

Rev. Anne J. Scalfaro
8 March 2026

10:30 a.m. MT Worship
Third Sunday in Lent

Calvary Baptist Church
Denver, Colorado

“The Good News is...Together, the Impossible is Possible”

Third Sermon in *Tell Me Something Good: Grounding Ourselves in the Good News this Lent*

NOTE: A sermon is a spoken word event. This manuscript served as a guide but is not exact to what was preached in the moment. My manuscripts always always include much more material than what was actually preached.

Mark 6:32-44; Ephesians 3:20-21

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

One of my favorite spiritual writers, Robert Benson, says, “*We are not here to show something to God. We are here because God has something to show to us.*”¹

That quote is from Benson’s book entitled, *Between the Dreaming and the Coming True: The Road Home to God*. The invitation he poses to us is to come to know God, not just as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer but as *The Dreamer* too—the One whose Dream for our lives and our world is beyond anything we could ever predict or imagine or desire or understand.

With children dying in wars as we drop bombs, with immigrants forced to leave their homes, with queer folks denied rights to live as themselves and with so many hungry, homeless,

and without health care, perhaps it is obvious to say that yes, we live *Between the Dreaming and the Coming True*. Between the messy, beautiful ideal of Creation and it’s stated goodness and the actualized, equitable, abundant, liberative lived-reality of the kin-dom of God here on earth as it is in heaven. We live in this messed up, mixed up middle, and in the midst of trying to make our way, many of us have a deep soul-stirring within us, a deep awareness that God wants more for us than what we are living right now. There is more for us than what we see in front of us or what we see on the news. We *know* that the pain, injustice, inequality, and suffering of what we see and perpetuate and allow and endure and create and even what we fight against and lament for and protest about...all of how the world is

¹ Robert Benson, *Between the Dreaming and the Coming True: The Road Home to God* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1996), pg 68.

now is not God's dream for us,
or God's desire.

know THIS is not the end of the story, yet many of us have lost a vision of what the end should be or could be. We feel trapped in the trauma and troubles of Today, no longer able to dream or imagine of a different world.

And sometimes it just takes one story, one moment, one worship service to help us ground us in God's vision and remind us of the dream.

I was at Starbucks yesterday waiting to pick up a couple of those big containers of coffee for the Evergreen Gathering yesterday morning. As I was waiting across the store by the pick up area, I started to notice that the man who was at the register kept picking up various items in the refrigerated case and the areas by the check-out stand and he'd ask the person at the cash register to scan the items and tell him how much they cost. One by one he kept putting the items back and shaking his head. I stepped a bit closer to see what was going on, because I began to feel the tension of those behind him in the line. I'm not really sure what led me to do this, but I just walked up and stood beside him

and explained to the people who I know thought I was cutting in line that I was with this man. We were together.

I quickly assessed that he had exactly \$2.03. He was trying to find something he could afford to buy. The cheapest thing he could find was a single string cheese, that was \$2.11. I took the string cheese and a couple other granola bar type items and said "we'll take these things" and scanned my Starbucks App, which thanks to many of you who give me Starbucks gift cards at Christmas time, is still healthily stocked up with plenty of money. (I say that to say, YOU are part of this story too!)

The man thanked me for the food, but then explained that the blessing was two-fold. He was trying to find something to eat that was healthy and had protein because he was hungry, yes, but also, he needed to use the restroom, and purchasing something in the store was the "key" that is needed to be able to use that "amenity." I thought I was meeting the need of hunger, but the primary need was that of bodily function and human dignity.

Here is a store—full of food—
and this man could not find

anything under a \$2 price point that he could eat. Here is a store—with a working restroom—and nobody in it at the time or lined up to use it, and this man could not access it without purchasing something. We have tied basic human rights—food and toileting—to one’s ability to *pay*. And meanwhile, here I am with more than enough money on my Starbucks App to pay for whatever the man wanted and I have that money on my App because I’m a part of a community that is very generous to me at Christmas time. And in this moment, all of these things converge together in such a way that this man, who did not have a community around him in that moment—despite being backed up by a line of people (most of whom were either frustrated, in a hurry, or on their phones and not paying attention)—*until* I walked up and proclaimed myself as “part of his community” (whether he wanted me to or not). And in a way, as I stepped up with my App, I stepped with all of you who gave me Starbucks gift cards. And with all of you who have taught me to see the people around me with more nuance and awareness, and compassion. To pay attention in a deeper way. I’m looking at you,

Blessings Ministry volunteers! And community members like Joe Keniston whose life we honored last month. You, as a community, shaped me to respond in that moment yesterday to show up as community for someone who needed community.

