

Farmville Baptist Church
June 20, 2021
Am I Enough? Are We Enough?
Tracy Hartman
I Cor 12:1, 4-7, 14-18

This morning we continue our series titled "Enough" by asking the questions, am I enough and are we enough? Do you ever ask these questions? I confess I do on occasion, and I know lots of other folks who do too. Today we are going to explore how God would answer that question. Three weeks ago, on Trinity Sunday, Sandy read to us from Genesis 1, where we are reminded that God created us in God's own image and then declared us to be very good. Then God blessed humanity and entrusted us with the care of each other and with the care of creation. We certainly were enough then!

But it wasn't long before things went south. You see, God made some very risky choices during creation --- perhaps the greatest was giving us free will. God could have created people that were hard wired to love, worship and obey God ó but it seems that God knew that these qualities are meaningless when not offered freely. Instead, God wanted us to want to live in relationship with Him, and God gave us the costly gift of being able to choose to do that or not. Of course, it wasn't very long until those first humans fell short of God's best, of God's ultimate desire for us, and pain and sin entered the world. Were we enough then? Yes. From that point on, throughout Scripture, we see God reaching out over and over again to redeem us from ourselves and to restore our relationships with God and with each other.

For generations, God worked through covenants with Abraham and his descendants, charging them with being a blessing to the world. But with the coming of Jesus, God established a new covenant with us, making it possible for each of us to be in direct relationship with God. The prophet Jeremiah put it like this:

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

In I Cor. 3, Paul puts it this way, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in you? Ephesians 2:10, at the top of our bulletin, reminds us, “You are God’s master piece, created anew in Jesus Christ, so we can do the good things planned for us long ago. What do you with a masterpiece? You treasure it and enjoy it and protect it. Friends, we are each God’s masterpiece. What might our world look like if we all cherished each other that way?

But sometimes it’s hard to remember we are enough, isn’t it? It’s so easy to focus on the our struggles and failures. This was true for my brother-in-law that we lost this week. He was a wonderful man who modeled the qualities of loyalty, perseverance and servanthood. He would do anything for anyone. But like all of us, he had shortcomings, and he often struggled to forgive himself and to accept God’s forgiveness for those things. He and Jay talked about that many times. The other night, Jay imagined the conversation between Jim and God when Jim left this life for his eternal one. Jay could hear God saying, “Welcome and well done good and faithful servant,” and Jim replying, “But what about this problem, and this issue and these times that I failed you and others?” In response, Jay envisioned God saying, “The first time you confessed those to me, I forgave you and flung those things as far as the east is from the west. All that remains is my love for you. And you were enough.

Jane Marczewski is learning that she is enough. You may have seen her recent audition on American Idol that went viral last week and earned her a golden buzzer from Simon Cowell. Jane, who uses the stage Nightbirde, has been living with cancer. She wrote this blog recently about her incredibly difficult year:

After the doctor told me I was dying, and after the man I married said he didn't love me anymore, I chased a miracle in California and sixteen weeks later, I got it. The cancer was gone. But when my brain caught up with it all, something broke. I later found out that all the tragedy at once had caused a physical head trauma, and my brain was sending false signals of excruciating pain and panic.

I spent three months propped against the wall. On nights that I could not sleep, I laid in the tub like an insect, staring at my reflection in the shower knob. I vomited until I was hollow. I rolled up under my robe on the tile. The bathroom floor became my place to hide, where I could scream and be ugly; where I could sob and spit and eventually doze off, happy to be asleep, even with my head on the toilet.

I have had cancer three times now, and I have barely passed thirty. There are times when I wonder what I must have done to deserve such a story. I fear sometimes that when I die and meet with God, that He will say I disappointed Him, or offended Him, or failed Him. Maybe He'll say I just never learned the lesson, or that I wasn't grateful enough. But one thing I know for sure is this: *He can never say that He did not know me.*

I am God's downstairs neighbor, banging on the ceiling with a broomstick. I show up at His door every day. Sometimes with songs, sometimes with curses. Sometimes apologies, gifts,

questions, demands. Sometimes I use my key under the mat to let myself in. Other times, I sulk outside until He opens the door to me Himself.

