

### **Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent, March 15, 2023**

Recommended readings: p. 156, "August 30, 1800," pp. 157-158, "Trouble..." pp. 166-177, "Capitalism" (part one)

In chapter six, Matthew Desmond describes how the distinctive brutality of unbridled American capitalism has its roots in slavery. "The United States stands today as one of the most unequal societies in the history of the world. The richest one percent of Americans owns forty percent of the country's wealth, while a larger share of working-age people (those eighteen to sixty-five) live in poverty... Those searching for reasons the American economy is uniquely severe and unbridled have found answers in many places (religion, politics, culture). But recently, historians have pointed persuasively to the gnatty fields of Georgia and Alabama, to the cotton houses and auction blocks, as an early example of America's low-road approach to capitalism. As a source of the fledgling nation's financial might, slavery shaped our political institutions and founding documents, our laws governing private property and financial regulation, our management techniques and accounting systems, and our economic systems and labor unions.... America's present-day tax system...is regressive and insipid in part because it was born out of political compromise steered by debates over slavery. This generates inequality and enables large corporations to avoid paying their fair share—or any share. In 2018, sixty Fortune 500 companies, including Amazon, Chevron, Delta Air Lines, and Netflix, paid no federal income taxes."

*Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, "When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat." The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.... On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day. The time is surely coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.*  
(Amos 8:4-12)

The prophets of Israel reserved their harshest words for people of faith who took advantage of their vulnerable brothers and sisters. Their words need to convict us as we watch people starve in one of the wealthiest nations on earth. The generosity of God's love must inspire us to be generous toward one another.

### **Prayer**

God of abundance, teach us how to be inundated by your love and your gifts, allowing them to flow into and out of our hands to bring blessing and hope to our neighbor. Open our eyes and our hearts to see and to serve one another. Amen.