



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Pastor Neal Buckaloo
Sunday, October 17, 2010
Make It Simple: Sharing Enough

Philippians 4:11b-13 I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Paul wrote, "I have learned to be content. . ." What does "contentment" feel like? When and where have you experienced contentment? An image that comes to mind is the beginning of summer days on the farm after grade school was out. There was an experience of freedom and the lure of an expansive summer before you. And you had great portions of your day to play. Now not every child has had that experience, but that was part of my growing up.

There are no doubt other moments of contentment. A job finished and well done qualifies. A time enjoyed with friends. You reconnecting to long lost friends or relatives. Perhaps returning home to the place you grew up after a number of years have passed. What would be on your list of your times of contentment?

I imagine the opposite of experiencing contentment is to be filled with fear. Fear is a feeling of disquiet or apprehension or a condition marked by agitation and anxiety or anxiety caused by a real and imminent danger. In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president of the United States in the midst of the Great Depression. His inaugural address included these words: This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

Isaiah, the prophet declares on God's behalf, (Isa. 41) ¹ But now thus says the LORD . . . Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. . . ⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; ¹⁰ do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;

That is declared and celebrated in your baptism – a gift of God that lasts a lifetime and beyond. It will be affirmed and claimed next Sunday for Molly Elizabeth Carroll as she is baptized at the 11AM worship service.

Psalm 46 begins this way: ¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; ³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. ⁵ God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;

How are we to understand our relationship with God? God is creator—we are God's creatures. God is our refuge and strength. Martin Luther reminds us in his explanation of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed "that God has created me and all that exists...God daily and abundantly provides...all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life...out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all!" It is in this relationship that we recognize that God has abundantly provided us with all that we are and all that we have. Gifted in this way by God we live in thankfulness for the gifts of God that daily sustain us. As opportunity presents itself we share the blessings we have received and do so out of thankfulness to God.

If we focus on the scarcity, we never have enough. When we focus on God's abundant blessings, there is more than we can ever imagine. Recognizing God's abundant blessings we experience Paul's message to the Philippians in our own lives. We can be content with what we have because we know that we are blessed and can "do all things through him who strengthens us."

God can educate us with models of simplicity, graciousness, and generosity. I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need, the Apostle Paul wrote. Together with St. Paul, we learn the secret. God can never be limited in what God does for us and others. Our limits, our fears, our lack of surrender—they may hinder God's process.

But God just keeps giving abundantly and trusts us to figure out that the store of love for us is never empty. God beacons us to live thankfully and graciously. God calls us into community where our gifts are mingled with the gifts of others, and together we make a whole, a complete gift in thanks to God. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We can "MAKE IT SIMPLE" by paying attention to God's abundance, and proclaiming it by our own abundant giving. Here. Now. Our message is counter-cultural; counter-intuitive. Trust. Believe. Give. Give thanks.