

First and Center

Pastor's Blog

January 23, 2020



Every time we pray The Lord's Prayer, we say the words "deliver us from evil." For many people who pray this prayer, they have done so for so many years that they really don't hear the words anymore. You know, like "forgive us our debts/trespases/sins as we forgive our debtors/those who trespass or sin against us."

That second phrase there is the hard one for most of us. Think about it next time you say the words.

Deliver us from evil. I've started saying that a little louder when I pray the prayer, and I've started praying it outside the context of The Lord's Prayer. Deliver us from evil.

- The evil within ourselves that leads us into temptation, leads us to ignore the hurt we cause the earth, other people, and ourselves. Evil may seem to be too strong a word, because we think it means something on the scale of 9/11. But, most of the ways that evil acts in our world are more subtle, and therefore, more easily dismissed as "not really that bad." But, the "not really that bad" all adds up.
- The evil within the powerful corporations and institutions in this world. So many individuals and companies with both money and power do so much harm to so many...from sweatshops in Southeast Asia to sex trafficking to making products and packaging that pollutes the earth to controlling governments and their policies.
- The evil within those governments and the leaders in them. What's the old phrase? "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." There are good people who are in government on every level, no doubt. There are also those who are in it for their own enrichment or who simply like to hurt people.

A colleague recently helped me with this word by saying she does not call people evil, but rather their actions and motivations. Which, theoretically, can be changed. Hence the prayer. Praying that these folk have a "Centurion" moment. Remember the story of Jesus' Crucifixion, where a Roman Centurion, a leader of a hundred men who were beating prisoners and nailing them to crosses, suddenly looks at Jesus and says, "Truly this man was a son of God." I can't help but believe his life changed after that moment.

I can't make that happen. But, I can work for good in any way I can see. I can call those whose actions are unjust, harmful, and yes, evil, to account. And I can pray, "Deliver us from evil," calling passionately to the one who can make that so.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse
Transitional Minister