

Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship  
Anita Rediger  
October 3, 2010

## How Much is Enough?

*PIGPEN'S TALE from [www.squalorsurvivors.com](http://www.squalorsurvivors.com)*

*I couldn't eat at my table - it was piled high with junk. To sleep in my bed, I had to lift off yet more boxes of junk. In the morning I piled them back on, so there was room to get out of my bedroom. One night I was too tired to move the boxes so I decided to sleep on the sofa, just once. Six months later the boxes still occupied the prime real estate of my bed, while I made do with the sofa.*

*Every day I would try to clean up my mess but my efforts were ineffective. I worked all day but essentially just shifted the piles. One day, during one of my shifting sessions, I decided to move my bed. I took off all the boxes, pushed - and it wouldn't budge. Something underneath was jamming it.*

*I uncovered a futon mattress I had abandoned years before. The futon was colorful - speckled with beautiful shades of emerald green, sapphire blue, turquoise, topaz yellow and fuchsia pink. These were the colors of the **mildew** growing all over it. Worse, the mildew had even spread to the wall! I will never forget that moment. I shook with fear and shock at how low I had sunk...*

I remember that the first time that I had ever heard of such behavior was when I was a teenager. Concern about Great-Uncle Roy made its way through the family. After Aunt Violet died this old Iowa farmer lived alone. At first, folks commented with a hint of laughter that he seemed to be collecting blankets; yet by the time that he died it wasn't funny anymore. He had bedrooms in his old Iowa farmhouse filled with blankets, the hallways and living spaces, too. Uncle Roy couldn't get *enough* blankets.

We seem to be growing in our awareness that "hoarding" is a real disorder which can have crippling personal and social consequences. Even though there may not even be room to eat at the table or sleep in the bed, there is never "enough!" (My love for books...recognize that in my free time...I should read the books I have instead of shop for more! Let's not push this too far!!) And it is not only material items which can grip us in this way...

Megan's words of last week about the "chasm" between rich and poor challenged us with the lure of ease and security; one of the problems with them if we aren't paying attention to it is that's "there's never enough."

This week's Gospel text also presents us again an anxious text about "having enough." Right on the heels of the undeniable truth of the chasm that of its own grows wider and wider between haves and have-nots, come two more "uncomfortable accounts." I asked Kyle to attempt to read the Gospel account this morning from a "teasing" point of view. I tried it a couple of times myself and found it very difficult. These seem such serious words and in addition, I've always heard them read this way. As Jesus seemingly, goes

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“on and on” about what it means to be part of the Kingdom, the disciples interrupt him, throwing up their hands in despair and crying, “Increase our faith....” How else might we interpret what they meant by this?

How well I identify with their exclamation of despair. When faced by challenges that seem so great I hear them saying...as I find myself often saying – at least to myself – “I can’t do this...it’s impossible...the needs of the world are too great. My personal resources so limited...” A response out of fear, out of a posture of anxiety...in other words the disciples were saying, “we can’t do this...we aren’t well-enough equipped.”

“...I’m not smart enough, I’m not strong enough, I’m not capable enough....and there are other “not enough’s!” “There’s not enough time. I don’t have enough energy...there’s not going to be enough money...I’m not strong enough, bold enough, tough enough....big enough...attractive enough, tall enough...my clothes aren’t nice enough, my car isn’t new enough, my house isn’t nice enough...my family isn’t important enough” Anyone have anymore suggestions or “not enoughs” which you might add???!

And aren’t these anxieties about having “enough” truly related to the question of having “enough” faith? Instead of starting at the end of the list and working back, what if we would really focus on the question of having enough faith...or not? Honestly, I note that when I slip off of center in respect to my faith, the voices of these other fears and uncertainties begin to taunt ever more loudly Jesus teasingly responds to his overwhelmed disciples... “dear ones, wait just a moment....take a deep breath...” Yes, the needs are great. The risk you run for stepping on others’ toes is likely...but one thing that YOU HAVE IS ENOUGH FAITH. Don’t waste good energy wringing your hands about not being well-enough equipped. Don’t worry so much whether you can follow my call...just like workers who know that there isn’t great surprise or acclaim when they do their daily work, go on out into the real world. Go with trust and confidence. The workers did their day’s work and came home again. They didn’t get everything done in one day; they did that day’s work and came home, fixed supper and then sat down to eat themselves. All that they needed was provided. Tomorrow would be another day...

Three years ago this month, we gathered for our first “wondering aloud” conversations. Who would have ever imagined that three years later, we would be meeting weekly for worship, growing in all the best ways as a community of faith – building deeper relationships with one another across the span of the generations, being part of Peter and Jenna’s call to Northern Ireland, sharing exciting new relationships with persons from the wider Mennonite world...think back on the wonderful fellowship and emboldening words we’ve shared from brothers and sisters from the seminary, the conference, other churches...

I’m discovering that our Emmaus Road venture is becoming for me a very important “story” of faith. We *know* that we are participants in a ministry that is beyond what we could have “pulled off” or “made happen” simply out of our own resources. Gratefully,

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we've discovered that in that sense we don't "have enough!" As we recognize that the question ISN'T whether WE have "enough or not" we are strangely calmed to walk as followers rather than super-responsible leaders. We don't need to worry if "our faith" will run out; at the same time there it doesn't work to attempt to "hoard" faith. (just like the manna & quail experience in the wilderness).

Jesus offers his disciples a contrast in "framing stories." The "framing story" of our culture is that we need to grab for more because there isn't enough. Surely something "more" will satisfy us. Trust and contentment are not good marketing strategies for consumer goods.

In contrast, Jesus invites his followers to step back and see what has a hold of them. Instead of focusing on the scarcity of their strengths and abilities, he reassures them of the abundance all around them. There is enough faith. The Spirit of God is responsible for that! Instead of buying into a story of scarcity we are invited to participate in the writing of a story based on abundance. There really is enough! (In contrast to the, no doubt, soon to begin ads about the scarcity of certain dolls and electronic items for Christmas.)

When there is awareness that we have faith enough for our journey together, strangely many of our other "not enough's" lose their paralyzing effects. Suddenly, it doesn't matter so much if my clothes are nice enough, my house big enough, my car sporty enough...etc...

Jesus gives a quick response to the disciples' hopeless exclamation.... "increase our faith..." He says...maybe even teasingly...you do have enough...you already have enough faith to change the contours of the world... 5 loaves and 2 fishes were enough to feed 5000 people (not counting women and children)

But it's our tendency to want just a little more...What is it that we "need?"

MCC Christmas Giving 2010:

- Hope
- Food
- Peace
- Friendship
- Shelter
- Care
- Education
- Sustainable resources –

Things we need

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“The opposite of poverty is not wealth” chapel speaker at BU. The opposite of poverty is “enough.” BU Civic Engagement theme for 2010, “Living with Enough: Responding to Global Poverty.” Nick & Kyle reading/discussing a book “A Lent Lived On the Streets” for BU.

Reading again from 2 Timothy 1:1-14 – to encourage us, to remind one another...to live into...“ Grace, mercy and peace...from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did- when I remember you...recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you...for God did not give us a spirit of fear (cowardice) but rather a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Friends, the Good News which comes to us in today’s texts by the power of God is that we have we don’t need to feel overwhelmed by the challenges of discipleship. We don’t need to focus on what we lack. Instead the Good News is that we already have enough...enough faith... may we practice it boldly!! AMEN