And it also just reminded me that it feels like the world we are in now that keeping the dream of God’s kin-dom alive is just keeping the dignity of each person’s humanity in tact, first and foremost. It feels basic, but it’s the heart of the incarnation. That we are all glimpse of God’s divine image and goodness.

The person checking me out saw the Calvary logo on my sweatshirt and my name tag that I was wearing because of the Evergreen conference, and said “*Oh that’s nice of you...are you doing this because you’re a pastor?*” but I instinctively said, “*I’m doing this because I’m a person and so he is he.*” It was kind of an automatic response. I’m more prone to be like, yes I’m the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Denver and please join us for worship at 10:30am but something in me (beyond me) spoke up to say this actually has nothing to do

with me being a pastor. This is about staying in touch with our humanity.

“I’m a human and he is too” came out of my mouth before I could think of it, and probably because while other people may see me a pastor first, I always just see myself as a person first. I actually found myself having great compassion for everyone in the Starbucks store yesterday: the people frustrated in line, the cashier frustrated that he couldn’t just give the man the string cheese but felt like he had to abide by the system. We have a lot of rules and constraints in our world.

God’s Dream, what God Imagines for us and Dreams for us, has far less rules than most of us would be comfortable with, I think. Because it’s not about preserving order as much as it is creating possibility. The Gospel, the Good News, truly is that *Together*, the Impossible can become Possible...but that won’t happen if we are not in it, together. You, Me, All of Us.

And together, in being community and reminding each other of what we have, we are actually holding on God’s dream for us and our world.

Our gospel story today is a favorite. Who doesn’t love the feeding of the 5,000...what’s not to love? Everyone gets fed. But like many of the stories that seem neat and tidy and hopeful and perhaps a bit too ‘miraculous’ for our taste (a bit too easy given the stresses of our world), I remind you that this story takes place in the context of political threat and deep grief.

John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin and mentor and teacher, has just been beheaded by Herod. Jesus and the disciples are grieving and so are all the people in the area who knew and loved John. When Jesus sees the crowd and Mark says that Jesus has compassion on them because they were like “sheep without a shepherd” it’s because they were. The crowds were the sheep that followed their Shepherd—John the Baptist. Jesus was very early in his ministry. His crowds were not yet nearly as huge as John’s. He was, in fact, learning from John in so many ways. This is why Jesus, at the beginning of this text, tries to lead the disciples away to a deserted place to pray and presumably to grieve, because the verse before today’s text, we learn that John’s disciples had just laid his body

in a tomb. And here they are today, the next day, trying to function. If you know the fog of grief, you know what I'm talking about. This was a shocking event that not only showed Jesus and the disciples the extent of Herod's power and what he would do (murder) for the sake of his reputation (remember John had been telling Herod it was not lawful for him to be with his brother's wife)...it was also shocking because Jesus realized this was now "his time" and that the journey was going to be far more dangerous than perhaps even realized at first.

So many people are coming and going, Mark says, that Jesus and the disciples don't even have time to eat themselves...so they get in a boat to go to the other side of the water just to rest...and hopefully eat something. Perhaps you know the feeling of meeting so many people's needs (like your kids), or maybe just one person's needs (like your partner you are a caregiver for), that you realize you haven't even eaten yourself even as you've fed those in your care. This is what the disciples and Jesus were feeling—their own hunger and fatigue. Their humanness and their human need.

And Jesus is actually trying to nurture this and address it by saying, "it's time for a break," when the crowds just keep coming. And it's the swelling crowds, coming to Jesus in grief as "sheep without a shepherd" that lead him to draw deep from within whatever reserves of energy he has left within him to feed out a bit more...to nourish the crowds with teaching. Perhaps you know this feeling too...that at the moment when you are completely spent (wet-rag rung-out spent) and are on your way home or out the doors, someone else in need stops you and needs yet something else. And somehow you find the energy within, by the grace of God to help just a tad longer. You eek the energy out when you felt like you had none left. This is what Jesus does. Until...

