**Kingdom Mindset**

**Narrative Lectionary Lent II**

**March 17, 2019**

Matthew 20: 1-16 Russell Mitchell-Walker

One of the main themes of the reading from Matthew today, is that there is enough. Enough love, enough resources, enough grace. What does it mean to have enough? Having what we need? Trusting that there is enough resources for everyone? Too often we compare what we have with others, or what we do in relation to others, and we judge ourselves as having not enough, or that we are not enough. When we really look at what we have or what we don’t have, can we really see, what enough is? We pray in the Lord’s prayer, give us our daily bread. Do we have enough to eat today? Do we have shelter, do we have enough to wear, do we have access to health care, education, resources to buy what we need? When I ask myself these questions, I know I have more than enough and I can let go of comparing with those who have more than I do and be aware of those who have less. This is what the landowner in Matthew’s story recognized. He recruits a number of workers throughout the day and pays them the daily wage, regardless of how long they worked. Those who worked the longest see this as unfair, as they look at the amount of work they did compared with the others. The landowner challenges them with the contractual obligation that they agreed to work for the daily wage, and also asks them, “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what I have?” The first workers complain saying: “these last worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us, who have bourne the burden of the day and the scorching heat”. I think that is the whole point! The landowner is recognizing everyone needs a daily wage and carries that thinking and plan throughout the day as he recruits new workers. He wants everyone to have enough and not calculating what they do. He chooses to pay everyone a daily wage, so that each will have enough to feed their family that day. The daily wage was enough for 10-12 loaves of flat bread, or 12-16 cups of wheat. Lamb was 3 days wages. Therefore, the daily wage was not enough for meat, the day labourers’ life was still one of poverty.

The landowner made a commitment knowing there was enough for all, to pay everyone the daily wage, regardless of how much they worked. It was a commitment of justice. The other workers experienced it as unfair, and our society would agree, but in terms of equity and caring for others, it is just. Jesus tells us, this is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. In telling this parable, Jesus challenges us to have this kind of mindset. A consciousness that there is enough for all to have what they need. How do we, how might we, live out this concept that there is enough for all?

What do we as a community at Eastside need? What is enough for us in our context? Our focus presently is largely on finances, but what else is needed? What do we need to continue and grow in community together? Can we see that we have everything we need, that we have enough? Is it a matter of figuring out how to share what we have, in its abundance?

Last Saturday our Messy Church program gathered not only three families, two of whom were not at the previous gathering, and a few adults, but there were also two Muslim women that joined us who came to learn about Lent and what we believed. Naumana and her friend came as neighbours to get to know us and learn about our faith. She said, ‘we are neighbours and it is so important for us to know each other and build bridges of understanding’. In the context of this weekend’s shooting at the mosques in Christchurch New Zealand, we can feel overwhelmed with grief and powerlessness at not knowing what to do. We can feel like I am only one person, that I am not enough. I admit for myself, as I was scrolling through all the ‘thoughts and prayers’ messages on Facebook, I felt some terrorist attack fatigue and didn’t have the energy or motivation initially to post something. Then I found myself thinking of Naumana and all my Muslim friends. I sent her a message of solidarity and commitment to continued learning and bridge building. She replied, “Thanks a lot for your beautiful thoughts, and yes, we will continue to work for PEACE”. With what seems to be so much hate in the world, it is important to remember that there is more than enough love and compassion in the world for everyone, and for everyone to live together in the midst of and learning from our differences, while recognizing and celebrating what we have in common. It is this kind of thinking that can get us through the tough times, and support others in their fears and struggles.

Given the landowners’ understanding that he has enough, he is generous with what he has. His generosity benefits those in need, and reflects a commitment to caring for all, regardless of who they are or how much they work. It is a response to an identified need, and an act of compassion. After church on Sunday, Sarah Tkachuk and I received an e-mail from a member of the congregation who had made the decision to donate $10,000 to Eastside’s Mission and Service fund debt. This is a very generous gift to an identified need, and while the donor wishes to remain anonymous, they do hope that the gift will inspire others’ generosity towards meeting our remaining $15,000 debt to the M&S. We also have a stewardship committee that we are calling the Gratitude Team who will be working primarily on a stewardship campaign to increase the number of regular givers and the total amount of annual giving. We will launch the campaign on April 12 with a Gratitude Dinner, so stay tuned for more details. The group also came up with other ideas for fundraisers to address our debt, one of them we are starting today. You will find two bulletin boards with envelopes numbered with the amounts of $1 to $100. We invite you to choose one envelope, put at least the identified amount in it and put it in our offering box or drop it off at the office. Once all 100 envelopes are filled, it will raise another $5050. We all have enough to be able to contribute something through this activity, including children, whether it be $1 or $100 or any amount in between. May our generosity be like the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another theme in the passage today is about recruiting or gathering people to share what you have. The landowner kept going to the market to recruit more workers throughout the day. In reading about this passage, some critique the landowner for being disorganized and not knowing what his need was at the beginning of the day, others say he became aware throughout the day that the work would require more labourers. I like to think that he returned to ensure that all who needed work received work, and recruited those to share in his wealth out of all that he had, knowing that there was enough. This would seem to be in line with Jesus’ message. The recruitment was important to provide for as many as possible, for them to experience the good news. At our Gratitude Team meeting Wednesday, Rachel MacDonald came with a three-page list of ideas to help the church, both in its financial situation as well as ideas for sharing with the community about who we are and what we have to offer. One idea she had for letting the community know about us, was to create a bookmark to give to friends and neighbours. On the bookmark would be a beautiful picture that relates to one of our bedrock beliefs; an inspiring scripture that is meaningful to one of us – we would choose the scriptures; a “why I go to Eastside” statement from a member; and our logo. It is a different way of recruiting but sharing our story, what we have to offer, and the variety of ways one can be a part of our community could be more steps toward moving us forward. As we consider this as a faith community, we could explore the questions: what do we need and what do we have more than enough of that we can share? I often hear we have an authentic welcome - people have come and stayed because they felt welcome here. What other elements are important that we have more than enough of? Sometimes we have to consider what we need, to have enough, before we can share with others. Sometimes we might become aware of areas that we may need to be open to receiving. What can we benefit from being in partnership with others in our community? This week there was a Facebook message from a local school who have children who are coming to school hungry and asking for our help. How can we partner with them? How can we receive from others as well? There are some things that need no limits. If we knew someone needed a hug to have enough, to feel that they are enough that day, would we deny them that hug? There is enough.

As we explore and reflect on what it means to have the mindset of the Kingdom of Heaven, may we begin to live with an awareness that doesn’t compare what we have but helps us be aware of what we can share. When we are focused on what is enough for each of us, we can be aware that there is more than enough that we can share. There is enough – enough love, enough partners to work with, enough resources, enough grace, enough for all. May we live out the generosity of God’s love and compassion for all in need. May we celebrate who and whose we are, and be open to experiencing our wider community in new ways, as we seek to reach out to our community to share with us all that we have. May we continue to work to build our community to be one that can live out the kingdom values of sharing in such a way that there is enough for all.