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Lent 3C Legacy Sunday
Peace, Seattle
March 7, 2010 epk
Isaiah 55:1-9, Luke 14:1, 7-14

ENOUGH FOR ALL

For two years we've been looking at our life as stewards through the lens of Legacy.

- **In Year One** we focused on personal legacies we each have received, gifts from those who came before us that have influenced and shaped how we live and who we are, grounding us in the Christian faith.
- **In Year Two** we've shifted from the personal to the communal; inviting 27 writers from all generations to tell us about the collective Legacy of our congregation; about ministries and dreams of ministries that we together do offer and might offer the world in the name of Christ.

I can't think of a text more appropriate for Legacy Sunday than the expansive and all-inclusive invitation from the LORD which is given a voice by the prophet Isaiah:

EVERYONE WHO THIRSTS, COME TO THE WATERS!
YOU THAT HAVE NO MONEY, COME, BUY AND EAT!
COME, BUY WINE AND MILK WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE!

How's that for a legacy of generosity? No age requirements; no income requirements; no restrictions; NOTHING to stand between you and God's abundant life.

AND…alongside the invitation comes one piercing question:
WHY SPEND YOUR MONEY FOR THAT WHICH IS NOT BREAD,
AND YOUR LABOR FOR THAT WHICH DOES NOT SATISFY?

Lent is a season for stopping our incessant activities long enough to discover what's at the root of our appetites; what's beneath our cravings; to discern what we really are hungering for.

Saint Augustine said:
"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Jesus taught that all our cravings for meaning, all our longing for fulfilling relationships are symptoms of the most basic hunger of all…the hunger for God.

Before the feast God offers can truly satisfy, I've got to know what I'm truly hungering for.

But in a culture oriented around acquiring, accumulating and consuming, deeper hungers get buried.

In his essay, "The Religion of the Market," David Loy says the biggest threat to the traditional religions of the world is not the arrival of new cults or sects or insights of science but the religion of the market.[1]

The religion of the market is a Wall Street-driven machine that baptizes every craving and confirms every greedy impulse. It proclaims that consumers must demand and should be provided more and more, with no thought to the notion of ENOUGH.[2]

[1] David Loy, "The Religion of the Market," *American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997): 275-90. Quoted by Darryl Trimiew in *Feasting on the Word*, citation below.
[2] Darryl M. Trimiew in *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Vol. 2*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. Page 74.

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The last few years may have laid bear the FOLLY of the philosophy that values greed above accountability. But old habits and systems die hard.

As people of faith we are called by our Lord to participate in a divine economy, in which the last become first, and the greatest become servants, and the best gifts are already paid for.

I'll never forget the first Native American POW WOW gatherings I attended.

- There was a young man, about 14, who was celebrating a significant milestone in his life.
- The way he celebrated it was not by receiving gifts.
- Instead, he stood at the center of the dance grounds with his father who called out the names of those who had been significant in this life—grandparents, elders of the tribe, teachers.
- As each name was called, the father thanked them for helping his son reach this point in his life, and then the young man presented them with a gift. It's called GIVEAWAY.

What a powerful legacy and testimony about giving!

To be a community of faith called in baptism and marked with the cross of Christ forever is to be a community that practices giveaway. This congregation knows how to do that!

- Giveaway of the gifts of grace, and love and welcome.
- Giveaway of time and energy so others can share in the fruits with which we have been blessed.
- Giveaway of our financial resources which are also gifts from the Great Giver.

EVERYONE WHO THIRSTS, COME…
YOU THAT HAVE NO MONEY, COME…

Jesus picks up Isaiah's theme in today's gospel when he tells his dinner host: DON'T INVITE YOUR PEERS AND THE PEOPLE WHO CAN REPAY YOU TO DINNER, INSTEAD INVITE THE POOR, THE CRIPPLED, THE LAME AND THE BLIND. SPREAD WHAT YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN AROUND. **That's how things work in God's divine economy.**

The past four weeks we've been reading in the LEGACY DEVOTIONAL how God's legacy of generosity in Christ Jesus has touched lives through the ministries of this congregation.

We've heard stories about ministry within and beyond our walls, personal stories, dreams, and visions; ways that we at Peace are building a LEGACY for ministry which, we hope, will keep on growing and keep on giving long after all of us here today are long gone.

There's excitement here at Peace – you can sense it on Sunday mornings, you can see it in the growing youth ministry, you can hear it in the babble of babies; you can even taste it today at our Legacy Meal! God is up to something here! And the Spirit has called us all to be part of it.

And alongside that excitement—there comes a challenge: to close the GAP between the financial goals we've set and the actual income we've received; between our Vision and reality.

This is a generous congregation. And as our ministries grow, as we strive to fully inhabit the ambitious vision we've laid out for ourselves, our generosity will need to keep on growing, too.

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The gravity of grace is pulling our congregation into an orbit of hope and our Lord Jesus—the very one who gave himself away for the sake of us and the world—promises he'll be with us every step of the way.

Every other religion comes with a catalog of obligations that must be satisfied in order to earn divine blessing. But the divine economy revealed to us in Jesus operates differently.

This God's legacy of grace, mercy and peace is all there—waiting for us before we ask!
It is free gift, already paid for, and it's all ours!

There's nothing we can do to earn God's grace or control it. But there is so much we can do in response to God's giving!

Today we make that response specific and learn once more how trusting God brings us life.
Amen.

Prayer:
Lord God, we praise you for your legacy of giving and loving, and for your steadfast faithfulness in walking beside this congregation during 68 years of service. Enable us to grow in the financial stewardship of our lives so that your mission through our congregation may continue to grow and mature and bear fruit. Through Christ we pray. Amen.