ARE YOU SATISFIED?

JOHN 14:1-14

A SERMON PREACHED IN DUKE UNIVERSITY CHAPEL
ON SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2020 BY THE REV. BRUCE PUCKETT

"That's enough." Can you hear a teenager pushing herself away from an Easter feast, having enjoyed all the food she cares to have saying it? "That's enough." Can you hear an exasperated mother saying it to her two boys who continue to fight over the ball in the living room, though she has told them to stop 5 times? "That's enough." Can you hear the professor finishing the day's multivariable calculus lecture recognizing her students' heads are spinning as they strive to grasp the latest concept as class time expires? "That's enough."

You know, "That's enough" really isn't a phrase we hear very often. It's not something we're encouraged to think. There is too much money to be made, too many products to be sold, too many politicians to be elected, too many futures to be pursued by convincing people of the opposite of "enough." If discontentment can be stirred, if you can be made to believe you don't have enough—enough clothes in your closet, enough accessories for your car, enough space in your house, enough toys in your play box, enough beauty products on your sink, enough money in your 401k, enough letters behind your name—then you are likely to pursue more and more and more… restlessly. There's an internal kind of agitation and unsettledness that says whatever the reality of the current situation is, it is not enough. There is a restlessness or troubled heart that follows in the way of life and truth—a holy discontentment if you will. This unsettledness drives people to pursue a world where women are not paid 82% of what men doing equal work are paid, where folks are not forced from their homelands because of the effects of ecological devastation, and where people are not killed for jogging while black. Yet there is also a restless or troubled heart that leads on a way, not marked by life and truth. It is the restlessness encouraged by advertisers, fueled by comparisons, rooted in fear, and masked by self-centered desires for something more.

I wonder today, what is enough for you? Our Gospel lesson today helps shape our understanding of what truly is enough. On this fifth Sunday of Easter, we return to the room where Jesus gathered his disciples for a meal prior to his trial, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. This portion of John's Gospel is the beginning of what is often called the farewell discourses because Jesus speaks his departing words, giving instruction, consolation, and encouragement for the future for the disciples in the room and those who were to come.

The words Jesus speaks to his disciples you know well. You've heard them at times where you've needed deep comfort and care, likely at a funeral where you were burying a loved one or friend. Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places…"

For as much comfort as these words may bring, I feel a strong temptation to say to Jesus today, "Easy for you to say, 'Don't let your hearts be troubled.' You are God after all. And how could my heart not be restless and troubled? Do you know about the world we are living in anyway, Jesus? Do you know about Covid-19, stay-at-home orders, and phased re-openings? Do you know about a crashing economy and an uncertain future for everyone? And I haven't even mentioned the ongoing social injustices that are built into the very fabric of our society. Let not your hearts be troubled? Really? Because I'm troubled today."

Yet when we remember the context of this passage, perhaps we can recognize how Jesus speaks these words directly into very troubling circumstance as a means of reassurance and comfort. In the chapter leading up to our reading, Jesus has washed his disciples' feet, revealed that Judas would betray him, foretold of his coming death, implemented a commandment to love as he has loved, and predicted that Peter would deny him. Having just witnessed and experienced these things, the disciples were no doubt feeling unsettled, restless, troubled. And who wouldn't be? They just learned that one of their trusted friends was betraying their leader and Lord. They had heard that even the most enthusiastic disciple among them would cave in his commitment at the most critical time. And they were reminded that Jesus was about to leave them to go to his death. So Jesus, surely sensing their struggle, speaks these words of deep comfort, care, and promise rooted in trusting relationship. In their unsettled and

disturbing moment, Jesus reminds them of the trust—that belief rooted in the context of relationship—they have in God and calls them to that same trust in him. Jesus invites his disciples to lean deeper into the relationship they have established precisely when things seemed most uncertain. Precisely when things are most unsettled and disturbing, Jesus invites you to lean in deeper, too.

But the disciples receive Jesus's words of comfort and his promise of a dwelling place in the heart of God with uncertainty and questions. Perhaps you would, too. Thomas misunderstands Jesus's comments and consequently asks for directions. "We don't know where you are going. How will we know the way?" You haven't given us enough. What you're saying is not enough. Give us more details. Tell us the steps. We need the directions. We need the answers. Yet instead of a roadmap and answers, Jesus gives himself. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is saying, "You find your way to the heart of God through me. You know me; you know God. I am enough for you. In fact, I'm all you need."

Phillip responds to Jesus by saying, "Lord show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Show us God the Father, and that will be enough. Show us the Father, and we will be content. Ironically, Phillip's request comes on the heels of Jesus making one of his "I AM" statements—specifically linking himself with the God who is revealed to Moses at the burning bush as "I AM." Phillip missed the point Jesus had just made that intimate, relational knowledge of Jesus was the way to intimate, relational knowledge of God. Phillip was caught in the trap of not thinking he had enough. The Rolling Stones might have said of Phillip, "He can't get no satisfaction."

