

You are More Than Enough - The Rev. Emily Given
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Note: These are sermon notes and not a formal manuscript.

When the world feels confusing and torn, I have found that I get quiet. There is power in words and we need them yet when I don't have any that are well thought out or well "felt out", I get quiet. I listen. I wait. I watch. And I offer myself where I can.

As a sermon preparation tool, I often read the appointed scripture aloud repeatedly over the course of a few days. The passages reach a different part within my heart and mind when I speak them. Then I ask God what should be spoken out of the silence that I try to keep.

It is also true that the scripture comes to me in a different way when I hear you read them. Sometimes I sit in the presider's chair and think, "darn, now that I heard that coming out of X's mouth, I wish I would have preached about something else instead. Maybe it is the Spirit's way of whispering a sermon just for me in the moment.

This week it was hard to keep the silence. Not so much because of my own particular political views but because there was so much need for love and connection. So much longing for reassurance and peace. So much uncovering of the brokenness of the world.

I kept asking God, what your the message this week? (Not mine.) Where does scripture intersect with our world? What can I offer to what we know as Christians here and now that doesn't further divide us.

What I was looking for didn't come. And I felt as if God was silent... and I must admit I was a little scared.

On Thursday morning, I jumped into my car to get a Diet Coke before attempting to put fingers to keyboard. The CarPlay served up one of my favorite songs by a Reggae crossover artist named Tubby Love. When I recognized the tune, it made me relax just a bit and I was thankful. My shoulders lowered a few inches and my jaw unclenched. Music has a way of acting as a healing balm.

Then the lyrics came in. Over and over, he sang -

"You are already more than enough."

There it was. The message that I needed. The message that was the ground on which the scripture passages for this week were standing.

"You are already more than enough."

We are given two images of widows this morning, one giving her last handfuls of meal and the other her last two coins. The natural time to be tempted to hold back and keep what is ours out of fear. The natural place to experience doubt and fear. In both stories, the message is “you, God’s people are already more than enough” because “I, as your God, am more than enough.”

By the world’s standards, it is easy to look at the widow placing her two coins in the treasury and say “Look at this woman” (scoffing voice) when the truth is, Jesus looked at her and said “Look at this woman” (in an uplifting voice). He pointed her out as a model of faithfulness. A model of trust. A model of gratitude. A model that it IS possible to live a different way.

You are already more than enough.

What you HAVE is already more than enough. The God who created you, redeemed you... and continues to journey with you is more than enough.

What can we learn from her? How can we live more like her? Trusting that our generosity and our sacrifice will be a blessing... not so much because of the ways those two coins would contribute but because of how the giving of them had the power to transform her... how OUR giving has the power to transform us. Trusting that God will meet us in our generosity.

It is also a time to be careful and offer an extra measure of thoughtfulness because it is tempting to weaponize scripture for our own needs against one another. It was uncomfortable to read aloud a gospel that spoke of long robes, best seats, and the extreme wealth disparity because it is all too easy to read our views and values into that scenario and make it fodder for division. The invitation to look deeper than that is our call as Christians.

There is no doubt that scripture offers conflicting messages and the desire to pick our favorite voice. Resist that urge. Look at the whole arc of what it is saying to us collectively. All 66 individual books, with their many writers, were trying their best to communicate one thing. In all the messes we create as humans, God never leaves us. The holy rhythm of breaking and remembering is real... but our hope should not be lost.

It is in the gathering together that we experience the blessing of a community in Christ. On Tuesday night when we gathered for a prayer vigil around the altar, what I saw was Messiah being made up of living stones. This is an incredibly beautiful place yet those who enter truly give this sanctuary its beauty.

I laid hands on each person and anointed them with oil and did something I hadn’t ever done before. There are three different types of oil for anointing. One for baptism, one for the catechuminate (learners), and one for the sick. In that oil stock that night I co-mingled all three because it felt like a time in our life together as a church and as a nation that something was something needing to be re-born, we were learning, and there is an undeniable sickness in the division that we have. And what we were feeling in our hearts was the very nature of the message contained in the psalm. Not because it was already true, but because it is our eternal hope - Justice, freedom, love. It is what we are called to co-create with God. “Neighbor” is both a moral construct and a faith statement. How we love matters, in light of our differences AND in spite of our differences.

This love is not foolish or sentimental but powerful and brave. It is based on the truth, YOU are already as children of God more than enough and YOU (meaning God) have always been more than enough. This does not make us naive to the world around us, it just helps us put it all in perspective and helps us remember where our power comes from. It's not from the rulers of this world, but the ruler of heaven and earth.

And together we will continue on in hope to do our part of being the kingdom (that kin-dom) of God here and now. People within the church will often quote St. Julian of Norwich when they say "All shall be well, and all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be well." While I believe that to be true, it is not the most powerful part of that quote. What is usually left off is this. 'For there is a force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and will never let us go.'

This is our truth. And to that I say, Amen. Amen.