

Enough

A sermon shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

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by Rev. Dave Le Grand

Can you think of any major event or milestone in life that is marked without food somewhere near the centre of it? Perhaps one of the first banquets, certainly the first banquet of ancient Biblical history, comes from this story from Exodus where the hungry Israelites discover a mysterious, miraculous, food just waiting for them to collect each day.

In honour of Alex Trebek, here is a Jeopardy answer, for \$800: It's the amount of manna the Israelites gathered, if every person gathered a portion for themselves...

"What is 'ENOUGH', Alex?"

This is the real miracle of flaky manna – not that it mysteriously appears on the ground, but instead, that there is enough for everyone. Those who gathered little found they had enough; those who gathered more than they needed had nothing left over. They all had what they needed to sustain them.

"Enough" – If you have just been laid off, and needing to visit a food bank for the first time, hearing the word "enough" might be a bitter pill. It requires huge trust in God providing, abiding by that rule that you gather only just what you need.

In our modern economy that preaches all-you-can-consume and constant growth, "enough" is not in the modern North American vocabulary. God's directive to gather only enough doesn't seem to stick for those Israelites, but for a time the Israelites demonstrate their trust in God's provision of enough to satisfy their needs. After escaping Egypt with their lives and despite their grumbling in the wilderness, this discovery of abundance, God's manna, is what Love looks like – God loves them even though they don't listen very well. How they must have celebrated over this miraculous food!

We might add the command to wear a mask, and faithfully care for one another by keeping distance between us. We long for that, don't we, to share a meal with one another. It looks like the promised land, so close, that abundance symbolized by breaking bread together around table. Food, even imagining food, can evoke a sense of abundance, sharing with one or two people who are within our safe bubble; can be enough?

You will notice the table in the sanctuary (is set for 3) – perhaps a banquet shared by two is our present reality. The third is an empty spot which could be a tradition for some families who have lost loved ones; that spot reminds them of who is not at the table. Or that empty spot might remind us of God's hospitality, who knows what stranger might pass by. Banquet invites us into a theology of God's radical hospitality; the call to all of us to welcome absolutely every child of God in. It's a place where the spirit in me greets the spirit in you.

When I was an outreach minister in a suburban Oshawa church, I invited people to form teams that would cook and serve dinners at the downtown St. Vincent's kitchen. Food and money to run the kitchen depended completely on the goodwill of local businesses,

organizations, individuals, and the people who volunteer. It was set up as a dining room then, everyone who came through the door was welcomed, served at their tables a hearty meal complete with dessert and great service. I was blessed to be one of the servers who treated them everyone like the character in the old series *Cheers* – anyone remember everyone yelling “Norm” as he enters the establishment in each episode?

It is only partly about feeding the body there, though. It is so much more – each day, kids, youth, middle-aged, and elderly alike came together to connect as community. There are places like this in every city, having to be resourceful in these pandemic times; here in Sudbury we heard often about the Elgin Street Mission and Blue Door Café. In these modern, distancing times, downtown organizations and leaders – some from this church – are working hard to create safely distanced, warm space for our most vulnerable to gather, connect. God is resourceful, and working hard through people thanks to generosity of money and time and expertise to provide enough to go around!

And the other Bible reading: Jesus had just died, what were the disciples to do? They followed what they learned from Jesus – sharing, never hesitating to go to the alleyways and invite in those huddled and cold to sit at God’s table. It was a motley crew, the community that Jesus assembled. And it’s very risky – bringing so many different personalities and styles to God’s banquet table. The followers of Jesus trust that God will give them what they need, their brokenness and passions alike binding them.

We at St. Andrew’s are not a big, or flashy, community. But, if... If you and I have faith enough to believe the Bible’s claim that God will give us enough, that God will give us courage enough to do remarkable things – imagine what more God can do through us.

We are not alone. Thanks to technology, you joining us at home, are here. I’ll invite Roger to pan down with the camera to the table, those of us in the sanctuary, you are invited to look at the table. We are at table, and God is the dishevelled, disoriented stranger who wanders in to join us at that spot we made for her. We are not alone and we have more than enough to love every neighbour.