

WHAT IS ENOUGH?

A sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 19, 2018

St. Paul's Cathedral, Kamloops BC

The Very Rev. Ken Gray

Vianne and Isabel are two French women living in Vichy France during the Second World War. As their territory is increasingly dominated by the Nazis and the SS, and as friends, family and communities alike are increasingly ravaged and devastated by the enemy, they are each drawn deeper into resistance movements. The novel *THE NIGHTENGALE* (soon to be a feature movie) is a magnificent testament to the courage of these and other women who resisted so bravely and pervasively throughout the Second World War in occupied France and elsewhere. Their stories have heretofore remained untold, until now.

Near the end of the novel, Vianne is sharing the story of her dead sister many years after the fact with a particular audience in these words:

On the day before she died, she sat in the shade beside me and held my hand and said, 'V, it's enough for me.' I said, 'What's enough?' and she said, 'My life. It's enough.'

At face value it's a bizarre and contradictory statement. She has lost almost everything: Her best friend – shot at the border; her father – executed in the public square; the removal of her best friend's son – repatriated to the USA; her husband – devastated by concentration camp abuse. There seems so little to celebrate; though she knows love in a deep and profound way, despite the considerable losses.

I admit to personal challenges around the concept of "enough." I often covet more talent, opportunity, discretion, wisdom . . . There's a long and sad list. I sometimes turn to the popular writer and reflector Brené

Brown. In her book *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brown explains that courage, compassion, and connections with others are the keys to a wholehearted life, or one of authenticity and belonging. The ability to feel like we belong is our own responsibility, not that of others. We need not feel like we must prove ourselves to be part of the world because there are no prerequisites to being good enough. Right now, exactly as we are, **we are good enough.**

A different author continues in a similar vein:

By cultivating our courage to be who we are uncensored, compassion to others and to ourselves, and connections with people through both good times and bad, we can begin to recognize our self-worth and live with meaning and satisfaction. We can be us, exactly as we are, and go through life with confidence and joy.

Let's turn now to a more ancient author, and to the Letter to the Ephesians. Listen to this enough-centred language:

So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but **be filled with the Spirit**, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, **giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Such is the language of contentment. Such is the practice of gratitude which sustains many I know and appreciate and love. Such is the discipline of an intentional lifestyle, always aware of the presence of God near us and everywhere who is able to pick us up where we are down.

At the request of Cathedral committee Kathy Moore and I met with a local sign designer the other day. We are going to place an invitation outside three doors of our building. While not finalized, the text will read something like this:

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, or LGBTQ. We welcome indigenous and non-indigenous folks alike.

We welcome those who are rich or poor. We welcome crying newborns, those who are hard-of-hearing and those with skinny figures and others who could afford to lose a few pounds.

You're welcome here if you're "just browsing." See what you think and feel!

We welcome soccer moms, hockey dads, starring artists, tree-huggers, venture fund traders, vegetarians, and junk-food eaters.

We welcome those in recovery or still addicted. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, or those who got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake.

We welcome seekers and doubters, and especially, YOU!

In conversation with Bishop Barbara she encouraged us to name a specific ministry more intentionally, that is the ministry of healing prayer. Her suggestion builds well on our current practice of offering healing prayers during communion at the later Sunday morning service. It builds on our practice of "prayers in the bowl" at both morning services. It

builds on our beautiful and powerful practice of praying for and through each other on Maundy Thursday (using the washing of feet, blessed oil and prayer shawls); it connects well with things I learned at a recent national worship conference in Victoria where about one hundred of us from all over Canada shared in a marvellous healing rite at a local Lutheran Church.

Through this somewhat labyrinthine series of ideas I have today laid out, what I am trying to say is this. There is such a thing as satisfaction in life, but we need to move through and beyond our own hopes, dreams and desires and incorporate God's very real presence in order to accomplish this. We need a forum for this to happen and today's words from the sixth chapter of the Gospel According To John help us on our way. In and through participation in the Eucharist, that intimate public communal event, where we take bread and wine physically into our very bodies, so that our bodies can sustain us through earthly life in preparation for all that lies beyond, we are not simply "going through particular actions." We say in fact to God, that while faith is an acquired taste, discipline and practice that were I presently am . . . is for the time being, enough!

So let's close with a little mantra, something like this:

O God

I am enough

And You are enough

For me and all creation,

Right here, and right now . . . (3x)