...after a while, the disciples turn the tables on Jesus and use his very words on him now. Saying, okay Jesus, it's late, you're tired, we're tired, people are hungry—send them home so they can all go buy food to eat. Seems like a fair statement from the disciples. We've done what we can do...break up the party...people have been 'fed' spiritually, now they need to be literally fed, and we don't have

food, so that means—party is over...Goodnight and Goodbye.

But Jesus responds curiously. He says to his tired, hungry disciples, “You give them something to eat.” This is an invitation from a Dreamer who represents the Creativity and Abundance of God’s kingdom....but of course....the disciples do not yet know this or hear Jesus’ words in this way. They hear it as an irrational command from their leader who is also probably just hangry himself and out of his mind, trying to push his work off on them.

They reply, “You want us to go out and buy a bunch of food and bring it back here to feed them?” They focus on the cost of this, quoting two hundred denarii. Remember, a denari is the amount of an entire day’s wages for a day laborer, perhaps \$40-\$60 in today’s currency. 200 denarii would have been half a year’s worth of wages for one person. The amount of money that the disciples name of what it would cost to feed these people shows us just how many people there are. This is long before we are told the count is 5,000 men (on this international women’s day, I’d just like to shout out the women

and children who would have also been in this crowd...who I’m pretty sure made sure everyone got fed...but more on that in a minute.) The disciples, from the beginning of Jesus’ “ask,” seem to understand there are a lot of people around them and feeding them is not in the budget, or the schedule.

Jesus then teaches them how to Dream, how to Imagine, how to create Possibility instead of relying on Probability. He says, “How many loaves have you?” “Go and see.”

Go and see. Those three words are everything. Go and see. Take stock of what you actually do have before saying you don’t have anything. Go, talk to the people. See with your own eyes what’s out there.

They come back with five loaves and two fish, and I wonder if they just kind of went a couple rows back in the crowd and intentionally came back with not a whole lot so that Jesus would say, “you’re right; there’s not enough; let’s send them away.” But that’s not what Jesus does. Jesus begins to teach us about the dream and how even as we live Between the Dreaming and the Coming True there is actually a way we can

meet needs here and now in a tangible way that makes a difference. We can find abundance even in the midst of what looks like scarcity.

At this point, when the disciples have “gone and seen” enough to get five loaves and 2 fish, Jesus invites everyone to sit down on the grass in smaller groups...creating little communities out of this giant blob of a crowd. In other words, while they were probably all turned to face him as he was teaching, he invites them to sit down and turn and face each other. Connect with each other. And in connecting with one another, they begin to look at each other and take a beat and actually probably begin to realize what they actually have in their midst. Maybe they begin to see what they couldn't see before.

So often we live in scarcity because we ‘think’ we don't have enough because we're listening to the messages around us telling us we don't have enough or because we're counting the change in our pockets and coming up with \$2.03 without realizing the 8 cents we need to feed ourselves is in the pocket of the person next to us, who has nothing

better to do with that 8 cents than to help feed you.

Perhaps my favorite part of this passage though is what Jesus does with the loaves and fish, because he will repeat these same actions at the Last Supper in the Upper Room when he is telling his disciples goodbye and he's about to be handed over the powers of the Empire who will crucify him. He gives them, then, a reminder that before them in the act of breaking daily bread around the table—there is enough for all, for all time. And it's the same actions that he engages in as the Risen Christ with the ‘strangers’ on the Road to Emmaus, who recognize him in the ‘breaking of the bread.’ This makes me think Jesus did these actions a lot—if teaching about Scripture did not lead to the two people on the road recognizing Jesus as the Risen Christ, but breaking bread does...that that is the moment when their eyes were opened...then that tells us there is something ‘special’ in these actions.

And the four actions are:
Taking the bread, **Blessing** the bread, **Breaking** the bread, **Giving** the bread.

Taking, Blessing, Breaking,

Giving. I'd like to suggest that these are the actions that can actually keep God's dream alive in the world.

It's after this, that the crowds, in their community circles on the grass, eat their fill and have 12 baskets of leftovers. There are so many quantifiable numbers given in this text. 200 denarii. 5 loaves. 2 fish. 12 baskets. 5,000 men. Lots of numbers. Some that speak of abundance, some that denote scarcity.

