

Message Manuscript - © 2025 Josh Lunde-Whitler

October 26th, 2025 - Main Street Congregational Church

(Note: This manuscript is a “living document”! It may differ substantially at times from what is shared aloud during the worship service. There may also be typos, or written in a way that makes more sense for oration than for reading. Feel free to share all or portions of this text, but please include a citation.)

Passage: Matthew 6: 25-30; 33-34 (Year C, Proper 25)

I. Re-examining our priorities.

How do I spend my time, and am I spending it on what is truly important? What is truly important... and what just feels important?

These are questions that I definitely felt after my time visiting Kenya, and then Zambia, the summer after my first year of seminary (2005). I know that there is a legacy here at Main Street of going on immersion trips to Haiti and elsewhere, this was something Joan was very passionate about, and a few weeks ago when we talked about holy memories that continue to guide us and inspire us, those trips were chock full of holy memories for me, and I imagine it's the same for many of you, regardless of where you went. One of the things that happens when we are immersed in a way of life that uses less, consumes less, is that it breaks the **illusion...** that I need x to be happy – whether it's x dollars, x cars, x friends on social media, x academic degrees, x whatever... If you get a chance not only to see how the global majority lives, but also experience hospitality from them, work alongside them, get to know people personally, and see how they look out for each other, how a life can be hard, and yet fulfilling... As a seminary student I couldn't help but be reminded of the very first church – in Acts 2: They had few personal possessions, they shared everything, they only used what they needed and were known for their love and generosity, and they spent lots of time praising God and having joyous meals together. It was inspiring, and humbling, and it challenged me to consider what was truly important, what did I need to be fulfilled What was I chasing after?

So you come home, and you're never the same. You look around at all your stuff and think, bah. (*Disgust*) All you see is excess (and I didn't have a tenth of the stuff then that I do now.) And you resolve to live differently (and it did reorient me in an important way, that's a story for another day), but otherwise, slowly but surely, I settled back into my normal routines and normal ways of living. Occasionally remembering, sometimes responding, but too often forgetting, that the norm, is not actually the norm, for the majority of the world in 2025, and for anyone in the world for the majority of human history.

II. “Enough” is countercultural.

As we continue setting out on our journey together, this morning, I wanted to discuss the idea of “enough,” as a value, that was part of the very DNA of Christian life, in the early church – And

yet, this runs directly counter to the culture we live in – making it a harder message for us, and perhaps a more necessary message for us, than even Jesus’ original audience for this speech, part of the Sermon on the Mount.

Even if you’re not materialistic, or are generous with your resources, Scarcity is still the air we breathe. And so of course it affects us, and it has affected the church in the US. And I hope it does not come across as a minimization of people’s individual struggles with anxiety or depression, to say that this air we breathe, this illusion of scarcity, sure seems like it’s connected to the prevalence of feelings of anxiousness, loneliness, and restlessness we see.

Recently I listened to a psychologist doing commentary on a show on Youtube (she does psych commentaries on a lot of nerd culture shows that I like) – Her name is Georgia Dow, and she said that if there was no more worry in the country tomorrow, our entire economy would tank, because our economy runs on worry. Is she right? Are advertisements effective because they offer us perspective on the important things in life – Or because they convince us we need something, sometimes subconsciously >> or that you won’t have a secure future until you do x.

And fear and worry have long struck a chord in our politics as well, but these days it feels like this has become the key signature of our discourse. Nothing consolidates power and inspires people faster than fear, especially fear of an “other,” which easily turns into hatred, and then the justification of violence – it’s a cycle that feeds on itself (ouroboros) - (A cycle that further supports a fear-based, power-based economy, siphoning resources and labor from the hated groups, for the groups in power.)

And it is all fueled by the fear that stems from that gnawing feeling of scarcity.

We say we live in unprecedented times – but I’ve been training myself to see how we’ve been heading this direction for a long time.

So yes.... When we say “enough,” and refuse to put our energies into the cycles of fear that drive our economy and our politics, this is a countercultural act of faith.

