

“Enough”
November 13, 2011
Grove Presbyterian Church

Old Testament Lesson

Exodus 16: 13-21

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.’” The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

New Testament Lesson

I Timothy 6: 3-10

Manna from heaven. The name? A pun on the people’s question, “What is it.” It isn’t Wonder Bread and Pumpernickel dropping out of the sky. It is most likely bug excrement. But mostly it is a message that you may only eat it day by day, two quarts worth only. No hoarding possible. One day at a time. Trust that what God provides today is enough.

In other words, to be like Winnie the Pooh. Pooh would have found manna tasty.

Pooh and Piglet walked home thoughtfully together in the golden evening, and for a long time they were silent.

"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said Piglet at last, "what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do you say, Piglet?"

"I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully.

"It's the same thing," he said.

Ever since we read Winnie the Pooh and House at Pooh Corner for church book club, I’ve been puzzling my puzzler trying to figure out which stuffed animal am I?

Piglet, nervous and timid?

Eeyore, melancholic and gloomy?

Tigger, braggy and bouncy?
Kango or Roo, momma mothering her adventurous joey?
Maybe pompous Owl?
Often frantic, clever Rabbit, I suppose.

It helps to know who we really are, even if the truth hurts. It helps to do the painful dig work to figure out why we peculiar stuffed animals do what we do.

“Everything has its own place and function.
That applies to people, although many don't seem to realize it,
stuck as they are in the wrong job, the wrong marriage, or the wrong house.
When you know and respect your Inner Nature,
you know where you belong.
You also know where you don't belong.”
– The Tao of Pooh

*"While Eeyore frets ...
... and Piglet hesitates
... and Rabbit calculates
... and Owl pontificates
...Pooh just is."*

"Well," said Pooh, "what I like best," and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called. ~A.A. Milne

Part of me really wants to be like Pooh; but then striving to become Pooh kind of defeats the purpose.

Man, I really have to schedule myself getting into some kind of program and work on those self-help steps so I can achieve inner contentment. Maybe there's a workshop or two?

Uh oh -- that too rather defeats the purpose. It is like being so busy talking about Jesus you never bother to talk with Jesus.

~~~

Discontentment shows. Discontentment breeds trouble. Guaranteed.

Morbid cravings.

We all must do more. We all never do enough.

Paul, in this passage from Timothy, refuses to protect the club.

Paul blames church leaders for fomenting discontent by taking advantage of congregations, by visiting, freeloading, telling them what they want to hear, and charging the congregation for the privilege.

**Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.**

Besides being annoyed at how these church leaders betray the people's trust and cause distress among the congregations, Paul is angry that they pretend to be godly for personal gain, personal benefit. They use people to fill themselves. Don't we now. I sure have.

And we of Happy Valley were a few weeks ago all so smug about the indiscretions and infractions in Ohio State and Miami. We now just won the trophy for shame and pain. No institution is more important than any single girl or boy.

~~~

You are what you tap into. The root source that feeds you shapes you. What's the source? What's the motive?

In the case of these church leaders: what is the source of their infectious self-centered, self-justifying exploitation?

Their motive, Paul criticizes, is love. Misguided love. It always is what you love. You are what you love.

They masquerade as godly for personal gain. Their love of money. Money itself isn't the problem. Money isn't the root of all evil. Loving it is. Avarice. Thinking it is your means for personal contentment. The love of more. Power perverts. How much enough is enough?

And the consequence of their actions? A congregation littered with spiritual garbage: envy confusion, slander, dissension, disunity, wrangling.

Gimme, gimme, gimme. Mine, mine, mine. What do you end up with? Just a lot of junk in the garage. Overstuffed garages equals overstuffed souls. Tough to fill a soul overstuffed with junk.

Bigger isn't always better, says the burst balloon to the string.

It isn't as if we possess anything anyway. We sure do not possess persons.

Money isn't the only kind of gain we seek to fill the vacuum of dissatisfaction in our empty souls. Morbid cravings or divine appetite?

Idolatry makes love impossible, says Kathleen Norris. And our secular society is anything but secular. It is filled with all sorts of gods to adore and venerate.

Help us be godly leaders. Help us be filled by you, Lord. Do Lord, you Lord.

**It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.
And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God
who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2: 20**

If there is no inner contentment, godliness sure isn't going to shine. No godliness, no contentment. No contentment? It then becomes very easy for you to justify using persons. We're going to get satisfied one way or the other.

For not all love is loving, let alone godly. Our human kind of love requires a divine modifier. Let our love be Christly love. There is the only gain worthwhile.

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

A little innocence would be nice these days...

Wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the forest, a little boy and his Bear will always be playing.