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**St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Indiana**

***You Are Enough and You Are Loved***

*Please click here for a printable version of this sermon.*

**Luke 12:13-21 NRSV, emended**

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But Jesus replied, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And Jesus continued, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. He then wondered, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' I know, I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to the landowner, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves and are not rich in the things of God."

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In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus was talking to people who knew scarcity.

Unless you happened to be part of the lucky 1% in the Roman Empire, you likely lived in poverty. At least a quarter of the population lived below subsistence level, not knowing if they were going to be able to find what they needed to survive the day. You knew your family was doing well if you had enough of an inheritance to squabble over, like the man who prompted Jesus to tell this parable. For many of the listeners, the idea of being a rich landowner with an abundant harvest was a distant dream.

Being released from concerns over survival would have been seductive.

In my visits to Haiti, I have met women who live below a subsistence level, in ultra-poverty. They are without adequate shelter or food; they have no way to care for their children. I have heard their stories of literally making mud pies for their children, in hopes that full bellies would calm their cries, even if there was no nutrition there. I have seen the way they are desperate to keep a man in their life as a way to help provide something - anything - for their children, and the length they will go to do that. The chronic diseases and the way these women have aged beyond their years shows the toll this has taken on their bodies, while the downcast eyes and hunched shoulders show the toll this has taken on their souls.

Even for those who are among the lucky 1% who were not living this existence on the edge, being surrounded by it, seeing it everywhere you go, would likely take a toll on you. Even if you had enough, you would intimately know the perils of scarcity. The idea of being able to work enough to have some security would be seductive, to be able to store up something against the future, to have some insurance that you would not quickly fall over the edge into this desperate way of life.

For many of us in these pews, we have never known that way of life, that even if we lived in poverty, we believed it was just temporary. Yet, many of us live in that same fear of scarcity, not of food or shelter, but of so many other things. It may be wealth, but maybe even more fearing a scarcity of likes or recognition, a scarcity of time - in our days or in our years, a scarcity of our health or fitness. We are always on the quest for more because we have been conditioned to believe that we do not have enough, even as we live in a land and time of abundance.

In her book *The Soul of Money*, Lynne Twist writes about the great lie of scarcity. She writes, "For me, and for many of us, our first waking thought of the day is "I didn't get enough sleep." The next one is "I don't have enough time." Whether true or not, that thought of *not enough* occurs to us automatically before we even think to question or examine it. We spend most of the hours and days of our lives hearing, explaining, complaining, or worrying about what we don't have enough of...Before we even sit up in bed, before our feet touch the floor, we're already inadequate, already behind, already losing, already lacking something. And by the time we go to bed at night, our minds are racing with a litany of what we didn't get, or didn't get done, that day." (*Daring Greatly* p 25-26)

Whew. This is more true for me than I want to admit. I am finally at a point in life where I don't have to juggle the dollars and the due dates, worrying about which bills to pay when so the utilities aren't shut off. Yet as I have experienced a sufficiency in this area of my life, scarcity has crept into another. Our scarcity mindset drives us to want more - more wealth, more time, more fitness, more organization, more degrees, more books. We look for security by seeking more of the things we think we lack.

And how quickly not having enough turns into not being enough, my personal failings of not managing my time or wealth well enough, not building my physical fitness, not being likable enough or worthy enough for others to notice and celebrate me.

And this brings us to the age-old question, what is enough?

I am reminded of the story of Joshua Becker, author of *Becoming Minimalist*. He started down a minimalist journey after a day spent cleaning his garage. It was a beautiful day and he had everything spread out in the driveway, sorting through items, organizing them so he could find them better. His five-year-old son was playing alone in the backyard. When he asked his dad to come play, Joshua couldn't because he needed to get everything cleaned up and put back into the garage. That day, he realized that his possessions were keeping him from being able to focus on what he found truly important, that it wasn't just about being better organized or only keeping things that "sparked joy,"

but that the things he had were not allowing him to be fully present to his family how he wanted to be.

The author of the letter to the Colossians tells us, "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."

While we can get caught up in the directionality of this passage - of a misconception that heaven is somewhere up there - we are to seek Christ and the things where Christ is. Christ is to be our focus and our goal.

Our possessions themselves are not bad. Nor is our quest for health and wellness or our attempts to use our time well or our desire to be surrounded by people who care. Instead, I picture life like a well composed photograph with a clear subject. The other objects in the picture draw your attention to the focal point - they clearly point to the subject, but they do not obscure or crowd it out.

These things we desire can point us - and others - towards Christ. These things we seek become a means to an end, but not the end in themselves.

Our wealth allows us to care for others - it's what allows me to support these Haitian women I met on their pathway to a better life out of poverty and into stability.

Our health allows us to go on a walk or play another game of tag with those we love.

Our time allows us to sit with a friend in their struggles.

Our knowledge and our connections help us work for justice for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

This is what Jesus means in being rich toward God, of seeking the things that are above.

In our quest to have enough and to be enough, our lives are demanded from us. *Getting and keeping* occupy our hearts and minds. Freedom comes from knowing that, through Christ, we have enough and we are enough.

We are worthy to be called children of God, not because of what we bring or what we do, but simply because we are. God has called you "child", has said you are enough and you are loved. We gather at this table, fixing our eyes on Christ who is truly present in the bread and in the wine. We are washed and fed so we can be God's people in the world, freed from fears of scarcity in order to love others fully and deeply, in order to risk everything as we join God in restoring the world with grace and peace.

And when we come to trust that, we can hold our possessions, even our very selves, with open hands, knowing that they are not truly ours, but simply what God has entrusted to us for the good of the world.

In the kingdom of God, there is enough. And you are enough. You are loved. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23; Psalm 49:1-12; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21