

I'm above it. That was my attitude. Above the meaningless, mindless, drudgery, low paying, part time job ... of flipping burgers. I wanted something fresh, new, different – so my first job was a sandwich artist at Subway.

I'm above it. During high school, I worked at Walmart, hired as cashier. But at the first opportunity I moved back to the thrilling world of Lay Away. It was amazing, and I bet I was the envy of all my friends. After a couple years, I worked myself into the accounting office, and later into Pharmacy. I didn't want to be stuck 8 hrs a day standing at a cash register.

After college, we got married and I took a year off before seminary. Wanting a job, and without any high profile offers (of which I am sure I was well qualified) I took a job at Walgreens as a photo tech. A few months into that job, I got the opportunity to be an assistant manager - which I continued throughout seminary. I thought I was above it all. Better pay, better prestige, better respect, better opportunity.

That is my privilege. On one hand I am grateful. They were good experiences that shaped me. On the other hand, the privilege I received, the benefits and opportunities – as an educated, white, male, - are a microcosm of our society at large. And the injustice found in workplaces.

How many of us are above those low level jobs? Or strive to be?

I was lucky, I guess. I didn't need the jobs either. I didn't need to work part-time in high school. I got to go to college. Walgreens was just to fill a gap in time, before entering a professional field. So, the jobs were just bonus. The problem is, I don't know who I stepped on to get those jobs, and who I pushed out of the way. To be above it.

Most are not as fortunate. Yet, when we revel in being fortunate, or being privileged, we neglect and ignore and hate our neighbor, left in our dust of success.

Take a look at the examples of big Pharmacy, recently Mylan the maker of EpiPen. No competition, means a jack up in the price, only to increase the salaries of the CEO's. And when that was discovered, and only then, did they recant and look for an alternative. That cost of health care, because of greedy millionaires, only adds to our wealth income gap.

As does paying employees less than a living wage. Including our servers whose tipped wage hasn't gone up in 22 years. Relying on customers to tip 20% just to make it to minimum wage. This concept is foreign in other parts of the world. Good news is it is slowly starting to change.

The philosophy in our land of opportunity, is to pay workers as little as necessary, so profits increase. Who cares about the least of these? We are above it, right?

We celebrate labor day with our cookouts and days off, at the same time single moms and dads, working multiple jobs without making ends meet, struggle each day, with no hope for a holiday.

We are part of a society and system that rewards the rich, drives the poor into further poverty. To work at any job, not to mention multiple jobs, requires expensive child care, time away from your family; unable to give the attention to help kids with homework, which may lead to failure in school, no college education, low paying jobs, crime, or other hardships with which to deal.

In most cases, it is an unbreakable cycle. Yes, we hear success stories. But not enough. We are part of creating the injustice, which means we need to be part of the solution.

What do we do to change the narrative of being above it?
Change the idea that unfettered capitalism is the way of life.
Change the idea that it doesn't matter who we push out of the way to get to the top. Change the idea that we are in some caste system where the top are the most powerful and important, while those at the bottom are worthless outcasts.

Look at the political narrative in this country...is anyone talking about the poor? No. It is always strengthen the middle class. Let's make the middle class richer. Sounds nice. Strengthening the middle class may give you more money, but it heaps burden on families hovering around the poverty line. Jesus said nothing about the middle class. The priority are the poor.

Blessed are the middle class? For yours is this country of America? - as written in a Washington Post article – is nowhere in the Bible.

How do we honor the cashier, burger flipper, and janitor? How does God call us to bridge the equity income gap, between women and men workers, black and white workers, old and young? How do we fulfill our ELCA value of sufficient, sustainable livelihood for every person?

Giving food at the pantry, helping homeless shelters, donating clothes or money – it helps. But the problem is bigger than that.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God, doesn't mean we sit back and say – sorry you are poor, but God still loves you. We are commanded to love our neighbor, provide for one another, share, show the poor the least among us that they have a fair share in the kingdom of God.

These are matters of faith, of radically loving our neighbor. Faith should shape our public interaction, our votes, our debates. Are we only in this world to improve our lot in life?

When we act above the poor, we fail to be church.

When we only look out for our own toil, our own interest, we are acting in vain.

There is a time to love...people, and time to hate... the injustice. The injustice that has corrupted us. The injustice that has caused us to lose the mission of church, and lose sight of God. To hate the sin and the evil that causes us to shame and blame the poor, instead of fight with and for the marginalized community.

Fight for the poor, for \$15 minimum wages, affordable child care, affordable senior care, common sense immigration reform, and laws that shut out minorities from civil opportunities?

Most of our poor, huddled masses, won't be seen on the street, or in the food line. But we interact with them everyday, with no idea they are struggling.

But God, through the life and death and resurrection of Christ, redeems us from our sin, unites us together, for the purpose of being a community where equity is found.

Do we care about equity and justice for poor laborers?

Or are we above it?