

*Reflection/story on Exodus 23 and Matthew 25:*

*Tim Schmucker, TUMC "People on the Move": 15 February 2015*

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The heat and humidity were at its peak that early afternoon in rural Nicaragua, Central America, so we sought a bit of relief under a tree to eat lunch. I was a 20 year old Mennonite university student, visiting peasant families who were participants in a Mennonite Central Committee development project an hour south of the capital Managua. The MCC worker who I was with had told me to be prepared for visible misery, as crops had been meagre for years and development efforts non-existent. All due to deeply rooted poverty and oppression.

This is 1978, so the Sandinista Revolution, while growing strong in northern Nicaragua, hadn't reached the central west area where we were. There were, however, many many sympathisers, both rural and urban, both poor and middle class. Only the oligarchy still supported the entrenched dictator. Nicaragua had had enough – basta ya!! - enough of the ruthless dictator family – the Somozas – who had ruled Nicaragua for 50 years with the unwavering support of the USA, treating the country like their personal fiefdom.

Lunch that afternoon was the main meal for the peasant family who hosted me. Their only meal. A young family. Little children; I don't remember how many. Rice and beans – gallo pinto – with a sugar cane drink. My plate had a fried egg. It was enough for a light lunch, for me. How they were going to make it until breakfast, I had no idea.

On the way back to Managua, the MCC worker asked me if I had noticed that my plate was the only one with an egg. No, I hadn't, I replied. He continued: That was the only one the family had for that day. They gave it to you, their guest.

And yet I was a gringo, from the USA, the imperialist country that had controlled their country since the mid-1800s, either via proxy dictators or by the occupying Marines. And the past half century had been particularly brutal under the puppet Somoza regime.

And that peasant family gave me, a gringo from the USA, a resident alien in Nicaragua, their only egg.

Exodus 23.9: You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Matthew 25: Jesus dividing the sheep and the goats: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.... Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger? ... And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."