



*"...The heart of the sons of men  
is full of evil,  
and madness is in their heart  
while they live..."  
(Ecclesiastes 9:3)*

*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before the high God?  
He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;  
and what doth the LORD require of thee,  
but to do justly, and to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with thy God?  
(Micah 6:6, 8)*

a homily on just society and our mad state of rebellion

healing our brokenness inadequately (part 10): Cannibalism, american style

*"They heal my people's brokenness inadequately, asserting:  
'It's OK! It's OK!'  
But nothing is OK!" (Jeremiah 6:14, author's translation).*

Introduction to the series

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Judicial inequality and injustice. Economic inequality and injustice. Rampant greed and fraud on the part of wealthy individuals and essential institutions. Bribery and corruption of government officials. Inordinate influence of the wealthy on laws and public policy. Unjust laws and policies favoring the powerful and influential while disadvantaging the less powerful and influential. The infliction of the vulnerable with hunger, homelessness, sickness, and anxiety. Self-righteous justification of the mad state of rebellion. Stubborn refusal to acknowledge these and a host of other societal ills.

No, I am not talking about America of 2024. However, if the shoe fits...

I am talking about late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Judah. These, and many other evils undermined the temporal, moral, and spiritual health of the nation. All the signs were there. The nation was on the verge of collapse. It was in desperate need of truth, however sour it might be to the national palate. But the nation's shepherds fed the populace an empty diet of

propagandistic myths of nationalism. Many of Israel's prophets joined the fray. Israel's watchmen, Jeremiah charged,

“Heal my people's brokenness inadequately, asserting:

‘It's OK! It's OK!’”

“But nothing,” Jeremiah replies, “is OK!”

Does this, too, sound familiar? Strike close to home? It should. Too often, today's religious leaders—whether they go by the name, “prophet,” “priest,” or “pastor”— seem to lack both discernment and courage. They seem utterly blind to and mute about sin and evil, unless, of course, it involves some form of real or imagined sexual deviance. If they do speak out, it is often with muted, vague, delicate, and generalized voices and statements. These shepherds seem not up to the challenging task of bold and clear truth telling of the sort that our society so desperately needs. Now is not the time for delicacy and caution.

This homily is the first in an ongoing series entitled, “Healing Our Brokenness Inadequately,” based on Jeremiah 6.<sup>14</sup> In this series, we explore specific examples of individual and societal sins about which political and religious leaders all too often remain willfully blind or, if sighted, stubbornly mute... and therefore complicit. Tragically, sometimes their complicity is even active and enthusiastic. With these examples in mind, we will often call upon the classic Hebrew prophets as well as other ancient and not so ancient prophets to speak as if from the dust. We read these discerning writings in light of the societal ills and injustices that abound in our modern world. Sometimes we even imagine and take a stab at replicating what a Hebrew prophet might have to say if he were to come to us from the past.

In today's homily, we offer additional examples of our brokenness about which too many remain silent and worse, in which too many engage themselves. Such moments as ours desperately cry out for the type of discernment, boldness, and truth-telling so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets.

The 8<sup>th</sup> century prophet, Micah, issued this warning to the power elite of his day:

“I am warning: Ya ‘<sup>a</sup>qōb’s elite must listen right now,  
along with Yīsrā’ēl’s governing officials:  
Isn’t it incumbent on You to determine what is just—  
<sup>2</sup>the very ones who hate what is beneficial and love what is harmful;  
the very ones who strip their skin right off them,  
and their flesh from off their bones;  
<sup>3</sup>the very ones who have eaten my people’s flesh,  
stripped their skin right off them,  
snapped their bones,  
chopped them into little pieces to fit in a pot,  
as meat in a caldron?”<sup>1</sup>

This is brutal and grotesque language and imagery to describe the inhuman manner that Israel’s elite treated those over whom they had influence and power—those they were called to shepherd but ended up eating for dinner. The verbs are grotesque with the “stripping,” and “snapping,” and “chopping.” And, of course, there is the eating of human flesh. It is not only the vocabulary and imagery that is grotesque and brutal. The very structure, with its short poetic lines, is grotesque and brutal. One can almost hear in the short, staccato like lines the chop, chop, chop of the butcher’s knife; the slice, slice, slice of the carving knife’ the snap, snap, snap of human bones; the plop, plop, plop of human flesh as it is dropped into the caldron for cooking.

It is a sad commentary on our society that such grotesque, brutal, and violent cannibalism is alive and well in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Following are just a few examples of the many we could offer. Our first example of American cannibalism comes in the form of American business’s cannibalization of children.

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<sup>1</sup> Micah 3. 1-3, author’s translation.