III. Putting our energy into the important stuff.

How does all of this make you feel? — We could feel guilt or shame, or even more anxiety, about our roles in this, but I hope we can breathe into this a little bit together before allowing ourselves to marinate in these familiar feelings. We could feel anger, which is an appropriate response, if we can channel that anger, with love, towards nonviolent action, and resist allowing it to turn into hatred or resentment. (And if you are carrying some hatred or resentment right now, that’s human, and it’s okay...)

Whatever you’re feeling, the gift we need for the journey here is not to beat ourselves up, or to abandon our current lives, or to seethe. The gift Jesus offers is a feeling of “enough,” a kind of rest, a letting go... that is also an invitation to our spirits to re-center, and to reprioritize. To ask ourselves what is truly important, and how can my time, energy, and resources better reflect

what I value (or what God values). Jesus asks us to consider the birds and the lilies, adorned with splendor without any direct effort on their own part. But nature isn't passive. Birds gotta eat. Lilies... well, photosynthesis, I guess? Point is, the word "contentment" might be used with this verse to give the impression that we are merely receptacles, waiting to receive God's grace. God's grace is indeed enough – We are invited to rest knowing that there is plenty for all, and that divine Love is our most reliable source for fulfillment and purpose. But then from that center, we are then called to be in the world, to love, to share, to sing, to create a contrast community of hope that resists fear, and the consequences of fear... to seek first the kin-dom of God, and God's righteousness.

> Reflection Questions:

What worries/anxieties can you begin to let go of?

What is something that gives you real joy – and how might reflecting on this, or doing this, help you prioritize what's most important to you?

Reading

Our reading from our Sacred Story this morning comes from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25 thru 30, 33 and 34.

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,^[a] 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 which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?^[b] **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 [God] not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

33 But seek first the kingdom of God^[c] and [God’s]^[d] 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.

(Optional closing words): *May the Still-Speaking God refresh our hearts and minds as we reflect on these ancient words together. Amen.*

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 26, 2025

Prelude

Welcome

Welcome! We're so glad you're here!

Special welcome to any newcomers (welcome card) Families welcome!

Welcome to those watching on FB! – Please leave any reflections, prayer requests, there. Cards of Reflection when you came in, if you didn't get one, Deacons (Dee) can bring it to you.

It is the 20th Sunday after Pentecost in the Christian calendar; It's Reformation Sunday!

You have made it here this morning, taking time out of your precious weekend hours to tend to your heart and spirit, to draw near to the Spirit of God as she surrounds and imbues this family. — Invite to make the most of this time. Sing loud, read with your heart as well as eyes, pay attention to how God might be working in you.

(pause)

No matter who you are, where from, where in your faith journey....

No matter how you look or what your background is, how you identify yourself to others or what others have labeled you....

No matter who you love, what you've been through,

> You are welcome here, invited to hear the still-speaking God

Announcements

- Donations for toilet paper - Newbury FP

Concert 3 pm

>>> Look in bulletin or Happenings for the rest!

Community Prayers for Peace > start Nov 12 (6pm) > for personal and world-healing. >>

Call to Worship

One: As people seeking shelter from the storms we come, O God of the skies.

Many: May we set aside our fears, and find solace in your peace.

One: Our spirits long for your company, our hearts for your healing; our bodies move to the rhythm of your call.

Many: May we set aside our burdens, knowing that your arms are wide and your table is long.

One: As the sparrow finds a home for herself and her nest in the safety of your trees, we are invited now to rest from our usual defenses and distractions, to simply trust.

Many: May we set aside our need for "more," and explore what it means to live in "enough."

You are invited to stand in body or in spirit, as we sing:

*Hymn: Come O Fount of Every Blessing One license #707872

Opening Litany & Lord's Prayer

inspired by "Come O Fount" and 2 Tim 4:6-8; 16-18

One: Font of Blessing, You pour into our lives the waters of Life, which we can then offer to others.

Many: It is in giving that blessings abound! Give us wisdom and courage to seek and share love when we can, and to rest and receive love when we need it.

One: Rescuer-from-Danger, at times you pull us out of the fire, or turn us away from the chasm. Other times you give us the strength to do new things, or overcome obstacles, in ways that shock us.

