

A Meal of Turnip and Mud

Carl Frederick Buechner is an ordained Presbyterian minister and author of more than 30 published books. His work has been praised for its ability to inspire readers to see the grace in their daily lives.

In his book *The Sacred Journey*, Buechner tells about a time when he was serving in the military during World War II.

One winter, he said, he sat in Army fatigues somewhere near Anniston, Alabama, eating his supper out of a mess kit. The infantry training battalion he had been assigned to was on bivouac.

“There was a cold drizzle of rain, and everything was mud,” he wrote. “The sun had gone down. I was still hungry when I finished, and noticed that a man nearby had left something that he was not going to eat. It was a turnip.”

When Buechner asked the man if he could have it, the man tossed it over to him.

“I missed the catch, and the turnip fell to the ground, but I wanted it so badly that I picked it up and started eating it, mud and all,” Buechner related. “Time deepened and slowed down. With a lurch of the heart, I saw suddenly that not only was the turnip good, but the mud was good, too, even the drizzle and cold were good, even the Army that I had dreaded for months was good.”

The incident was an epiphany, the author admits.

“Sitting there in the Alabama winter with my mouth full of cold turnip and mud, I could see at least for a moment how if you ever took truly to heart the ultimate goodness and joy of things, even at their bleakest, the need to praise someone or something for it would be so great that you might even have to go out and speak of it to the birds of the air.”

Buechner is right. We are surrounded by goodness that we often take for granted. In the creation story presented in the first chapter of Genesis, after all He had done through the sixth day, the 31st verse proclaims: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”

We should appreciate, then, the beauty and the goodness of the heavens and the earth that our Lord created and gave us, and praise Him for them. His handiwork also includes mankind, and we show our praise to God for them through service – to our residents, their families, our associates, and visitors.

When Jesus was assailed by the Pharisees because the whole multitude of His disciples were praising Him as He drew near the descent of the Mount of Olives, Jesus replied: “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out (Luke 19: 40 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter

