

There is something Holy about sitting around a table with others, eating a meal, sharing life. It is a place where God meets us as we truly see and hear, know, respect and value others. Much of Jesus' ministry was Table Ministry. He ate with friends, those who disagreed with him, and those who were considered unworthy and unclean. And in every setting, there was transformation. God was at work, caring, strengthening, challenging, granting mercy, grace, and forgiveness. This Lent, on Wednesday evenings, we have been gathering around the table to encounter Jesus, to allow him to transform our lives. As we follow Jesus to the cross, this has been an opportunity to grow in mutual love and the understanding of the gift given us in Jesus Christ.

We will continue our devotions here, online. And perhaps if your situation fits, you can use this devotion as you gather with family around the table at home!

Our evenings have centered around themes taken from Idina Menzel's song, "At This Table." Here is [the link](#) so you want to listen and follow the lyrics.

**Messiah Lutheran Church
Lenten Midweek Devotion
March 25, 2020
"Come to the Table...
...where there is enough for everyone"**

"There's enough for everyone"

Scripture:

The entire of God's Word is the story of God's abundance over against humanity's fear that comes from an attitude of scarcity: The Story of Genesis in chapters 1 & 2; The Exodus Story; And Jesus' whole ministry was one of sharing God's abundance. So I will just include this one story:

Matthew 14:13-21 (NRSV-CE)

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. [14] When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. [15] When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' [16] Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' [17] They replied, '*We have nothing here* but five loaves and two fish.' [18] And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' [19] Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. [20] And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. [21] And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

And a couple of key things Jesus has to say about abundance:

John 10:10 (NRSV-CE)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it *abundantly*.
(italics added to both)

Matthew 6:25-34 (NRSV-CE)

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? [26] Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? [27] And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? [28] And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, [29] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. [30] But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? [31] Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" [32] For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [34] 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Reflection:

I would recommend reading Walter Brueggemann's article, ["The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity."](#)

The mentality of scarcity has exploded as we find ourselves being asked to isolate and distance ourselves from one another. From food to toilet paper, people are afraid that they will "run out." We are watching our retirement funds shrink and we are afraid of not having enough to live on.

So first let's address the myth of scarcity.

A scarcity mindset is a trap. It keeps us locked in fear, in comparison, in envy and covetousness. It tells us "There is not enough." Therefore, we're all in competition with one another for the little there is. It's not just money, although that's where scarcity thinking is most obvious. It bleeds into the rest of our lives too. There's not enough love. There's not enough recognition. There's not enough ability to succeed. We live in fear of running out. It's a false fear, a lie.

Now, the truth:

God has placed us on an abundant planet, in an abundant universe. Although we can, at times, create scarcity through faulty systems, fundamentally abundance is always there. We can tap back into it. There is enough.

Other reflections:

Poverty in the world is not the result of too few resources. It's the result of mismanagement of resources, of ignorance, of bad decisions, or institutional and systemic structures that limit access to resources. Now to be clear, some people have less because of their own choices. But the world's

poorest people aren't poor because of their own bad decisions; they're poor because of systemic problems.

The Bible always calls for one response to poverty: compassion, and sharing out of our own abundance. But that's the key. We have to first see the abundance. We have to choose to live in it, and to give out of it. We have to choose to be full of light.

Often times abundance is confused with having all our material desires met. Abundance is not that, but being close to Jesus, giving him what we have, and trusting him to provide for what we need. Abundance is sufficient, enough.

So how do we live in an attitude of abundance? Simply, the closer we stay to Jesus, the more we will bring a new economy of abundance to our lives and to the world. Jesus' advice in Matthew 6 seems to be to trust God's providence and to live more in the moment. That doesn't mean we don't still practice good stewardship – saving for emergencies, planning for retirement, but in the end our trust is in God's grace which is sufficient. It means living life, holding what we've been given in an open hand rather than a clenched fist.

A wonderful example of how this is lived out is at our mobile food pantry. People with an attitude of scarcity come and are worried about how much food they'll receive. They want to make sure no one gets an advantage over them. They want to take more than they really need, they treat volunteers as adversaries who stand between them and what they perceive is theirs to take. People with an attitude of abundance, see people first. They are joyful, even when needing to come to a food pantry because their resources aren't enough. They are grateful for whatever they receive because it is a gift that they didn't have before. If they see someone not getting as much as they did, they share what they've been given.

Discussion:

- We all worry about having enough. How hard is it for you to "live with an open hand," and trust in God's providence?
- The world "screams" that we don't have enough and that we should be afraid. What can you do to lower the volume of the world's lies and turn up the volume on God's word that what God gives us is enough?
- Where are you seeing examples of people who are living with an attitude of scarcity and/or with an attitude of abundance? How do you see yourself? (Be mindful we are one or the other, we live with both within us.)

What you can do:

- When others are frantic and anxious, be the non-anxious presence. You don't have to be a jerk about it, but simply don't "buy in" to the fear.
- Look around you, where do you have more than you need? Can you give away what you don't *really* need?
- What other ways can you live abundantly?