

“More Than Enough”

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¹*To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!*

²*As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until he has mercy upon us.*

³*Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.*

⁴*Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.*
(Psalm 123)

Where do you go when you have had more than enough? When things are beginning to really get to you? When you feel like the bad news, the bad breaks, the bad feelings just keep building up, weighing you down, to the point that you think you might break? Where do you go when you have had more than enough?

This psalm speaks directly to that question... and to that feeling. It was and is a prayer uttered by people who were beat down and worn out by the injustices of the world... people who had grown weary of watching the wicked prosper, while good people were made to suffer. They were fed up with watching the rich take advantage of the poor, the powerful treating the meek like worthless pawns in their selfish games. They were sick of it. They were over it. *“Have mercy upon us, O LORD,”* they prayed, *“have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.”*

Fannie Lou Hamer was very acquainted with this feeling. She was born the youngest of 20 children, daughter of two cotton plantation sharecroppers in the Mississippi Delta. She started picking cotton with her family at age six. From that day on, she went out to the fields, dawn to dusk, in 95-degree heat and high humidity. After a bout with polio at age 13, she went right back out into the cotton, and despite a permanent limp from the disease, she still picked 250 pounds daily. As an adult, she was subjected to the horrifying injustice of involuntary sterilization, which was not an uncommon fate for black females from Mississippi. Through it all, she and her siblings lived under the terrifying oppressive hatred of the Ku Klux Klan.¹

Hamer later became a powerful voice in the civil rights movement, especially active on the subject of voting rights and rights for women at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Of course, she grew very familiar to the scorn and abuse of white politicians on both sides of the aisle. But Hamer was also a woman of great faith, and that faith sustained her on the difficult path she chose to walk. One of the things for which she is most remembered is a speech she gave on December 20, 1964, at the Williams Institutional CME Church in Harlem. Before Malcolm X took the podium, Hamer uttered the famous words of someone who had experienced more than enough racism, more than enough oppression, more than enough of poverty and pain. *“For three hundred years, we've given them time,”*

¹ <https://www.wgbh.org/news/commentary/2017-10-03/fannie-lou-hamer-i-am-sick-and-tired-of-being-sick-and-tired>



she said. "And I've been tired so long, now I am sick and tired of being sick and tired, and we want a change."²

The people who chanted this psalm knew that kind of injustice, and they too were sick and tired and being sick and tired. So where did they go when they had taken more than enough of the world's mess? They went to the Temple in Jerusalem. This psalm is one of the ones that bears the superscription, "A Song of Ascents." Many biblical scholars believe it was sung by pilgrims who were "going up" to Mount Zion, to the temple mount at the center of Jerusalem. They were going there seek God, to ask for justice, to seek God's blessing, and to re-dedicate themselves to the Lord. For them, the temple was a place of hope, a place where they could envision a better world, and renew their faith that good things were on the way, even if evil seemed to be winning in that moment.

So, I ask again. Where do you go when you have had more than enough? Where do you go when you are sick and tired of being sick and tired? As you imagine those places in your own lives, I hope that this church, this congregation, is on your list. I hope and pray that Larchmont Avenue Church is, in your experience, a place of refuge... a place where you can come to have your hope restored, your spirits lifted, and your faith renewed.

If this is your experience, if this is a place where you come to seek hope and restoration and courage for the journey, the passage we read this morning from Second Corinthians suggests that your hope is well founded. When we come here to pray, to worship, and to enjoy fellowship with other people of faith, we are reminded that there is no safer place in the world than in the caring embrace of God. When we devote ourselves to the church of Jesus Christ, we draw near to the God who is at work in the world – at work for good, at work for justice, at work for redemption. But like the pilgrims of old, as they made their way up to the house of God, we have to make a decision to go there. We have to commit ourselves to the idea that God is here, and that this is where we will find the way, the truth and the life we seek.

"Each of you must make up your own mind about how much to give," the scripture says. *"But don't feel sorry that you must give and don't feel you are forced to give. God loves people who love to give. God can bless you with everything you need, and you will always have more than enough."*

Here, with these people, in this place, "you will always have more than enough."

In case you have not heard it already, today is Dedication Sunday, the time when we, as God's people, re-dedicate ourselves to this ministry and this mission. Some churches call this "Consecration Sunday," which recognizes that, when we commit our time, our talents, and our money to the work of God, we view these offerings as sacred. It is a confession that we are not just acting to pay the bills. We are engaging in a spiritual practice and discipline that is critical to our claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Whatever we might call it, this is essentially our "gala season." Many of us have been attending a variety of fundraising events recently when we have the opportunity to support the work of various non-profit organizations. I see great generosity in those events, and that is a wonderful thing. Our mission partners and other non-profits are doing some amazing work to help people in our area, and they deserve our support.

But again, I ask you, Where do you go when you have had more than enough? Where do you go when burdens become too heavy to bear... when you are losing hope... when you

² <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2019/08/09/im-sick-and-tired-of-being-sick-and-tired-dec-20-1964>

need shelter against the storm... when you need a caring presence to help you carry the load? Do you come to a place that reminds you that you are not alone? Do you seek out the Almighty One... the Merciful One... the Eternal One... the One who loves you so much that He would give everything for you, even his own begotten Son?

When you have had more than enough of contempt, more than enough of scorn, more than enough of injustice and pain and suffering, do you come to the One who promises that, in Christ, in the church, you will always have more than enough of what you need?

May God grant us the will to say "Yes" to this divine invitation, and to re-commit and re-dedicate ourselves in faith, hope, and love to the body of Christ in the world. ***Amen.***