But the answer to the equation of this 'problem'—so to speak—the problem of people's hunger, is not something quantifiable or countable. Jesus offers a qualitative solution to their quantitative 'problem.' Not something that focuses on numbers and scarcity and will there be enough, but something that reminds them of the actions of their very lives that will ensure *all* will always have enough. The actions are not about counting something. The actions are about living in a certain way. Seeing with a distinct perspective. **Choosing to create communities of care by gathering together and Taking, Blessing, Breaking, Giving.**

If we do these things—with our

resources and with our very lives—there will always be enough. The impossible becomes possible. It's like Jesus is showing us how to Live Between the Dreaming and the Coming True; he's showing us how to co-create the kin-dom of God, *together*.

First we focus on **taking**. And this, by the way, is not about taking from others or 'taking' what is ours, so to speak. It's about 'taking stock' of what is before us. It reminds me of a favorite line from James Baldwin when he was interviewed by the New York Times in 1962: "*Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.*" This from a black, gay, prophetic artist living in a country that embraced none of those identities. Baldwin calls us to account, always. To face the reality of what is before us.

That's what Jesus does too.

In this moment, Jesus takes what is before him, these loaves, and just acknowledges that they are there. There are resources before us if we open our eyes and see what is around us. Let's see, what are we actually working with? We have to know

what we're actually working with before we make any declarations about what we can do or can't do.

Even in the direst of circumstances, the way to move from a scarcity "there will never be enough" mindset to an abundance mindset of "God will provide enough" is to take stock of what is before us.

I imagine that in this moment, "taking stock" of what is around these crowds as potential food resources is far more expansive than the first five loaves and 2 fish the disciples discovered. If there are 5,000 men in this crowd, then there were most certainly 5,000 women (give or take a few hundred), because I bet their wives, daughters, mothers were with them, and their hungry boys who always wanted snacks. I know very few moms (or parents for that matter) who leave the house without snacks in their purse or diaper bag. There had to have been some figs in some pockets, some olives in some purses.

It's always been far more meaningful to me to think of this text not as a miracle where Jesus is multiplying a literal five loaves and two fish, but rather that Jesus is multiplying their

imagination and reminding them by holding up the five loaves and two fish, that if they each check their knapsack and pockets for what they may have in there...a few figs, a few olives, a loaf here or there, the fish that the teenagers caught while they were over by the lake during Jesus' lecture (because Lord knows they weren't sitting still by their parents for that long)...they will see that they actually have enough to make a decent meal out of what they do have—IF they share. If they pool their resources.

If they sit down, turn toward one another, and take a moment to assess what is before them. Maybe in sitting to face each other the youth will begin to get antsy and the parents will realize they can send them off to run into town to buy something and there are older folks who are less able but who have some money they can give them to run into town. Or maybe as they are sitting on the grass, they'll realize that something is poking them in the back and oh yes, they have a fishing pole on them, and they were after all, sitting right next to a lake and they could go fishing for some food.

I imagine that there were

toddlers who were curious and wandered around and found some honeysuckle or figs or some kind of plants that were edible.

I imagine there are lots of possibilities for how food appeared that day...perhaps an abundance was felt all the sudden because in the actions of Jesus being there and teaching and tending to their needs, they realized they did not need to eat until they were stuffed, but could sustain themselves on just enough so that all could have some.

And maybe that sense of abundance would not have come if they were not spiritually and intellectually and emotionally fed as well. Who knows. But “taking stock” of what is before us, is a key part of living with gratitude and recognizing all that we have, rather than focusing on what we do not have.

As African American tennis star, Arthur Ashe liked to say as he was breaking ground in an otherwise white sport: *"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."* That is abundance thinking that is grounded in reality. Not pie-in-the-sky naivete, but a real belief

that what is before us will be enough...at least to get us started. And that's all we really need to do, is just start. And trust that God will help us, or others, finish.

Then there is **Blessing**. This is so important because it contextualizes our resources—reminding us Whose they are and Where they come from. When Jesus holds the bread up to heaven and gives thanks for it and blesses it, he is drawing our attention to the Creator of all Resources and Gifts. The Provider for all of us. The One who calls us to be Stewards of this Earth, not Owners of it.

Eucharist, by the way—the word many traditions use for Communion or the Lord's Supper—means “thanksgiving.” There is something about ‘giving thanks’ and about Blessing...about remembering that we do have before us is enough and that is comes from God, not from our own earning or working, that is powerful. Especially in a society that runs on capitalism, which ideally helps develop innovation and growth in a market, but unfortunately that innovation and growth is usually only used to gain profit and growth for some. It is not about innovating

for the good of the whole, otherwise it would not be about profit, it would be about providing for all.

