

“Enough To Go Around”

Do you have any quirks - certain habits, mannerisms, peculiar ways of doing things? Maybe you fold wash in a precise way, or you have a habit of tapping your foot when you are nervous. Or you scratch your nose or squint your eyes for no apparent reason. Quirks can be funny. Maybe a bit strange. Perhaps annoying! I have a relative who used to complain that when her husband ate he chomped down on his food. A former parishioner of a church I served was telling me about the pastor who followed me at that church. She said she liked him, but he had this annoying habit of using the word “irregardless” instead of the proper word “regardless”. (Of course, this made me think of what people say about me once I leave a church)!

You may say, “Oh, I don’t have any traits that are annoying, or weird. But my wife does...my husband does...my friend does.” That’s usually the way it is – we can spot them in others, but not in ourselves!

I don’t have any strange or annoying quirks! (I just thought I’d throw that in). Well, maybe I do.....I have this habit, if I get something new, I don’t want to use it right away. For example, if I buy a new tie, I tend not to wear it until my old ties are really shoddy looking. But by then, the new tie I bought is out of style. The same thing happens if I buy a new shirt, or new coat. Nancy gets frustrated with me. I laugh about it. But I keep doing it!

I’ve often tried to figure out why I act this way, what’s underneath this? I think at some deep level, I’m *afraid of running out of things*. *I want to keep the new stuff to make sure I have enough to go around in the future*. Somehow, probably early on in my childhood, something must have happened to lay this anxiety deep into my nature.

But you know, I think there’s some of that anxiety in almost all of us. ***We worry about whether there will be enough to go around. Will I have what I need?*** Will I have a job? Can I keep up with my mortgage or rent payments? Can I survive on a fixed income in my retirement years? What about the cost of healthcare?

With all of this in mind, let’s look at a little story found in 2 Kings 4. It’s a very simple story involving the prophet Elisha. “A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. ‘Give it to the people to eat,’ Elisha said. ‘How can I set this before a hundred men?’ his servant asked. But Elisha answered, ‘Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: “They will eat and have some left over.”’ Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord” (2 Kings 4:42-44).

Someone brought a gift of food to the prophet (this was a common thing to do). He was given some fresh grain, and 20 loaves of barley bread. Elisha chose to share it, presumably with 100 of his fellow prophets. Elisha’s servant doubted that there was enough to go around. So Elisha again reiterates what to do, “Give it to the people to eat, for God says they’ll have enough to eat with some left over!” So they ate, and *there was* some left! Miraculously, there was enough to go around. *God provided!*

I think this is a word of encouragement for us today! ***This question – will there be enough to go around – is especially pertinent today, with the social and economic chaos caused by Covid-19.*** We have the worst unemployment rate since the Great Depression. Some businesses are still closed. Some will never be able to recover from being shut down for so long. People are wondering how they can pay their bills, pay the mortgage, pay the rent. Yes, it's nice to get stimulus money, but this just adds to the mountainous national debt. (Of course, somebody has to pay for it. That would be us – the taxpayers – or our children and grandchildren). The stock market is trying to recover from its deep plunge.

In the ancient world, many people lived on the edge of starvation, struggling just to survive from day to day. Much of the Old Testament and New Testament was written against that backdrop. In fact, just before the verses we read in 2 Kings it says there was a famine in the land at the time (verse 38). In some countries today, famines and drought and hunger are realities: Nigeria, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia. Now the United Nations is warning us that the coronavirus might cause famines “of biblical proportions” in perhaps three dozen more countries.

Well, I think you get the point. A lot of people are wondering, “Will I have enough? Will there be enough to go around?” *The story from 2 Kings 4 gives us hope!* Somehow in the hands of the prophet Elisha, God multiplied the food in a miraculous way. In fact, they not only had enough – they had some left over! “He set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord” (verse 44).

I can hardly read this story about Elisha and the miraculous feeding of 100 people and not think of Jesus feeding over 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. The Gospel of John relates how a huge crowd of people kept following Jesus because of the amazing things He was doing. One day He was teaching the disciples, out in the country, when this huge crowd approached. They had spent so long trying to catch up with Him that by now they were hungry.

John writes: “When he (Jesus) looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?’” (John 6:5). There were well over 5,000 people (they only counted the men!). Philip felt overwhelmed, “half a year’s wages wouldn’t be enough to buy food for each person to get just a little!” Besides, there weren’t any Weis or Giant food stores around! Andrew, another disciple, said, “Well, there’s a boy here who has 5 loaves and 2 fish – but what are they among this ocean of people?” Do you remember the rest of the story? Jesus takes 5 loaves and 2 fish – He blesses them – then He feeds all those people – and has 12 baskets of food left over! *God provided, miraculously!*

God provides for us if we trust Him! I remember a discussion I had with another pastor years ago. We were talking about the “hard times” we were experiencing then with the economy. I was concerned about our people, those who were struggling financially – and how all of this would affect peoples’ giving to the church. In the midst of the conversation my pastor friend smiled and said, “God has plenty of money!” Somehow, I’ve remembered his words after all these year! *God has plenty of money!*

God can provide our needs in ways we can't imagine. *God* is our Source - not our employer, not the government, not our financial advisor. God is our Source! God can bring people across our paths, and open up doors to provide for us, if we trust Him.

A number of other Scriptures tell us of God's ability to provide for His children's basic needs. I love this one in Matthew: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes...so do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:25, 31-33). Notice the conditions we must meet: "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Seek first God's kingdom: for God to rule in our life. Seek God's righteousness: to be right with God, to do what is right.

Here's another principle to follow if we want God to provide our needs: ***If we want to receive, we must be willing to give!*** This goes against the grain of what we are prone to do! If we're worried that we might not have enough, we are probably not in any mood to give anything away. Think of the boy in the story of the loaves and fish. He was willing to share his lunch with an army of people! I wonder if he may have thought to himself, "If I give my lunch away will I myself have anything to eat?" But the boy shared his bread and fish with the Master and a miracle happened!

Scripture teaches us that in being generous, we are blessed. Proverbs 11:25 says, "Be generous, and you will be prosperous. Help others, and you will be helped." Proverbs 22:9 tells us, "Be generous, and share your food with the poor. You will be blessed for it." Jesus says, "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Luke 6:38).

In 2 Corinthians 9:8 the Apostle Paul says if we give generously and cheerfully, "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work." This doesn't mean the reason we give and share is to *get something back*. That's selfish, and is not a worthy motive. But the promise is that if we are unselfish and give to others in need, God will somehow provide enough to go around for us!

This is a really tough time for millions of Americans, and people all over the world. There is so much *bad news* about the world's health and economy and jobs etc. But there's *good news* (the "gospel" is "good news").

The good news is that God is our Source - and if we trust Him, seek His will above all, and are unselfish even when we ourselves may be short on things, God ***will*** provide

God has lots of money
