

**Blessed with Abundance – (Matthew 6:26-34 – The Message) – Aug 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

I read this version of the scripture one morning at the cottage in my devotional from Cameron Trimble, and for some reason it hit me like I had never read it before. That happens sometimes with scripture, I like to think that it is the Spirit nudging me.

In previous readings, and in other translations of this scripture, I had often focused on the message of ‘don’t worry – God will provide’. But this time as I read the scripture, Trimble guided me to focus on how this scripture speaks not just about how God will provide – but on the abundance of God’s provisions.

She invited us to intentionally *‘look for abundance. To pay attention to the way people show up for you, (the way) nature provides for you, and (the way that) grace is offered to you.’*

So one morning at the cottage, I decided to go down to the water edge really early, and just sit in quiet meditation to “count my blessings.”

It was so early in the morning, and there was still a gentle morning mist on the water that was slowly being burnt off by the early morning sun.

It had been very stormy the night before, so the water was completely calm – there was not a single ripple. You could see the clear reflection of the trees on the lake like it was a glass mirror.

I closed my eyes and I just listened. I heard:

- Birds chirping
- Chattering of chipmunks
- A distant call of a loon from somewhere across the lake

- The loud caw of a crow
- An acorn dropping onto our neighbor's tin roof
- The gentle ringing of the wind chimes that hang from a tree by the water
- The unexpected sound of the rapid fluttering wings from a visiting hummingbird
- A fish quickly surfacing to the water
- A woodpecker diligently tapping at the bark of a tree in the woods in search of food
- And, as the morning woke up, I heard the distant sound of children's voices eager to start their day of playing in the water.

It was so peaceful, that I felt I wanted to jump into the canoe and start paddling – but then it would have broken the stillness. I promised myself that I would do that tomorrow, but for this day, I just sat in the stillness and felt “Blessed with Abundance.”

(pause)

In the beauty of this sacred and special place of Camp Bimini, I invite each of you to just close your eyes, and in the stillness, listen quietly to the blessing that nature offers us.

(silence)

The silence for me at the cottage was broken by the quiet rumble of a trawling motor from a fisherman's boat returning from his early morning fishing trip – he had risen even earlier than me.

Perhaps you are sometimes like me, always on the go with a list of ‘to do items.’ Blair often jokes about my ‘to do lists’, even when I am on vacation.

Perhaps, like me, you need to make yourself intentionally be still.

In the month of August I have been offering a short Inspirational Message 2 or 3 times a week, based on a resource from Dr Rob Fennell. It encourages us to take just 5 minutes at different times of the day, or in different places, to just be still with God.

I hope you have joined me in that, and if not, I invite to check it out in our blog on our website. For me, I have found that this Spiritual Practice has grounded me in gratitude. And when I am grounded in gratitude, then I am more able to manage the daily stresses in life.

Our scripture today tells us to:

*Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow.*

RIGHT NOW. What God is doing RIGHT NOW.

When we do focus our attention to the good things that God blesses us with right now – then it is much easier to not get caught up in negativity and worry about tomorrow.

And we also begin to realize how we are daily blessed in abundance.

In the liturgical calendar, we are about to enter the season of Creation that starts in September and follows through to Thanksgiving.

It's a season when we are reminded of the abundance of blessings from nature.

It follows the month of August known by some as 'Harvest Season.'

The early Celts traditionally observed Lammastide on August 1, marking the beginning of the harvest season, and especially celebrating the first wheat crop.

On Lammastide, loaves of bread were baked from the first-ripened grain and brought to the churches to be consecrated.

It's a tradition that continues in many churches in Ireland.

And here in Ontario, September is the month for our corn harvest.

All around us we can see the farmers working busy in the fields of abundance.

Perhaps you have a garden yourself and maybe each morning you have filled your basket with a wonderland of vegetables - peppers, zucchini, squash, beans, peas, cucumbers, carrots, beets, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, herbs and more.

Perhaps sometimes your basket has been so overflowing with abundance that you have shared your harvest with others. I know that I have gratefully enjoyed the offerings from some friends gardens.

Theologian Cameron Trimble reminds us that perhaps one of the blessings of Covid, is that we have slowed down enough to be more fully attuned and present throughout the season.

Perhaps before we were always too busy going, going, going. Now, grounded because of COVID, we might be more aware of the abundance of beauty around us in nature. She writes:

*It's easy to see the times of scarcity and failure. But for now, let's see what is also true - the harvest is plentiful.*

We are blessed with abundance.

And it is not just the abundance of a healthy harvest of crops, or the abundance of beauty in nature – we are also blessed with the abundance of God's love.

It's a love that is constant; a love that is unconditional; and a love that is beyond our human comprehension.

Our scripture today reminds us that God loves and cares for us more than anything else in all creation.

Jesus tells us that we *"count far more to him than birds."*(v26)

And if we are in awe of the abundance of beauty in creation, Jesus reminds us that: *"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you?"*(v.30)

That is the abundance of God's love for us.

We cannot deny that we are in uncertain times.

It is realistic to be concerned about a 4<sup>th</sup> wave of COVID.

It is right to be angry about the inequitable distribution of vaccinations around the world.

It is true that we might worry about the future of the Church.

But for now, let us just stop worrying, let us be still, and let us soak up the abundance of blessings from God.

In the days and months ahead; in this season of Creation; I invite you to take time to intentionally follow the instructions of Jesus in our scripture today:

*Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.*

... And they will be met with abundance!

Amen.