When God created the world, God charged us with being stewards of the land and these resources, caring for it and working the land to provide for our needs and the needs of all, but we have commodified it. And by “we” I mean the whole world...we as a human race, in general, with the exception of some indigenous communities, have come to believe that we ‘own’ resources and need to ‘trade’ them or ‘sell’ them or yes, even ‘give’ them away, but even that act of giving, operates within a power structure of the ‘giver’ (the one who has) getting to decide who gets and who doesn’t.

What the act of Blessing does is remind us, again and again, that in this world we live in—which is “between the dreaming and the coming true”—is imperfect, and that all that we have and ‘own’ is actually God’s. And that gives us permission of spirit to prepare ourselves to hold it less tightly. To release our grip on it for fear we, ourselves, won’t have enough, and to realize that God cares most about whether ALL have

enough.

And the good news is, ALL includes us! It doesn’t exclude us. So if we are ensuring ALL have enough, we are ensuring we have enough too. The reverse, unfortunately doesn’t work. If we only think about whether we ourselves have enough, that will never include ALL, even if we are generous with what we have. If we begin with the premise of providing for ourselves, we will fall short of God’s “dream.” The closest the “dream” comes to being realized here on earth, is perhaps in the earliest iterations of the church that we read about in Acts 2, when people held everything they had in common, they pooled all their resources, and people just used what they needed—clothes, food, etc—and there was enough for all. This works best in small communities, again, perhaps why Jesus invites this large crowd to break apart in small groups and face one another.

It’s also a key to surviving in these polarizing political times. We do not have a moral compass to turn to nationally, or a leader on a large scale that is prompting us to focus on Good Giver of “blessings” and for all people to remind ourselves that

what we have is God's, not ours....and so we have to turn to one another, and to the local level of communities like churches, to live into this ethic and ideal.

The late Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue beautifully wrote: "*a blessing is a circle of light drawn around a person to protect, heal and strengthen.*" This circle of light is best drawn with multiple people, with a community. It's in that 'surrounding' that the protection and strength and healing comes. Seeing provision has something from God, yes, and also from one another.

We care best for one another when we are meeting the human needs in front of us. Systemic change matters, of course, and we always advocate for that. But with such large-scale problems that are set-up sometimes to immobilize us and make us think that we don't have power, turning toward one another and God and "blessing" is precisely what we need to be reminded of Whose we are and Who we are. We are the people of God, created to co-create the kingdom of God: "*thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*" we pray. Yes, we are living between the dreaming and the

coming true, and also, we want to help make the Dream come true, to whatever extent is possible with our lives and our purpose in our gift of a life that we've been given.

Then there is the **Breaking**. Breaking is perhaps the hardest. It's about letting go, but is really the key to the whole sequence. When it comes to a resources, or something like bread, you literally cannot share it with others if you do not break it up. So the breaking is a necessary precursor to sharing. This is true for breaking up big corporate monopolies or even just a big loaf of bread. It has to be broken to be shared equitably.

But on a deeper spiritually and emotionally level, there is something that happens when we, ourselves, are broken, that also prepares us to be shared or given to others or for others. Often it's when we have been broken through a life circumstance beyond our control that we realize how little control we have...and how much we need God and one another.

It's humbling to realize we are created to be much more dependent than we want to be. We are taught that independence

is in the end all be all, but independence caters to ego, not to humility or to learning how to receive. And if we can't receive help from others, how do we think we'll ever be able to really receive something like 'grace' from God?

Sometimes it's our ideas that need to be broken, or our systems that need to be broken. Because when something is broken, the cracks that were there are now fully revealed or exposed. Only then can healing, or repair actually happen. As Leonard Cohen famously sang in his song "Anthem," *"Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."*

Spiritually speaking, if we are not willing to be broken open, to so speak, or to see our brokenness as a gift toward transformation, we will remain in the hurt and the suffering of the brokenness. But being broken and breaking things is actually the way we bring God's dream to life, the way we create and re-create. The shells of eggs break open for baby birds to emerge. The shells of nuts crack open to provide nourishment or seed new growth. Even something like a cloud has to

'break open' from the weight of the water it is carrying for the molecules of moisture to pour forth and release as rain.

And sometimes 'breaking' means we have to break our business models, to stray from what makes 'sense' if we are living with an understanding that the Dream is for ALL to thrive; not just survive...but thrive!

