

GIFTS FROM GLEANERS
Deuteronomy 24: 14-22; Acts 6: 1-7

On August 14th, 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression, President Roosevelt signed the Social Security bill into law. To some it was a Godsend; to others it was not appreciated or supported. Nevertheless, those who spoke against it still took, and even welcomed, their social security checks. To this day, Social Security is not a pension, it is a safety net. Admittedly in recent years panhandling has increased in cities and at the end of highway exit ramps. But if you go to Israel and Palestine as many of us have done, you will see beggars everywhere; some are lame, some are blind, some are widows, and some are just dirt poor because of health issues. It almost felt like we stepped back into the book of Deuteronomy, or the book of Acts, seeing what we saw. Fortunately, the Rabbis and holy law makers made guidelines where they could, designed to give order to society and to help those who were poor. Some of the laws made good sense: you shall not have two different animals hitched to pull a plow, for they will be called “Unequally yoked.” Also called unequally yoked were when a believer and an unbeliever desired to be married. It was not to be. They even had rules about not sewing a garment with two kinds of cloth; digging into history allows us to learn the reasons. And then we get to the rule that preceded Social Security and that, today, is helping so many people who, because of health or injury or job loss, depend on the things people of faith still do: *we glean, and we feed*. Here is the passage from Deuteronomy 24: 19-22:

¹⁹ When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. ²⁰ When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

²¹ When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. ²² Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore, I am commanding you to do this.

Here the term “alien” is not E.T.; it means “those who aren’t from around here, who are in need, in addition to those who *are* from around here who are in need. With the instruction to leave some crops behind for those who are hungry, farmers who live out their faith have not stripped their crops to the very last one even in our day. They leave some for gleaning. And what a gift that food is, and those farmers are. There is still gleaning in the world, and even in Florida. Today I want you to hear what a difference gleaning—getting fresh vegetables—can make to the nutrition and delicious taste of the regular canned goods and boxed goods many poor people can afford. Our own form of gleaning happens with many of you too! As you buy one item for yourself from a market, you get a second one to give away. You bring it on a Sunday to one of our food drives. But what are some of the stories about our gleaning and giving? We are blessed to hear some first-hand stories about that today.

First, I call on Elder Anne Nussle, who Chairs our Outreach Division to share information and stories about gleaning. She has also taken food to Tobias Caskey’s residents at the New Corinthians Community Mission in addition to taking food to the Port Orange Pantry. **ANNE**

Now I’ve asked Billy Jean Morrissey to share her passion for helping others have food as she volunteers at our Port Orange Pantry. **BILLY JEAN**

ANNE CONCLUDES HER PRESENTATION

Rev. Sumner concludes his message:

Friends so many of you are carrying on the great tradition that started in the days of the Old Testament, a practice that continued in the New Testament and beyond: giving food to hungry people, and even food for hungry pets I have learned! What blessings you have offered and are still offering. May the love continue.

Let us pray: Bountiful God: some have enough and to spare while others clearly do not have enough. Please bless those who give and glean; please bless those who get and are grateful. And please speed the day when hunger can be eradicated in the world. Through Jesus Christ we pray, who once fed more than 5000 hungry people. Amen.

Jeffrey A. Sumner

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