

## ***Day 1 Devotion***

*“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?”* Isaiah 58:6-7

These words from the prophet Isaiah, which we often associated with Ash Wednesday, both inspire and convict. They call us to repent of empty ritual, of lips made unclean by empty utterances of God’s name from hearts and ears too often hardened and closed to the plight of the marginalized and oppressed. The prophet reminds God’s people to “put your money where your mouth is.” *Loose* the bonds, *undo* the thong of the yoke, *break* every yoke, *share* your bread, *satisfy* the needs of the afflicted. These verses demand action and this action leads to what both God and God’s people want. *Loose, Undo, Break, Share, Satisfy*, THEN, “THEN your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly,” “THEN you shall call, and the Lord will answer,” “THEN your light shall rise in the darkness,” “THEN you shall delight in the Lord.”

The great theologian, teacher, preacher, and mystic Howard Thurman writes that those wanting justice and righteousness in the world, often operate under the assumption that goodness “is so inherently superior to evil that it is not necessary to ‘work’ at goodness.” Thurman rejects this notion writing, “it is instructive to observe that the same thing that causes strawberries to grow, causes poison ivy to grow, and for exactly the same reasons. When the conditions for growth have been met, then growth follows automatically. The fact that the former is a delight and the latter is a disorder is beside the point.”

The bonds of injustice won’t loose themselves. Nor will the yokes of oppression break themselves. Bread cannot share itself. Never have I seen a weed pull itself. But I have seen how furiously they grow when left to their own devices. Weeds can quickly take over and suffocate good fruit; in a garden, in a nation, and in our hearts. And so, God calls us to work every day to stop them, to pull them out, so the good might grow, the bonds might be loosed, and the yokes broken. For, Isaiah proclaims, when you busy yourself with working for God’s justice and righteousness in the world, “The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden.” *Loose, Undo, Break, Share, Satisfy*, THEN....

Rev. Will Shelburne, First Savannah

*Most gracious and loving God,*

*I ask that you guide and strengthen me to work each day for the good; for love, for justice, for you. Open my heart to hear your word, however challenging it may be, that through the power of your Holy Spirit, I may be directed in The Way of your Son, the Christ. Amen.*

**Resource:** *Meditations of the Heart* by Howard Thurman