"When Josh White made the decision to open Heretic Coffee Co. in Portland, Oregon, he knew he wanted the shop to be community focused. The 37-year-old said he grew up watching *Cheers* and wanted his shop to have the same familiar feeling as the bar in the show, a place that sees its patrons as more than just customers.

"We wanted to know what was going on in their life. We wanted to have dog treats for their dogs. Like, we wanted to be a part of their life," White said.

[Last fall] when White realized that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP—the federally funded program often referred to as "food stamps"—could potentially run dry on Nov. 1 due to the

government shutdown, it was that same ethos that compelled him to offer a free breakfast, including a breakfast burrito and a coffee, to any customer that might be in need.

"It was a very simple thing. We have food. And we can give away that food to people who are hungry," White said. "It's just the fact that our government is going to let people go hungry, and we're not OK with that."

White said he fully understands the financial implications of offering free breakfasts to an unspecified number of people at his coffee shop. "We had a couple of people tell us, like, 'You know, you're going to be bankrupt in a week,'" he said. "We responded and said, 'That's fine. If we literally have to shut our doors, if we go broke making sure children have food for breakfast, I'm really OK if that's the reason why we lose our business.'"

What White may not have anticipated is the outpouring of support from across the entire community, as business owners and others looked for ways to support White's effort to feed disadvantaged Portlanders.

White said he set up a donation

page over the weekend at the suggestion of a social media user, in order to help fund the free breakfast effort. By Monday, he said he had received \$14,000. Donations kept pouring in, and [within a couple days], \$184,000 had been donated.

[Because of the community's generosity, they could guarantee] that "anyone who needs a meal can get one, "no questions asked."

Reflecting on the outpouring of support for the coffee shop's fundraising effort thus far, White said, "I hope people take away that when the system fails us, it's up to one another to make sure one another is taken care of. It's up to businesses to help communities, and it's up to us personally to help our neighbors."

[Even more importantly to this effort, is how it's being conducted.] White said anyone who needs a free meal at that point would be able to request one discretely. Customers can approach the counter as if they are placing a regular order and request a "SNAP breakfast," at which point the cashier would input a fully complementary meal into the register.

"There is this cultural embarrassment that comes with saying, 'I have to use something like EBT or SNAP in order to buy my food,'" he said. He added that his own upbringing in "a low-income household" helped him understand the need for patrons to feel comfortable asking for assistance without the pressure of social stigma.

"We don't want them to feel like this is just a handout. We want them to feel like an everyday regular person," he said. White said the kind of community activism he has seen in Portland in recent days is characteristic of how supportive communities act in times of need.

"It is usually, typically not the governments that make movements go forward. It is everyday people," he said. "It's everyday businesses just saying, 'We're not going to let people starve, and we're going to take care of them.'"²

Breaking a business model—in this case—made room for a different kind of transaction: communal generosity.

Outpouring of love. Of care. It led to the opportunity to embody the final of the four actions that Jesus teaches us.

Breaking, in all its forms, is how we prepare for the final step, which is **Giving**.

How are we Giving what we have to the community and world around us? How do we see the act of giving as a daily practice? We're reminded in Luke's gospel that "to whom much is given much is required" (Luke 12:48). This relates not just to material possession but to our gifts and talents as well. We are created to give. And if we are all created and called to give, then the corollary is true as well. We all are created and called to receive. There is a reciprocity to the kin-dom of God that is not just about the rich giving what they have to poor and the poor receiving what the rich have until they are no longer poor.

True reciprocity is about equity; creating environments where all kind thrive and find purpose and meaning because we are all giving and receiving as a daily practice in such a way that

² Mason Leib and Faith Bernstein, "Portland coffee shop raises more than \$184K for free breakfast for SNAP recipients," ABC News (29 Oct. 2025), accessed on

March 8, 2026 at <https://abcnews.com/GMA/Living/portland-coffeeshop-raises-184k-free-breakfast-snap/story?id=126951978>.

power is diffused away from a few individuals or even a few countries, and entire people groups and nations are empowered by the Spirit of God at work within them...within all of us.

This is what the Apostle Paul is reminding the church at Ephesus of. I don't know about you, but I find it comforting and hopeful that the Apostle Paul had to remind the Church at Ephesus of the same things we need to be reminded of today here at Calvary too.

