



Let us pray: God of all that you have created, give us hearts to see and to share in your generosity. Help us know deep down inside that there is always enough for each of us and so we do not have to be jealous, resentful or fearful. Let us hear your Word and take your gracious gifts deep into our being so that we may live and be known as disciples of the Risen Lord. Amen.

I generally am not a fan of the word “enough” at least when applied to God. For me, “enough” is too often a limiting word as in “enough already” said when I’m frustrated with an argument that seems to go on and on with no hope of a true resolution. “Enough already” signifying that we need to quit, we need to accept that we hold divergent views and continuing to argue isn’t going to go anywhere helpful.

And I don’t like the word enough because I believe God is a God of abundance, or as written in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6, verses 37- 38:

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Interesting combination in the two verses. Give and it will be given to you – a good measure, shaken together and running over, poured into your lap. More than enough. Abundance. And, as one of the 10% of people in this country who tithe, this has been my experience.

Giving of the first fruits of my labor – giving 10% or more of my income- has seen nothing but abundance in my life. Now, I do not believe tithing is required to receive God's blessing as some do. It is a measure, however, of an understanding of relationship between myself and God. This may not be how you respond to God but I offer it up to you for your consideration.

Tithing is one way to remember that everything I have and am comes from God, who provides. The story in today's Gospel, often called the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, makes this point. The story in Exodus also makes this point.

In Exodus, the people have left Egypt and are in the wilderness beginning their journey to the Promised Land. As is the way of many of us, we grumble when things don't seem to be going as we thought they ought. The people grumble and God responds. God responds, though, with a day-by-day blessing. Bread for the day. Quail for the day. If you try to keep more than you need for the day except on the day before the Sabbath, the manna rots. Recognizing the Sabbath, God enables people to gather enough quail and bread to see them through the day of rest.

The daily limitation helps keep our focus on God as provider. Do not be greedy for what you have taken will rot if you take more than you need for that day. We see this later in the gospels in the words from Jesus about storing up a treasure of things that will rust or be ruined vs. our love for God and our neighbor which will never pass away, never rust or rot. Look into your heart and discern where your treasure is. What do you value and does it have lasting value. In other words, the opposite of "whoever has the most toys wins" with its assumption that more is always better and especially when that more means somebody else has less.

Our relationship with God is not only about money. It's also about love, justice, mercy and faithfulness. How we treat others. How we live our lives. Do we see a need in the world and respond to it? Do we see the world as a pie that has only so many slices so we need to be first in line to ensure we get our slice and too bad for those who were slow to get in line?

One way to think about this is to consider that we could make the pie in a 9" shell and not an 8" shell. Cut more slices so more can enjoy a taste. Or think about a pizza- order an extra-large cut into 24 pieces rather than a small cut into 6 pieces. Or add a salad if you want to be healthy and you will be satisfied with one piece of pizza rather than 4- well maybe. I hope you see the point: think outside the box, what are alternatives to the way we have always done things that might actually bring about new and healthier life. This is true in the physical and in the spiritual realm.

We are celebrating 180 years of generosity as highlighted on the bulletin board created by Christopher Short and Helen Hudson. They chose two ministries in particular that connect our faith life and our life in the world. This building is on the Register of Historic Places, reflecting its importance as a house of worship and a place of beauty. We are the oldest remaining church building in Montgomery County. And, we have a long history of reaching out to others, especially those who have lives filled with more constraints than most of us. From the

Application for National Register status, written by Fern Brill, I found this paragraph interesting and an example of what our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ can mean. She wrote:

As early as 1836, Negroes were listed on the parish record books as members of St. John's. This was at a time when Indiana law forbade any Negro to remain in Indiana unless he was registered and sponsored. The baptism of a number of Negro babies is recorded in the church book, and in 1860 a Negro woman was confirmed in rites conducted by Bishop Ufold, of Indianapolis. It is believed that the balcony was originally built as seating for Negro members. St. John's has recently been involved in sponsoring families from Poland and Vietnam, and was active in Civil Rights movements in the 1960s.

Think about that: from the very beginning of St. John's, this has been a community of faith that welcomed those who were not welcome everywhere. This has been a place of radical hospitality. With this kind of history and understanding of what our faith calls us to be and to do, it is no wonder that the Youth Service Bureau came to be – and to be housed in the Wheat House. If you haven't read the text on the bulletin board, I encourage you to do so. May it give you ideas about our future: What does it mean to be on a journey to generosity as we move forward into 2018 and beyond? Your financial gifts will help that vision come to be.

I think the owner of the vineyard deliberately paid the last to be hired first. That's the only way those who had been hired first would see what was paid to the last. It's the way Jesus could make his point: God provides. God provides enough for the day. Enough – enough bread and quail for the day. Enough in the Lord's Prayer: Give us this day our daily bread.

An amount that provides for shelter and for food so that we then can go into the vineyard and work with dignity and respect. We don't need to be greedy, jealous or resentful. God provides enough for our daily needs. We need to come back, day after day, to work alongside God. We need to give thanks, day by day, for enough. So maybe I should cut the word "enough" some slack when it helps to keep our focus on God, who provides what we need and who understands that we need God each and every day. Come, let us gather together and eat the bread of life and drink the wine that brings our salvation. God is a god of abundance who understands us better than we understand ourselves. A God who knows that giving us what we need, one day at a time, is the way to ensure we understand the source of all that is, forever and ever. **Amen.**