

Thanks giving Day  
Rev. Karen Millard

Joel 2:21-27  
Psalm 126  
Matthew 6:25-34

### Introduction to scripture

Today's scriptures are promises of abundance. They are not Pollyanna or naïve, they acknowledge heartache, desperation and need and yet in each of them God promises to carry us through. Thanksgiving reminds us to look around us at the sights, sounds, touches, and tastes of our lives recognizing all that we have.

I'll admit I had to pause as I began writing this because suddenly I could hear the birds chirping out the window, I glanced up to see the wind ever so gently blowing about the leaves of the tree, the mountain stood majestic before me and suddenly I was reminded to stop, take a deep breath and recognize all I had been given. See right before I had become overwhelmed by all I had to do, work at hand, friends coming into town I wouldn't have time to see, printers not working – the temptation to blow a gasket over the smallest of things was creeping in. Why do we get so quickly caught up in the vicious cycle of life whilst we forget the deep foundation we have been given by our loving creator?

Hear the words of the prophets, psalmists and followers of Christ – May they open us up to believe in Abundance.

### **Living Abundant Thanks**

Don't worry about your life  
Consider the lilies of the fields how they grow in abundance and beauty.  
Don't worry.....

We live in a world of never enough.  
Never enough time, never enough money, never enough resources, never enough... you fill in the blank.

This never enough mentality effects how we function so much that when we live in it we stop recognizing what we have and when we stop recognizing we stop being grateful and when we stop being grateful we stop sharing. We hold on tight to our time, money, resources, and care, we function in scarcity even where it doesn't exist.

“Mother Teresa once noted what she called the deep poverty of the soul’ that afflicts the wealthy, and had said that the poverty of the soul in America was deeper than any poverty she had seen anywhere on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

Lynne Twist in her book “The Soul of Money” states “What you appreciate, and the way you direct your attention determines the quality of your life... (she writes) So much of our life around money is centered in scarcity’s problem-based assumptions, and the spiralling diagnosis and chase for solutions beyond our grasp. If instead, you can put your full attention and appreciation on what’s there, then you experience the bounty available in the moment. You experience sufficiency, and that’s what you’re about. You generate that vision and you call others to that experience.”<sup>2</sup>

This week the UCC received a letter from our new moderator Mardi Tindal which spoke directly to this attitude of scarcity. So I thought I would share her story with you. She writes

“A few years ago, my southern Ontario congregation decided to host a regular Sunday supper for anyone who needed it. My husband and I became team leaders and spent every third weekend from November to April shopping, cooking, and serving a meal for as many as 120 people.

After a couple of years, we and other volunteers began to feel the strain of this commitment. In fact, the coordinator even wondered if we might have to end the dinner, though it filled a critical need during the cold winter months.

But in this moment of apparent scarcity, we experienced unexpected abundance. Members of the Muslim community, with whom our congregation has a lively relationship, heard about our concerns and asked if they could take care of one Sunday a month. We gratefully accepted. Soon, the Seventh-day Adventist congregation with whom our church shares its building offered to coordinate another Sunday. The Sikh community also got involved, and other community members continued to give leadership.

The weekly supper is now entering its fifth season as an energetic intercultural and interfaith venture. Kitchen and guests have been introduced to menus from around the world. To me, it is an example of the abundance that can be found in community if only we open ourselves up to the possibilities.

*Tindal continued* As many Canadians gather this weekend with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving, it offers a powerful message of hope in a society that often tends to see what is not there, rather than what is there, and what might be.

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<sup>1</sup> Twist, Lynne “The Soul of Money” ©2003 pg. 138

<sup>2</sup> IBID 131

The story of our church supper reveals a truth, and a paradox, described by Parker J. Palmer, founder of the Center for Courage & Renewal in Washington state. Palmer points out that when we think something is scarce, we tend to act in ways that increase scarcity. We fear food shortages so we hoard, decreasing the supply. We fear rejection so we withdraw affection, diminishing relationship.

But when we act as if we believe in the abundance of what appears to be scarce, we create conditions that help generate abundance. When we do this in community, the power that arises from our common action is almost unbelievable.

This isn't magic, and it's not just "Pollyanna." And please don't confuse it with the notion that abiding by religious beliefs is the route to being rewarded with stuff, or the damaging idea that our ambitions can be limitless. To the contrary, one of our greatest challenges is recognizing the natural limits of the earth and living within these limits for the sake of life itself.

Rather, it is an invitation to imagine what it would mean to trust in the supply of whatever seems scarce in our lives today. It is an invitation to courage."<sup>3</sup>

The courage to believe that God will carry us through the shadow times, the courage to believe we will have enough, the courage to believe in abundance. In bible study we had a conversation about how strange it is that when you stop worrying about money, things and people, things seem to work out? It's almost as if you have more.

John Perkins writes if we want the world to change we need to alter our perception of it. When we begin to believe in abundance and possibility our world will be transformed. We will create a new world around us when we embrace the abundance we have been given.

People like Martin Luther King Jr, Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Teresa believed in sufficiency, they taught us that "When you live from a context of sufficiency and you take a stand for something, you open up your heart and the hearts of people in the world around you. And when you do that, you build the vision, create the reality, and grow it such that obstacles eventually fall away."<sup>4</sup>

Can you imagine how different our lives would look if we functioned in the belief of abundance. If instead of worrying about what we or others don't have we lived in gratitude for what we do have, and shared that with one another. I know my life would change profoundly.

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<sup>3</sup> Tindal Mardi "Scarcity, Abundance, and Thanksgiving" Oct 6, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Twist, 194

What if we as a congregation began to look first at all we have before we looked at that which we don't.

This month we are embracing being nourished, in our souls, faith, community and life. This soul food nourishes us in such a way that we know we have rich, abundant lives. As we begin our study "Hungry for Justice" this week we will together as a community have an opportunity to pray, read and build opportunities to change the world around us. But first we need to have the courage to believe that what we have is enough. That we people of Squamish are worthy of being be blessed by God in such a way that those we meet will be blessed as well.

Today we were blessed in this service with the baptism of a beautiful young man. I remember profoundly when I first met Jennifer the joy she expressed having been blessed with Logan. When we started to discuss the potential dates of baptism I thought I'd throw out thanksgiving as an option. Jennifer lit up with joy, and fought back some tears. She started to tell her story of thanksgiving for the gift of Logan. We knew right then and there that no other day would do. Logan is a gift for which Jennifer and Ryan give thanks.

Diana I don't know if you know how precious this congregation holds onto the gift of Mira. For those of you who don't know we have another child gift in this congregation because Diana was diagnosed with breast cancer while pregnant with Mira. And I have heard how these people prayed and prayed for this mom and her little one. And now we have this little Miracle who blesses us here as she inquires about life and faith asking important questions of us like "Does God drink Coffee?"

These children remind us of abundance, and thanksgiving and gratitude. And yet neither of these mothers have had a painless, perfect, bed of roses journey to thanks. With breast cancer treatments, struggles to have children and back surgeries life is real. So when we talk about gratitude and giving thanks. When the scriptures encourage us not to worry – it's not that God doesn't care, it is that we are asked to trust, have faith and courage that we will be carried through. And to remember that we as people of faith and community have the opportunity to participate with The Holy in providing abundance for our world. We are called to live and offer God to one another every day so that all the world may live. Holy One help us in our unbelief – help us live into abundance.

Amen