

Sermon, August 2, 2026
"Enough is Enough"
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Luke's Church, Wilton Maine

"He who knows enough is enough will always have enough" said the Chinese philosopher Laozi back in 600 BCE. Yes folks worried about that way back then.

Jump ahead 300 years to the Greek philosopher Epicurus, *"Nothing is sufficient for the person who finds sufficiency too little"*. It seems worrying about enough is endemic to being human.

So let's hear from the poets, "You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough". William Blake, 1790

And how do we know enough is enough? A modern perspective from Anne Lamott, "Being enough was going to have to be an inside job."

Now I will submit to you that there are two kinds of people in this world: Those who think they are and what they have is enough, and those who don't. Which are you? Well it's not so simple you respond. In certain ways I'm enough and in perhaps my more quiet and darker moments, maybe I'm not. There are all the little ways one might worry about being enough. Perhaps it started this morning given a warm summer day, "Are my clothes good enough for going to church". Or then there's those who do coffee hour, "Do we have enough?" My summer worry "Is the church cool enough so you won't be out there sweating like lumberjacks wishing this sermon would quickly come to a merciful end". But we can also worry about bigger deeper things:

Money – do I have enough now, will I have enough if I need to go into a care facility at some point, do I have enough to leave to my children or whatever else I care about? The Vestry will meet later this morning and one of its worries is will there be enough money for St. Luke's both now and in the future.

Health – will it be good enough to keep doing the things I want to and love doing?

Relationships – do I show enough love to the people in my life I truly love?

On and on and on.

We had an "enough" problem in today's gospel. The disciples were trying take care of Jesus and keep him from worrying about all those hungry people. He didn't ask them to come out there. Let's wrap things up Jesus and call it a day. They are thinking in

practical terms: the people should go back to the villages so that they can get some food before the shops close. But their understanding is very much located in a perception that there is not enough: there isn't enough time for people to get back to the villages; there isn't enough food here; people will go hungry.

Amy Frykholm puts the context of enough in the struggle of keeping her local food pantry sufficiently stocked. When do we have enough? How do we trust? She discusses the running of a food pantry as an ongoing dialogue with worrying there will never be enough food or money to buy it when needed with dealing with the surprises of abundance that come from unexpected donations.

She describes how this dialogue culminated in one warm summer day at the Food Pantry:

One day we had around 100 half-gallons of ice cream donated: a freezer had gone out at the local grocery store. We didn't have freezer space for even ten of these containers. I needed to get rid of ice cream, and I needed to get rid of it fast. Yet I knew that this kind of sudden abundance would spread anxiety through the crowd. Many people would want to grab as much ice cream as they possibly could. Others would point at the grabbers and complain that it was unfair. Every single one of us could take a spoon and a half gallon of ice cream and sit outside and eat until our stomachs hurt if we wanted to. People could gorge or hoard to their hearts' content. And yet I knew that an overwhelming abundance of ice cream was likely to create more anxiety than no ice cream at all. We all have a way of viewing abundance through the lens of habitual, usually imagined, deprivation.

Part of me wanted to come up with a fair and rigid system. Everyone will get two containers of ice cream. I will stand at the front and dole out the ice cream to ensure fairness. But I knew that this would put me in the role of ice cream police. Trying to manage the ice cream would create cheaters and tattletales. Some people had households of 20 and some had households of one. A system of two containers each was not likely to be more fair than grab as grab can. There was no way I could catch everything that was happening. And anyway, I had a lot of other things to do – like make a meal for 50 people.

That day's solution came to me in a moment of inspiration. I climbed up on a stool and said to the assembled crowd who was eying the ice cream, "Please take all the ice cream you want and none of the ice cream you don't. There is no way that I can do that calculation for you. Only you know if you are a one half-gallon kind of person or a ten half-gallon kind of person. There is more than enough ice cream here for everyone, if everyone will just take what you actually want and leave what you don't. And pay attention to the others around you. Think about what they might want as well as what you want."

The gathered participants looked at me like I was completely nuts. I climbed down from my stool, went back to the kitchen, and started working on the meal. Before noon, the ice cream was gone. I heard no complaints, no dead bodies, no mounds of melted ice cream.

Perhaps that same inspiration came to Jesus. He didn't worry about not enough. He took the bread and fish they had, blessed and broke it, gave it to 5,000 people and there were 12 baskets left. Amy Frykholm puts it this way.

I don't know if there is any lesson harder for us at this particular moment in history than this one: at the darkest times, our work is not to listen to our fears and act appropriately, but to respond to divine abundance and act extravagantly.

To add a bit more wisdom, let's go to a Founding Father:

"The longer I live, the more I read, the more patiently I think, and the more anxiously I inquire, the less I seem to know...Do justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly. This is enough."

— John Adams

And the wisdom of children from the book, "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse":

"What's your best discovery?" asked the mole.

"That I'm enough as I am," said the boy."

I don't know if there is any lesson harder for us at this particular moment in history than this one: at the darkest times, our work is not to listen to our fears and act appropriately, but to respond to divine abundance and act extravagantly.