

Spoiled Fruit: I sat in the privy this early morning and watched through large gaps as a little boy came over the hill and stopped to pick out the best of rotten oranges Doniz put out for the goats. As I exited the "prayer room" Doniz arrived and made him throw the spoiled fruit away. The expression on his face never changed.

A book I'm reading by Philip Jenkins, focuses on Christianity in the Global South; Asia, South America and Africa. He supports my thought that third world peoples understand the old scriptures much better, and more literally than we in the US ever can. They live the poverty, powerlessness, injustice and disparity every day just as the early Jews and Christians. Similar to Buddhism, they understand Jesus as a "world weary aristocrat" attractive in a world of social deprivation.

The flip side is an understanding of the Sermon on the Mount as a gospel of prosperity intended for all; follow the rules and reap rewards. I call this "magical thinking" or "Chicken Soup Theology" but recall well the popularity of The Prayer of Jabez several years ago. My morning meditation, as I watched the drama of the rotten orange, was, "what exactly is our Christian Mission" with so many ways to understand the gospel?

My understanding is that Jesus came to set people free..save them...from sin, sickness poverty and injustice. I want to open a clinic, drill wells for safe water, build latrines, improve schools and industry and see food available for all. I believe the epistle of James does mean Jesus was the "balm" for the poorest. My morning question is, was he just to sooth and comfort with a promise of eternity in some unimaginable place, or, to show the way to eradicate poverty and bring prosperity?

Philip Jenkins calls me to read with a new mind the wisdom books of James, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. The gospels call us to "walk with" the poor, a ministry of presence, our mission. I do know I did not like the way I felt as I watched a hungry little boy give up a spoiled fruit with no sign of emotion.

For people on La Gonave, I ask for sponsors to fund education, health care, industry and, to work to make food and water available to all people by living more simply and sharing more spontaneously the resources of creation.

We have a young man who is attempting to dig a hole in the rocks to build a cistern so his wife can wash clothing. The cost of cement makes this a hopeless endeavor for a poor fisher man whose family eats only the catch of the day, if there is any. He shows me the hole without hope.

We have men wearing their wife's worn out, beaded sandals as they climb the mountain to gardens with a few seeds to plant, because we had a small rain. Harvest is a bad joke; a hopeless hope. When the rain does not come; there are no doctors for the sick; teachers are students themselves without pay, or books or pencils or enough light to see the black board; and, people go to church at 4 am each morning to pray; what should they pray for? Hope for heaven, or justice on earth?

Shirley, sud la gonav, 27 avril, 2009. Thinking theologically. Blogs: <http://gbgmlagonave.blogspot.com>