

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the early days of the pandemic, we constantly heard that there was not enough. Not enough toilet paper, not enough hand sanitizer or Clorox wipes. Not enough PPE for our hospital staff. Not enough information on this new virus. Not enough ventilators or ICU hospital beds. Not enough time with family and friends. Not enough time to get all of the work done that needed to be done. Some feel that in the midst of pandemic restrictions there is not enough freedom. Others have looked at the disproportionate effect the virus has on people of color and the recent murder of black civilians by police and say “there is not enough justice.” Family Promise has a growing list of families experiencing homelessness because there are not enough options for sustainable housing. As schools begin to open up they are faced with the reality that many of them do not have enough staff or enough space. The extra unemployment benefits expire this weekend and many are worried they won’t have enough money to survive. Everywhere we turn, it feels like there are messages of scarcity.

And when anyone or any group of people spends too much time in a scarcity mindset, we can begin to worry about if we will have enough. Will we have enough energy, money, health, to survive this pandemic. And if I am experiencing scarcity, it is tempting to buy up what I can, to store up more than I need to make sure that I will always have enough. And as we saw with toilet paper, dry food goods, and baby formula, if I hoard, others aren’t able to get any.

So how refreshing to hear the words of Isaiah this morning. “Come all you are thirsty, you who don’t have money, come and buy wine and milk without cost!” This passage in Isaiah paints a picture of abundance and sufficiency. There is more than enough to go around. But remember, the book of Isaiah is written to a people experiencing exile. They are living in a period of scarcity; these promises must have felt like music to their ears! Throughout the Old Testament, and into the New, God’s kingdom is often described as a banquet or a party. There is always enough food to eat and wine to drink. Everyone is welcome at the table. No one is left out because of their race, class or gender. All are cared for and provided for, with abundance. And the end of our passage in Isaiah emphasizes that God will be the one to bring this kingdom of abundance to pass.

In many ways we see Jesus doing just that in our Gospel text. Jesus does not have a scarcity mindset in the least. When the disciples want to send the crowds away to find their own food, Jesus says they should stay. And then feeds the crowd of thousands with just a few fish and a few loaves of bread. Here is God providing food without cost to God’s people, just like Isaiah prophesied.

Jesus doesn't send the crowds away—even though there is barely enough for his followers. Jesus knows there will be enough. And when we come to God's table to receive communion, even if it is over Zoom—we trust that God is going to show up. There will be enough bread, enough wine, enough grace, and enough God to go around. At God's communion table all are welcome, and no one goes without.

In a little while, as we gather around God's table via Zoom, we can trust that God will show up. God promises to be present in the midst of our fears and anxieties. In the midst of this season when we feel like we don't have enough—not enough answers, not enough security, not enough certainty—God will always be enough. It is amazing that God promises to come to us in such simple, tangible ways: bread, wine, and water. Even when life is at its most chaotic, God's grace comes in the simplest of forms.

As we trust and experience God's sufficiency at the table, we are free to live in the Kingdom mindset of abundance in the rest of our lives. This sufficiency and grace we receive does not mean that everything will always go right—we are not guaranteed good health or that we will always be able to find a pack of toilet paper at the store. God's abundance is the assurance that God's grace will hold us no matter what we face. As the Apostle Paul writes, "God's grace is sufficient for our weakness."

Learning to trust in this gift of grace allows us to be more expansive in our lives. God's grace might empower us to extend compassion to those on the other side of the political aisle. God's grace might invite us to care for students in need of school supplies, seniors who are lonely because of the isolation of the pandemic, or families experiencing homelessness. God's grace will be sufficient in the midst of difficult dialog about race, white privilege, and white supremacy—even when we find ourselves holding different viewpoints than those we love. God's grace will hold us together as a church community even while we endure physical distancing.

The culture around us seems to swirl with anxiety and fear about the scarcity that we are all facing—particularly during this time of pandemic and unrest. But our God is not a God of scarcity, our God is not even a God of just enough, our God is a God of abundance. At the table, and in every facet of our lives, God pours out grace, strength, and love. Pastor Michael and I have been talking a lot recently about a particular pastor who said "In the absence of certainty, people want clarity." I can't offer you certainty about the days ahead. I don't know what the virus will do next, and I don't even know when it might be safe for us to gather in person for worship. I don't have certainty on any of those external realities, but I want to be clear this morning that we can be confident in the midst of all of those uncertainties as we rest and trust in the abundant love and grace of God.