Many: Through it all you have never left our side. Help us believe in you, and in ourselves, as much as you believe in us.

One: Sonnet-Teacher, your song reverberates all around us, echoing possibilities of a new dawn even in the darkness of night.

Many: Hatred, violence, and oppression cannot stand the sounds of your people, singing with the song of your creation! Continue to tune our hearts to play along with your beautiful music.

One: God in Community, teach us how to harmonize with your vision for this world, that we might sing with abandon! May this vision reorient our priorities, according to the very manner of prayer that Jesus taught us:

LP

*Gloria Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo

Story for All Ages

- *Story/Illustration*
 - Took trip to Kenya in 2005: (research) (visited village) - people giving as much as they could for us to eat. Felt wrong. They weren't worried. (Give them food as I do it.)
 - >>> why do you think they did that? What was important to them?
- *Question*
 - > culture. What was important was the relationship, the treating of guests with care. Trusted they had enough.
 - >>consider birds/lilies: >> what feels important? What's actually important? (God's Love surrounds us, make us kind of a family, we are small part of God's big world, but also, God smiled when they made you and as you grow. God's love is in your very nature, and we can see it in birds/flowers, everything.)
- *Mission:* (Draw Picture of: what is something you have enough of, that you can share???) (two sides?)
 - **PRAYER:**

Musical Offering

Joys, Concerns, Prayers for the World:

> Joy intro. Card: gratitude for love we share. For sunsets, rivers, and cuddles with grandchildren, as reminders of the living God among us. — Add Carmen (cancer-free)

> Invite to share moments of gratitude, blessing, or celebration:

> Concern intro:

> cards: our need for love and compassion. Patience with our loved ones, especially children. Struggles with anger at family members who are not seeing what they're seeing....

> (food shortages), ongoing shutdown/furlough. Many who continue to face illness:

> Prayer list:

Our prayer list: Elaine Goodwin, Judy Smith, Louise McRae; Lori Belleville, Liz Gibb, Irene Finnegan, Rachel Monroe, Clark Imperioso, Laura, Barbara Taylor, Charlotte Zulkowski, and all living with chronic disease; Robbie Canales, Jeanne Judson, Steve Belmonte, Paul Bareford, Dave Simoneau, Stephen Kunz, Wayne Brooks, Carmen Harten, Gina Palmisano, Carol Massa, Fran, Cindy Foster, Nick Thacher, Tony Wellenger, Lucille Cynewski, D, Allie, and all living with cancer;

> Invite to share worries, pains, losses, hopes and dreams:

> Cries for justice/peace intro:

>

> *Ukraine, Russia, Palestine, Israel, US*

> Reassurance, trust, hope blessing:

Reformation Sunday >>> God of revolution (turn over tables of the money-changers) — yet we also acknowledge the diversity of your church — even if we do not always agree or get along.

*Hymn: Your Grace is Enough

Great is your faithfulness, O God of Jacob
You wrestle with the sinner's restless heart
You lead us by still waters into mercy
Where nothing can keep us apart

Great is your love and justice, God of Jacob
You use the weak to lead the strong
You lead us in the song of heaven's victory
And all your people sing along

So remember your people, remember your children
Remember your promises, O God
Your grace is enough (x3) for me

Reading from Our Sacred Story

Matthew 6:25-30; 33-34 Susan Gleason

Meditation and Reflection

Preparing for the Journey: “Enough”

IV. Re-examining our priorities.

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> Time of change for church; time of change for THE church, and for the country.... All Change is a loss but also an opportunity to grow (Jack Shitama) >> checking in on where our worries might be wayleighing our ability to show compassion, or feel gratitude.

> Reflection Questions:

What worries/anxieties can you begin to let go of?

What is something that gives you real joy – and how might reflecting on this, or doing this, help you prioritize what's most important to you?

Offering/Offertory

*Doxology

*Hymn We Stand Humbly in God's Grace

*Commissioning and Benediction

*Benediction Response

Carry your candle, run to the darkness
Seek out the hopeless, confused and torn
Hold out your candle, for all to see it
Take your candle, go light your world
Take your candle, go light your world.

What do you have ENOUGH of?

What is a way you can SHARE with others?