are more than just immigrants and refugees here among us. Scrolling through my Facebook page I see a mom, and then a dad, defending their son who is a dancer. I see a black female musician who can play better than her white male counterparts yet keeps getting passed up on jobs bc she's a woman of color. I see a friend not knowing how she's going to pay for her chemo treatments, yet grateful she's able to receive those treatments. And one of my camp kids who is attending Ohio State letting us know he was safe after having an

active shooter nearby. Injustices are all around us, disguised as healthcare, gun violence, racism, sexism.

In our beloved country, we've now decided that ICE can detain children indefinitely. I saw in this affluent suburb of Norwalk this week people lined up in our church building to receive food. I saw a mother and daughter rummaging through a free school supply box before open house began. People are hurting. The oppressed are all around.

And we can rebuild as a people, but only if we take time to rest, to do nothing, for a bit. And in our Nothingness, we honor God, bc we're resting as we're designed to do. From the beginning even God rested. We, created in God's image, were designed with rest in mind.

So this little text, that most people discount as simply being about fasting, is really teaching us how to live. How to stand up for others and be community for each other, holding each other, rebuilding our world, so we can live our best life together.