It really should be no surprise to us that Phillip would be asking about there being enough. When we first meet Phillip early in John's Gospel, we learn that he is always wondering about there being enough. It's in chapter 6 when we hear the story of the 5000 plus people who were following Jesus because of his healing miracles. When looking around at the people, Jesus asked Phillip where they were going to buy bread for all the people to eat. Phillip automatically thinks there is not enough. He says 6 months wages would not be enough to give everyone a little bread. How could we possibly satisfy the need? You know how the story goes. A boy gives one of Jesus's disciples 5 barley loaves and 2 fish as his offering. Jesus has the people sit, then he blesses the bread and shares it with them. Once all the people had their fill of bread, the disciples collected the extras that filled 12 baskets full. There was enough. Everyone was satisfied.

"Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." It will be enough. Jesus's seems slightly irritated by Phillips request. Afterall, Phillip had witnessed the feeding of all those people—a sure demonstration that through Jesus there is enough. Phillip has seen Jesus's God-glorifying works and heard his teaching. So it was no doubt upsetting when Phillip couldn't understand that Jesus already was providing what he needed. So Jesus asks, "Have I been with you all of this time, Phillip, and you still do not know me? If you've seen me, you've seen God. I am in the Father and the Father is in me. I speak on God's authority not my own, and it is God, my Father, who is working. Whether you trust me because of what I say or because of the works you've seen, either way: Trust me. I am enough. I am all you need to be satisfied."

If Phillip's failure to know Jesus intimately isn't as bad as Peter's betrayal, it's close. Phillip has missed the most critical thing by not yet recognizing that Jesus is acting in one accord with the Father. Phillip has not realized they've been creating and recreating together from the beginning. Jesus's whole life and ministry have been about revealing and glorifying God fully. Jesus has been demonstrating the Father's character from the beginning—the character of a God who loved the world so much that God came to be with us and ultimately die for us. So Jesus restates it plainly, and then he goes deeper still. Not only in Jesus have you witnessed God, but by dwelling in Jesus in the present, the disciples will carry on Jesus's work of showing God to the world. Jesus says to his disciples, "Not only do you get to see the Father now in me, you will get to show the Father to others by abiding in me and thereby doing greater things than I've done." Jesus is saying I am enough for you, and I am enough to satisfy the needs of the whole world through you.

I wonder, are you satisfied today? Do you know the one who alone is enough? Perhaps you've heard about one who is enough, but you don't have that trusting relationship with him that calms an unsettled heart. Today is a

good day to say, "Jesus, I'm ready to know you as enough for me." Or perhaps you've been walking and journeying with Jesus for a very long time, but today you wonder if you are satisfied—perhaps you aren't sure you've seen what you are supposed to have seen. Today is a good day to say, "Jesus, I'm ready to experience the true satisfaction found in you." Perhaps you've found that too often your contentment is contingent on your circumstances, so you're regularly wondering if you have enough. Today is a good day to say, "Jesus, I'm ready to know the contentment connected to the consistency of you living within me." Jesus wants you to experience today that he is enough for you.

In all of this talk about Jesus being enough and finding contentment in him, I want to make sure we take note of some problematic misunderstandings of this statement. Saying that Jesus is enough and in Jesus we are satisfied is not the same as saying all who truly trust in Jesus will have no needs or heartaches or trouble. Afterall, Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry who followed him and told the disciples they would do greater things than this for the glory of God. And saying Jesus is enough in no way allows us to align with the status quo of the world, as if to say that those who have wealth and abundance and power are those who by virtue of their circumstances truly trust in God. This would fail to recognize our homeless, power stripped, dying savior in whom we see the Father. And saying that Jesus is enough cannot be taken as a way of suggesting that working for a just world where everyone's physical needs are met and mercy flows is only of secondary good. Too often Christians have read John's Gospel story, and even this passage in particular, as a spiritual escape. In effect saying, "Don't worry about the present physical realities of your neighbors or yourself— we all have a room in God's house waiting for us anyway—all we really need is Jesus." The church has too often been so spiritually minded, that it is of no earthly good, which means we've often missed seeing and showing Jesus and therefore missed knowing God. So yes, Jesus is enough. And also, Jesus's work of healing the world continues, even for those who with troubled hearts trust Jesus is enough.

In light of this, listen again to Jesus's words that are full of care and comfort and promise: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. Jesus is enough for you and me. Lean into the intimacy of relationship with Jesus—a relationship marked by trust, ever deepening knowledge, and love. In Jesus, you will find true contentment; in him, you will be satisfied; in him, you will have intimate knowledge of God; and in Jesus, you will do those very things that bring honor to his name and glory to God, for the sake of the world. Amen.