A janitorial company, Fayette Janitorial Service, based in Tennessee, was recently found to have employed children as young as thirteen to work night shifts to clean animal slaughterhouses. “Minors were used to clean dangerous kill floor equipment such as head splitters, jaw pullers, meat bandsaws, and neck clippers,” the DOL said in a February release. According to the DOL, a 14-year-old working for Fayette at the Virginia facility reportedly sustained serious injuries while on the job.”<sup>2</sup> And, again, this was during the overnight shift!

Unfortunately, this is not a one-off. Many U.S. lawmakers, at the behest of business lobbyists, and willing to feed at the trough of American businesses’ bribes, are engaged in a full-on assault against child labor laws. Happily, and unusually, in the case of Fayette Janitorial Service, the company was found guilty of breaking Department of Labor laws and fined \$649,000. Though I can’t say for sure, I would wager a guess that this janitorial service was too small to afford high priced attorneys to fight and delay the charges as the larger companies can and do. Also likely, the just over half-million dollar fine barely made a dent in the company’s ill-gotten gains. Certainly, no individual manager or CEO was held criminally accountable. Still, hurray for one small victory for the little guy.

Then there are the outdoor laborers in Florida. They are not so lucky. I have lived in Florida. I have worked outside in Florida’s incredible heat and humidity. I have become dehydrated in Florida’s heat and humidity. I have suffered heat stroke in Florida’s heat and humidity. So, I can appreciate, even if other hardened souls cannot or will not, the multilayered wickedness of Florida’s legislators and Governor about which I am about to speak.

Though there are federal labor laws concerning breaks for outdoor laborers, a few local governments in Florida, observing record breaking heat year after year, have *proposed* more compassionate and appropriate laws concerning such things as water breaks, shade, etc. for its some two million outdoor laborers—there can be no doubt that the water and rest needs of an outdoor laborer in Florida are going to be different than those of, say, a laborer in Maine,

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<sup>2</sup> “US Company Fined \$649K for Illegally Hiring Children to Clean Slaughterhouses,” *Truthout*, Zane McNeill.

Minnesota, or Montana.

Now, before continuing with the ugly story of the Florida government’s cannibalism of laborers, let me just say that having lived in Florida I have had many, many occasions to observe its outdoor laborers—lawn service workers, roofers, pool installers, agricultural field workers, etc.— 75% of whom seem to be brown skinned people. They work hard. They work steady. They work long hard hours. They work harder than many more privileged Americans ever would or even could. These laborers are skilled. They are incredibly productive.

Even so, “Some farmworkers in Florida aren't allowed to take breaks, don’t have access to shade and are pushed to work faster... Some are afraid to drink water because they don't have access to a bathroom. Meanwhile, supervisors discipline them for trying to take breaks when they feel overheated.”<sup>3</sup>

So, how has the Florida State Legislature and Governor responded to local governments’ *proposals* for laws to better, more compassionately address the very real, sometimes life-threatening dangers that face its outdoor laborers? Concerned that their own meal ticket, Florida businesses, would be “hamstrung” and profit margins thinned, Florida’s legislature drafted, and the Governor signed a bill that bans local governments from adopting such laws. Even the very suggestion, it seems, of treating people humanely, scares the bejesus out of Florida lawmakers.

Slice, slice, snap, snap, chop, chop, plop, plop.

The response of Florida’s Legislature and Governor is inhumane.

“How can they not understand, those who act so cruelly;  
those who devour My people as if they were eating some common bread...”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “DeSantis signs bill banning Florida counties from requiring heat and water breaks for outdoor workers,” *Associated Press*, Brendan Farrington.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 14.<sup>4</sup>, author’s translation

The response of Florida's Legislature and Governor is meanspirited. It is an example of unrighteous dominion.

“We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.”<sup>5</sup>

The response of Florida's Legislature and Governor is inconsistent with their own pretended belief that governance is best done at the most local and intimate levels where leaders best understand the needs of their particular citizens.

“But woe unto you... hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.  
Woe unto you... hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses...  
Woe unto you... hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”<sup>6</sup>

The response of Florida's Legislature and Governor represents another example of governmental officials feeding at the corrupt and thieving trough of business that cares for nothing but profit margins for a tiny number of privileged and wealthy sociopaths.

“Your leaders are criminals,  
collaborators with thieves.  
All of them want bribes,  
and, more, actively seek out kickbacks.  
They do not stand up for the orphan,  
or hear the widow's complaint.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> DC 121.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 23.<sup>13-15</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 1.<sup>23</sup>, author's translation

Such leaders should hide their faces in shame. But, of course, they do not. They are hardened in their abomination. They

“possess the defiance of a whore;  
[and] will not allow [themselves] to feel shame.”<sup>8</sup>

While such laborers such as those in Florida are forced, like ancient Israel at the hands of their Egyptian taskmasters, to work harder, longer, and more productively under more dangerous circumstances, they have failed to see financial benefits commensurate with their labors.

“Wages have failed to keep up with productivity growth: from 1979 to 2019, net productivity for US workers increased by 59.7%, while typical compensation for a worker only grew by 15.8% in the same period. The median worker would have made an extra \$9 an hour if the rates had grown together....

