

September 28 & 29, 2024

Lost in Translation | *That's Enough*

Genesis 2:1-3

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When is enough... enough? Years ago, when I was first married, we had Thanksgiving with my wife's family and the spread was amazing. I had just recently been introduced to Swedish meatballs and I went a bit, overboard. Where were those all my life. But then after the meal my wife's grandmother pulled out the homemade apple pie. Homemade crust – the whole deal. Legally, I should not have had any but... well you know what happened – I said yes and boom there it was – an entire quarter slice of pie. I am not exaggerating. And... well... you know what happened next... I ate the entire slice. Of course I did. As the newbie in the family, I had to prove that I belonged. The pressure was on. And... well... you know what happened next. I had to find the coolest, darkest room in the house to recover. So, after about 30 minutes I emerged from hibernation with a new sense of purpose. I needed to know when to say enough is enough. As I look at our world... we all do.

Last week Pastor Sarah walked us through the story in John of the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus. In a very real sense Jesus shared with her and the entire village that in Jesus was living water. In Jesus you don't need to look any further. In Jesus there is enough.

Two weeks ago, we connected to the theme that we are created in God's image... in the image of God we have been created and that image is has three distinct pieces...

God's image is one of Creator:

¹ *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth... (Genesis 1:1 NRS)*

God's image is also one of Spirit:

... the Spirit of God was moving (hovering) over the surface of the water... (Genesis 1:2)

God's image is Word:

³ *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 NRS)*

So, to be image bearers – to be people who know that we've been stamped – like a coin – with the image of God. We are called to be creators. Creators of good. We are called to listen and be guided by the Holy Spirit so that when we do speak, when we do create, we speak light into the darkness. And we also see another characteristic in our God. It's a discipline. God shows restraint. God knows when to say – that's enough.

We see this in Genesis chapter 2:

¹ *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.* ² *And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.* ³ *So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1 NRS)*

In these simple 3 closing verses of this creation story, we see that God knows when to say – that's enough. God could have keep creating, but like a great artist, God is able to put down the paint brush, put down the sculpting hammer, remove the clay pot from the wheel, and say – it is good – that's enough. Why? Because one more paint stroke, one more swing of the hammer, one more twist of the wheel could ruin the whole deal. It's not even a question of less is more. How about what has been created is enough. Everything God wants in creation is here. Everything that is needed for all that God created, is here. No more. That's enough.

To dig a bit deeper, we see this in the name of God. There are several names for God, and they are used at different moments and for different reasons in our scripture. One is the name El Shaddai. This usually translated in English as God Almighty. However, there are lots of opinions on that translation throughout the millennia which is a sign that no one knows for sure. But if you take the Hebrew in its original form without the use of

vowels, which were added later, and look at the only the consonants the actual meaning of the El Shaddai is “the God who knows when to say enough”. God’s name is a phrase that describes who God is. So not only are we made in the image of God, but we are also called into living this name, knowing when to say enough.

Now does that describe us as human beings? Maybe not at the thanksgiving meal. How about at other times? Do we know when to say enough, say, when there is gossip? Do we know when to say enough when we have the temptation to criticize one another? Do we know when to say enough when we fret and worry about the political climate in our nation? Do we know when to say enough when we expect perfection from others but expect forgiveness for ourselves? Do we know when to say enough when we engage in our own negative self-talk? Do we know when to say enough when that newest shiny thing catches our attention? Do we know when to say enough as we watch our earth get warmer and warmer and warmer? Do we know when to say enough when wars and battles rage around the world?

It is in God’s nature to know when to say enough and think about our world if all the answers to those questions were yes. However, some of those yes answers seem to be too big and out of our reach or out of our control. Or we need to help others answer yes, that they too know when to say enough as well in order to make an impact. The truth and the truth that has been present for all time is that knowing when to say “that’s enough” when no one else around us is, can be incredibly difficult. Impossible even. Especially in our culture of more, more, more. Knowing when to say that’s enough gets lost in translation.

However, you and I are called to trust the story. Jesus in the Gospel of Luke puts it this way...

²³ Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? (Luk 9:23-25 NRS)

Martin Luther leans on this text as he teaches a daily dying and rising with Christ through our baptism. It’s a daily reminder of who we really are... who we’ve really been created to be. It’s a daily identity check because as we live things get lost in translation. It’s a daily call for us to trust the story. It’s a daily call to remember that you and I are created in the image of God and are called to know when to say, “that’s enough”. Think about this vision from God. A whole group of people. Lots and lots of people who knew when to say, “that’s enough”. Think about the impact that would have on our national politics. It doesn’t mean that everyone would vote the same way but wow, maybe people could talk to one another without screaming and dehumanizing. Think about the impact that would have on our stance of using military force in the world. Think about the impact that would have on climate change, world hunger, violence and oppressive behavior. Maybe we’d be able to do what God calls us to do: take care of the widows, the orphans, the immigrants – the least of these. Think about the impact that would have on our relationships with one another. Relationships in our own families. Instead of going on social media and comparing our lives with others we could genuinely be happy with our lives even if it doesn’t look like theirs. We’d spend a lot less time acquiring that next new shiny thing and spending more time with our loved ones and our friends. We’d spend a lot less time gossiping, criticizing and more time cheering and encouraging. We’d spend a lot less time in the darkest room in the house trying to recover and more time covering for one another with love.