First, there is a divine presence—a living Spirit of God—that is “at work” within us. We are not just out here on our own trying to make things happen...there is a spirit beyond our own skepticism, a desire beyond our own doubts, a hope beyond our fears that is stirring within us and around us, provoking us to possibility.

Second, the possibilities that this Spirit is provoking us to or toward are beyond what we ourselves can come up with on our own. No matter what AI platform we're bouncing ideas off of, no matter what kind of brainstorming tools we have, no matter how many great people are in the room and how many

seats around the table are filled...there is a God that is wanting to accomplish more in our world than even *we* want to accomplish...more, in fact, than we ourselves can even imagine! Which is saying a lot, because I can imagine some really cool things, and if the Divine has even more up her sleeve than what I think would be helpful in terms of just raising the bar of human decency and communal care from here to here (*motion down to up*), then wow – that's amazing.

We know what we “think” the Dream looks like, and we read the gospels to remind us of this good news and we look to the life of Jesus to remind us that there is someone who sees us in our humanity and with all our vulnerabilities and still believes in us and wants to teach us and show us “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

And yet *even still*—with that hope and peace and love and joy in our imaginations—somehow could it be possible that God can even imagine something greater? Something more equitable? Something more spectacular? Something more inviting? Something beyond our wildest dreams and deepest hopes?

Perhaps this is our purpose, Calvary. Right now and today. To show up each week here and then out in the world every other day of the week to remind ourselves and everyone we meet that there is a Dream beyond this Dystopian Reality that we experience, and that we read about and watch on the news. It's not just that there are good moments mixed in with the bad, that is true. We must maintain joy even in the midst of suffering and despair, that is a call of our faith—to lament with all that we have and to save yet a few breaths to praise too. But it's more than even that. We are to live in the present and be grateful and find joy even in the pain, but we are also to keep the Dream alive. To point people beyond ourselves and this world to a God who imagines somethings different for us.

This is the call of the church, is it not? To proclaim the good news and live it into being. It's a call that requires imagination and a fierce commitment to possibility and abundance, rather than cynicism or scarcity.

Which leads to the Third reminder from our Ephesians text today. And the third thing is really about how the first thing

and the second thing intersect. The Divine Spirit is stirring within us, and stirring within us to do things beyond what we ourselves can even ask or imagine, and the entity through which God is going to accomplish these things is not just you or me as individuals, is it? No..., Paul says. It's the Church!?! The Church of all places and people. Go figure. We, the church. The sometimes fabulous, sometimes flailing and failing, sometimes focused, sometimes friendly, always flawed and always fickle—*Church*.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Well of course Paul said the Church because he was creating and starting churches, and of course you are saying the Church because you want Calvary and other churches to survive, but what about other people of faith and other non-profits doing good work, and so on and so forth. To which I say, YES. We need all the communities and all the people of faith and all the ways of restoring and healing, tearing down and building up, and also one of those ways, and one of those entities is THE CHURCH. And that should excite us. To have such a calling as this in such a time as this. This is not

the work of other people. This our work. Our calling. Our hope and purpose.

I love how Grassroots Organizer, Marshall Ganz challenges our communities to create movements and why that matters and makes a difference. He says: *“Social movements have expressive, instrumental and organizational dimensions — story, strategy and structure. In their expressive mode they begin to tell a new story that gives voice to moral claims at the heart of a movement: demands for dignity abused, injury unrecognized, hurt unhealed, justice denied...Movements have narratives. They tell stories, because they are not just about rearranging economics and politics. They also rearrange meaning. And they’re not just about redistributing the goods. They’re about figuring out **what is good.**”*³

Sounds like gospel work, doesn’t it? Good news work?

The Apostle Paul writes, “Now to our Creator who by the power at work *within* us—you and me, all of us—is able to accomplish

(aka: get stuff done) *abundantly* far more than all we can ask or imagine (far more than all the sticky notes and org charts of 2, 5, and 10 year plans), to this Divine Creative be glory (*high renown or honor, brilliant thanksgiving*) in the Church (yes, the Church at Ephesus and Calvary Baptist Church of Denver at 6500 E. Girard Avenue) and in Christ Jesus (the Risen Christ who defied all odds and expectations when the stone was rolled away from the tomb) to ALL generations—young, old, in between, yesterday, today, tomorrow— forever and ever. Amen.”

Amen.