“The federal minimum wage has remained \$7.25 an hour since July 2009, the longest period in the minimum wage’s history without an increase, and it’s worth 29% less today than 15 years ago.”<sup>9</sup>

Slice, slice, snap, snap, chop, chop, plop, plop.

Meanwhile, American business and governmental elites have their pound of human flesh and eat it too. McDonald’s CEO, for example, “has one of the highest CEO-to-worker pay ratios in the world, at 1,224 times the median worker pay. A typical McDonald’s worker would have to work more than 1,200 years to make his compensation for a year....”<sup>10</sup>

Put another way, over a forty-year life-work cycle, a CEO could make 48,000 times more

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<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 3.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “We deserve more: US workers’ share of the pie dwindles,” *The Guardian*, Michael Sainato.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

than a laborer. Just let that sink in. A CEO who doesn't really know what it means to "work," is worth 48,000 lives. It is impossible to conceive a more preposterous, mad, and wicked idea.

Slice, slice, snap, snap, chop, chop, plop, plop.

While laborers work more productively under more difficult conditions, both of which save companies countless millions of dollars, corporations raise prices on everything at a rate that far surpasses the miniscule increased cost of production.

"A new report examining the causes of inflation demonstrates that corporate greed and increased CEO pay led to higher-than-necessary costs for American consumers in recent months... In the past two economic quarters alone, 53 cents out of every dollar of inflationary price increases were due to corporate profits.

"Since the start of the pandemic, corporate greed and profits accounted for close to one-third of all inflation... resulting in a phenomenon that is oftentimes called "greedflation."<sup>11</sup>

Slice, slice, snap, snap, chop, chop, plop, plop.

Of course, corporations and the many American media conglomerates in cahoots with them blame everything and everyone but the very greedy corporations that are raising the prices—"it's the supply system," "it's increased worker wages" "it's government interference," etc., etc. Many Americans blame the President. Everyone is blamed but the actual culprits.

Having said that, I do lay much of the blame on government officials. Though unjust laws and policies, they allow corporations to as they do. They allow the cannibalism of American business and stuff themselves with the human flesh they flay from the bones of the sheep

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<sup>11</sup> "Greedflation Accounts for 53 Cents of Every Dollar of Inflation in Past 6 Months," *Truthout*, Chris Walker.



they are supposed to be guarding.

“Warning! To those who issue oppressive statutes  
and continuously write laws that afflict;  
that put redress out of the reach of the underprivileged  
and rob the poor among my people of justice,  
making prey of widows  
and plundering orphans.”<sup>12</sup>

Slice, slice, snap, snap, chop, chop, plop, plop.

## Conclusion

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American business and government leaders at all levels are cannibalistically feeding upon vulnerable Americans—and, really, not just Americans, but human beings the world over. Our examples in this homily are but the latest and represent the tip of the iceberg. In doing so, they sell their own souls for that which “moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, they are both the thieves and the thieved. They act upon the pride and wisdom of this world that values wealth, power, and influence about all things. It’s a great and spacious and impressive looking building they enter. But its foundation is sand, its inspiration and builder the Devil, and “the fall thereof [will be] exceedingly great.”<sup>14</sup>

“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying,

‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!  
for in one hour is thy judgment come.’

And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of

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<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 10.<sup>1-2</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 6.<sup>19-20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 1 Nephi 11.<sup>36</sup>

pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying,

‘Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.’

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven,  
and ye holy apostles and prophets;  
for God hath avenged you on her.”<sup>15</sup>

As we have asserted many times, it was just the sort of behavior and policy that we have discussed in this homily that was the special and particular purview of the Hebrew prophets. They did not concern themselves overly much with dogma and doctrine. They did not concern themselves with the maintenance of religious institutions. Indeed, they were often quite critical of the religious institutions of their day. As we have pointed out and demonstrate in many readings/questionnaires, homilies, and meditations, they did concern themselves with such mundane societal matters as political graft and government corruption, legal injustice, commercial fraud, land use, wages, wealth and poverty, flamboyant and luxurious lifestyles, etc.

In our time, those who would take up their mantle—by whatever name, prophet, priest, or pastor—have failed to measure up to the calling that the Hebrew prophets fulfilled so well. They have often become distracted. They have often been less than courageous. Sometimes, they have become corrupted by and in the very system that they were meant to critique,

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<sup>15</sup> Revelation 18.<sup>9-17, 20</sup>

reform, and improve. But, for whatever reason, they are almost always silent, mute about the slice, slice, snap, snap, chop, chop, plop, plop of American business and governmental cannibalism that does harm to body and soul of so many of God's vulnerable children. Truly,

“They heal my people's brokenness inadequately, asserting:

‘It's OK! It's OK!’

But nothing is OK!”

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 18, 2024)*