

John 6:1-21

Preached for Stone Church of Willow Glen via Zoom by Rev. Samantha Evans

July 25, 2021

## **There is Enough**

At Broad Street Ministry, where I served in Philadelphia, there is a constant refrain that all volunteers and staff are taught: There is enough.

You see, in the early days, when the leaders were first creating the programs and offerings, they were learning about trauma informed care for people who were experiencing homelessness, hunger, and poverty. And they learned that the most important trauma to consider is scarcity. Every single person entering the doors for services had experienced severe trauma because of scarcity. Because at one point or at many points in their lives, there wasn't enough for them. Enough food. Enough money. Enough support and community and love. Day after day, they were told there wasn't enough.

Now, the interesting thing is that one might assume that the remedy to scarcity would be abundance. More than enough. Which is what the early leaders at Broad Street thought. So they would welcome in hundreds of people for dinner and serve the meal family style. Heaping plates of food for each table to share. A cornucopia of sorts.

What they quickly realized was that this abundance actually triggered their anxiety of scarcity. The guests would hoard the food. Taking way more than they needed. Becoming ill because of overeating or because they ate food that was improperly stored overnight.

And they did this because it stood to reason that if there was all this food today, certainly it wouldn't be here tomorrow. Abundance cannot last forever. So, they needed to hoard the resources before them to ensure that they would have enough for today and hopefully for tomorrow.

After a while, the leaders began to try something different. Rather than providing abundance, they started providing enough. Always enough. Enough food. Enough socks. Enough toothbrushes. Enough for every single person who entered the door. In fact, if for some reason there was a shortage of something, it wasn't offered that day. To anyone. Because if there wasn't enough for everyone, this anxiety of scarcity would infect the whole place.

Enoughness, they learned, is the remedy to scarcity. Not abundance. Never more than enough. Just enough. Enough today. Enough tomorrow. Enough the next day. For every single person who walked through the doors. This took time, of course, to build into the culture of the place. But once it took hold, once this refrain, “there is enough,” became central, it shifted the experience for everyone.

Not only is this good trauma-informed care for highly traumatized people, it is good trauma-informed care for all of us. Because the truth is that the dominant narrative in our society today is that there is not enough. And this plays out in so many harmful ways in our lives and in our society.

The reality of course is that some people have too much—an abundance of resources they don’t even know what to do with. And others have nowhere near enough—a scarcity of even the most basic needs of shelter, clean water and food.

The thing that I think is most interesting about this is that both parties and all of us in between, are susceptible to hoarding as a response to this prominent narrative of scarcity. Whether we already have enough or not, whether a resource appears or is abundant or scarce, we are tempted to believe that we need to take more and more and more of it. To hoard it because surely it will run out, and we don’t want to face the day when we don’t have enough.

At the heart of this gospel story today is the very simple and very challenging assertion that this narrative of scarcity is false. That in the kingdom of God, which has come near, there is always enough. There is always enough bread and enough fish so that everyone can eat their fill.

There is enough grass, enough space for everyone to find a place to sit and rest.

There is enough. Enough care and compassion and healing. There is simply enough for everyone. And no one gets left behind or left out in the kingdom of God.

This is hard for us to accept. It was hard for the disciples to accept. Even as they had already seen Jesus perform lots and lots of miracles, they still couldn’t conceive of how they would or could feed a crowd of 5,000 people.

Six months wages would not be enough to feed that many. And surely the scraps of one boy wouldn’t suffice.

One scholar says that a common interpretation of this story is that the boys’ willingness to give up his food actually shamed all of those around him to reveal their hidden storages of food. That that is how it came to pass that the crowd of

5,000 were fed. The scholar goes on to say that this could certainly explain how something like this could happen, but this interpretation makes God “no longer a miracle-worker unbounded by human laws, but a social manipulator who reminds people to share ... a divine therapist counseling charity among a greedy people who already know better.”<sup>1</sup>

Yes, it is good to share, and we should do that, but we are called to do that not from a place of shame or pity. But from a place of grace, of hope, of faith that there is actually enough to go around because God kingdom is markedly different than the one we know. It's not a kingdom of coercion and force, of separation and inequity. It's a kingdom where all—every single creature—have enough of what they need.

This story of a deserted place where bread miraculously feeds all the people sounds a lot like the story in Exodus where God provided manna to the wandering Israelites. This story is part and parcel of the story of God with God's people. In fact, it's the only miracle story which is told in every one of the four gospels. It is that important to God's story. To God's narrative.

And at the center of it is God's faithfulness to God's people. God's commitment to providing sustenance and provision. And if you'll remember, the manna spoiled after one day. So, one had to trust that just as manna fell from heaven today, surely more would fall tomorrow. Surely God would provide enough, today and tomorrow and the day after.

I chuckle a bit at the idea that Jesus fled when he realized that they were going “to come and take him by force to make him king.” It seems he knew that the people had misinterpreted his miracle feeding. They wanted a king with immense power who could manipulate even nature to achieve his ends. A king who could feed a whole kingdom with the snap of his fingers could surely defeat an army just the same.

They wanted a king who would give them worldly security and power, but instead, they got a servant, a savior who would reveal to them the truth and show them the way. To reveal to them who God is, what God is about.

Christ doesn't just tell us or even just show us what is good or how we should live, Christ invites us to embody and to live according to another narrative. A counter narrative. It's not just that those who have should share, it's that we live in a world where there is actually enough. There is enough food. Enough water. Enough

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Marie Yust, “Pastoral Perspective,” *Feasting on the Word, Year B*.

housing. Enough resources to ensure that every single person has shelter, sustenance, and dignity. There already is enough.

But because as a people, we are so invested in the scarcity narrative, we get caught up in questions like: how will we pay for it? Or how is a meager offering of one person supposed to change anything?

We chase after kings who promise abundance and wonder why the more we have, the more we feel we still need.

My friends, this gospel story and the gospel in general is not about sharing with the less fortunate, it's about creating a society where there is no such concept. Where everyone has what they need. Where there is enough, today, tomorrow, and the next day.

Let me be very clear here: there is no political party or politician alive today who can give us enough. There is no system of government or commerce or economic theory that can distribute goods and resources so that everyone has enough. There is no king we can look to snap their fingers and make it so.

There is only the servant, Christ, and us, the body of Christ. The people of God who have been called to consider another narrative.

My friends, we have received God's provision. We are witnesses of God's faithfulness, recipients of God's grace. We have come to this Table time after time, and there has always been enough for us. Enough bread and wine. Enough space, enough care and compassion. Enough, every single time.

I know it is only a glimpse ... but it enough to show us what is true.

Let us be moved to feel and believe it. And to do everything in our power to ensure that all people have enough, not because God shames us into sharing, but because God has first loved and cared and provided for us. Because God has given us enough. Because there is enough.

In the name of our Triune God, who creates, sustains, and redeems us all. Amen.