Amen, from the Hebrew root *amn*, meaning “so be it” or “it is true.” It’s a declarative that states something to be True whether that Truth is a Reality now that we see before us with our own eyes and understand with our limited perspectives is one thing, but to say Amen, So Be It, means it is true in a declarative, everlasting way that does not depend on our experience of the thing as truth or not. It’s having faith that it is true despite evidence to the

³ Quotes accessed on March 8, 2026 at <https://commonslibrary.org/marshall-ganz-quotes-and-wisdom/>

contrary. It's the belief that it WILL be true one day.

This the kind of declaration we must make *Together*. We can't do it on our own.

Together, the impossible is possible. Together. Yes, together as in, you and me and all of us—the collective— together, but not just that, you and me, and the collective, the community together—WITH the Divine Creative too. That's an oft-missing ingredient. We rely on our own ideas, our own efforts, our own energy/time/ limitations/dreams, and forget that there is a God, there is a Spirit drawing us to more hopeful ideas and higher ideals. There is a missing ingredient, without which, we will fall short, even as we make some good progress. No effort is wasted.

But I don't know about you, I don't just want my effort to not be wasted, I want my effort to be as effective as possible...as energizing as possible...at creating equity in our world. Equity so that those of us who have too much are released from the burden of that "much" and having to worry about how we hold on to it and keep it and not lose it, locked into the burden of

survival by worrying that one day there won't be enough or that we'll lose what we have or someone else will have what we need....and those who have "too little" are released from the burden of having to worry about where the next meal or paycheck or resource will come from...living in the stress of survival, the heightened cortisol levels of unhealth and survival, the opposite of thriving and possibility.

True equity *releases us all* out of scarcity thinking. And into a lived experience of abundance that is grounded in the present moment. Not in the past experience of what once was and what *was* lost, and not in the future anxiety of might happen or what we *could* lose – but in the present moment of NOW. THIS. ENOUGH. You. Me. Shared Reality. Shared Hope. Shared Dreams. Shared Experience. Full bellies. Nourished souls. Communities of care, sitting on the grass, looking at each other. Discovering that between all of us, we have just what we need, and more.

There are so many ways that we show up for each other in these ways as community—both inside and outside of the church.

And it works, it really works. We give too much stock to the Empire and to power when we allow their actions to define our hope. The Empire's actions may shape our despair, and certainly the Empire's action shape our reality. But their actions do not define our hope. Our belief in the power of God's love and the ministry of love of neighbor, self, and God defines our hope. There was a very strong, effective empire at work when Jesus was crucified. And yet, he rose. Our hope is defined by Rising Up to New Life when Power Takes Life and Strips Dignity.

We live Between the Dreaming and the Coming True, but as a community, we can actually keep the dream alive until it comes true in ALL its fullness. Maybe you cannot remember it today. If you are suffering or grieving. If you are being bombed or are being targeted. If you are having your rights stripped away or if you are searching for a meal, or shelter... maybe the dream is not something you can even conceive of. That's okay. That's why we have each other. Because when I can't imagine or remember the dream, you can. And when you can't, I can.

God does not expect us to always hold onto this dream when we can barely hold on to life itself. But God does desire, I think, for us to be a part of communities that can hold on to the dream and hold it out for us as something that is possible, so that we never lose sight of it. That's why Jesus came to earth, gathered disciples around him, and pointed beyond himself to the dream of God's kin-dom and love. That's why we are here today as the church with the Spirit at work within us. To hold this space "between the dreaming and the coming true" with hope and with actionable steps toward making it so.

Marshall Ganz says it beautifully: *"Hope is the belief in the probability of the possible rather than the necessity of the probable."*

And we hold this hope and take actionable steps of embodying this hope by taking stock of what we have, blessing it and the God who provided it, breaking open ourselves and our gifts, and from that breaking, giving and sharing that with the world. **Take. Bless. Break. Give. Repeat.**

"We are not here to show something to God. We're here

because God has something to show us *and through us*.

So be it.

Amen.

Tell Me Something Good Moment

As has been our practice the last couple of weeks, we're going to tell each other something good.

As the music plays, find some folks near you to share with. The prompt for this week is:

Share about a time when you worked with others to make something good happen that you couldn't have done on your own.

Also, during this time, you can share something good with all of us by coming forward if you would like to make a profession of faith, or join or church, and we'll affirm you in that decision.

When the music stops make your way back to your seats and we'll prepare for our benediction.