

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

EVICTIION NOTICE

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§ 2 Civil Code

#9672

Fifth Sunday

Lent Passage: Psalm 130 YEAR A

Food Insecurity Reflection Passage:

1 Kings 21: 1-16 NRSV

Now there was a man named Naboth, from Jezreel, who owned a vineyard in Jezreel beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. 2 One day Ahab said to Naboth, "Since your vineyard is so convenient to my palace, I would like to buy it to use as a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or if you prefer, I will pay you for it."

But Naboth replied, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance that was passed down by my ancestors." 4 So Ahab went home angry and sullen because of Naboth's answer. The king went to bed with his face to the wall and refused to eat! 5 "What's the matter?" his wife Jezebel asked him. "What's made you so upset that you're not eating?"

6 "I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or trade it, but he refused!" Ahab told her. 7 "Are you the king of Israel or not?" Jezebel demanded. "Get up and eat something, and don't worry about it. I'll get you Naboth's vineyard!" 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the town where Naboth lived. 9 In her letters she commanded: "Call the citizens together for a time of fasting, and give Naboth a place of honor.

10 And then seat two scoundrels across from him who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

11 So the elders and other town leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters. 12 They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people.

13 Then the two scoundrels came and sat down across from him. And they accused Naboth before all the people, saying, "He cursed God and the king." So he was dragged outside the town and stoned to death. 14 The town leaders then sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death." 15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to

Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive but dead." 16 As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

As you read this passage aloud, what resonates with you?

Land. Greed. Power. There are horrors of land loss in the US just as we see reflected biblically in this passage. Eviction. Displacement. Eminent Domain. Removing people from their land has shaped the history of this country. Land tenure issues for our Native American neighbors go back to the founding of this country.

Perhaps one of the most aggressive legislative actions of taking land is the 1887 General Allotment Act. Also known as the Dawes Act, this legalized land takeover from Native Americans resulted in 90 million acres of land being removed from their stewardship and ownership.

Think about how this theft caused a disruption in their livelihood. The land was divided among First Peoples and those outside of the Tribal Nation. This impacted their way of life and their access to food.

Where much of the land had been used for agricultural purposes, housing and everyday life, the Dawes Act interrupted it.

This is economic hardship of unimaginable proportions. If you own land, property or real estate, imagine a legislative act that allows it all to be taken away.

There are layers to food injustices. It does not happen in a vacuum as a singular infraction. As the reflection passage shows us, those who are in decision-making positions – in this case King Ahab – use their authority in ways that are often disparaging and systematically egregious.

Unfortunately this kind of behavior happens today in majority Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. Land comes at a premium. Land is tied to wealth. It is why redevelopment in an underserved community – in the form of gentrification – is not always welcomed.

In **Chapter Three**, near the end of the reading, the question is asked, *What does it look like for local government to enact policy that helps to dismantle the barriers that cause food insecurity?*

Write:

How has this passage shaped the way you look at legal forms of displacement such as evictions, eminent domain, and gentrification?

Psalm 130:1 says, "*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.*"

Do you hear the neighbors crying out to God in the midst of their eviction, and other forms of being displaced, subsequently causing economic hardships that lead to being food insecure?

What does it sound like?

Naboth owned the vineyard. It was his inheritance, passed down to him by his ancestors. King Ahab wanted Naboth to give or *bestow* the land to him. Ahab cared more about his own wants than the inconvenience to Naboth in terms of what he offered Naboth in return.

When a neighbor refuses to sell their home in the midst of a gentrification project, why or why not should they sell?

Reflect:

Is there an area in your community with abandoned or boarded up houses or buildings? If not, drive through your city and notice where this is true.

What are the demographics of that area?

What business was formerly there?

Do you know what the eviction rate is for your city?

Who do you imagine are the neighbors that once lived in these boarded up houses? They are someone's ancestors and someone's descendants. How would you speak hope into their situation?

Pray:

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. I cry out for my neighbors who have been displaced. I cry out for the neighbors who are days away from being evicted. I cry out to you, O Lord for my neighbors whose property has been taken away, leaving them in economic hardship. God, forgive me for the times that I have made unpleasant and prejudiced remarks about them without knowing anything about their situation. All I need to know is that they are made in your image, O God.

Lord, I pray for restoration, that you would restore hope and restore their livelihood. Do something miraculous in this season of Lent that responds to the real-lived experiences of my neighbors. Fortify our communities. Strengthen my understanding of what it means to love my neighbor as myself and to want them to have a share of your abundance. Lord, today I am ready fully and wholeheartedly to be an ecclesial disruptor of these systemic injustices. In the mighty and powerful name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Act:

Make a plan for how you will stay engaged in this food justice movement after the Lenten Season.

Name two people who you will ask to be your accountability partners.

Final Thoughts:

Civil rights activist and founder of Freedom Farms Cooperative, Fannie Lou Hamer, said: *You can pray until you faint, but unless you get up and try to do something, God is not going to put it in your lap.* Think about this as you draw near to the close of Lent.

More Resources: Yes! Magazine and The People's Kitchen Collective

Notes:

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