I have called Him a cheat and a liar, and I meant it. I have told Him I wanted to die, and I meant it. Tears have become the only prayer I know. Prayers roll over my nostrils and drip down my forearms. They fall to the ground as I reach for Him. These are the prayers I repeat night and day; sunrise, sunset.

Call me bitter if you want to— that's fair. Count me among the angry, the cynical, the offended, the hardened. But count me also among the friends of God. For I have seen Him in rare form. I have felt His exhale, laid in His shadow, squinted to read the message He wrote for me in the grout: *“I'm sad too.”*

If an explanation would help, He would write me one— I know it. But maybe an explanation would only start an argument between us— and I don't want to argue with God. I want to lay in a hammock with Him and trace the veins in His arms.

I remind myself that I'm praying to the God who let the Israelites stay lost for decades. They begged to arrive in the Promised Land, but instead He let them wander, answering prayers they didn't pray. For forty years, their shoes didn't wear out. Fire lit their path each night. Every morning, He sent them mercy-bread from heaven.

I look hard for the answers to the prayers that I didn't pray. I look for the mercy-bread that He promised to bake fresh for me each morning. The Israelites called it *manna*, which means *“what is it?”* **That's the same question I'm asking—again, and again. There's mercy here somewhere—but what is it? What is it? What is it?**

I see mercy in the dusty sunlight that outlines the trees, in my mother's crooked hands, in the blanket my friend left for me, in the harmony of the wind chimes. It's not the mercy that I asked for, but it *is* mercy nonetheless. And I learn a new prayer: *thank you*. It's a prayer I don't mean yet, but will repeat until I do.

Call me cursed, call me lost, call me scorned. But that's not all. Call me chosen, blessed, sought-after. Call me the one who God whispers his secrets to. I am the one whose belly is filled with loaves of mercy that were hidden for me.

Even on days when I'm not so sick, sometimes I go lay on the mat in the afternoon light to listen for Him. I know it sounds crazy, and I can't really explain it, but God is in there— even now. (PAUSE) I have heard it said that some people can't see God because they won't look low enough, and it's true. If you can't see him, look lower. God is on the bathroom floor. (PAUSE)

Beloved of God, wherever you find yourself this morning, whether you've found God on the mountain top this day or whether God found you on the bathroom floor in the middle of your anger and grief and pain, YOU ARE ENOUGH! You have been enough from the very beginning of creation. And we are enough now, and we will always be enough.

God has chosen to live within us — we bear the divine image, and we are indeed worthy to be called God's children. The author of I John puts it this way: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are." In humility, we must need to claim that love, over and over again,

We need to do that, for ourselves first, but we must also do it for the rest of the world that so desperately needs to know they are enough. In the gospels, Jesus commands us to love our

neighbors how? As we love ourselves. Only as we receive and accept the love that God has for us can we recognize God's image in others and help them claim God's love for themselves.

This is difficult work for many of us to claim God's love and then share that love and grace with everyone, but the good news for us this morning is that God does not call us to this work alone. God calls us to do it together. We heard the words of Scripture earlier reminding us that we all are uniquely gifted to fit together into one complete body. The masterpiece that is you and you and you are designed to join with every other master piece to become a beautiful and treasured whole. As a body, God calls us to be God's hands and feet in the world, and we've talked about that a lot lately, and we'll talk about it again --- and again.

But this morning, I just want us to put that on pause. So many of us are emerging from the pandemic exhausted and burned out in ways that we never imagined. Many of us are still carrying heavy burdens. So this morning, I want us to just rest in the arms of God, our perfect and loving parent who seeks us out, who meets us where we are, who whispers in our ear or writes on our bathroom wall, "You are enough."

Thanks be to God.