

# Enough is Enough

February 22, 2026

As the church invites us into the season of Lent, I want to name something about where we've been as a community. For months now, our church has been engaging the hard, faithful questions about how to follow Jesus in the world as it is—how to resist cruelty, how to show up for the vulnerable, how to live lives of love and justice when the systems around us demonstrate over and over again how broken our society is. That work matters. It is holy work.

But here's the danger: even the most faithful commitment to justice can become unmoored if it is not rooted in a deep interior life. Activism without grounding can slide into burnout. Love without prayer can curdle into resentment. Justice without trust can quietly turn into control. At the end of the day, this is about integrity, about our inner lives and our outer world being woven into an integrated whole.

In that, Lent does not pull us away from the work of love in the world. It pulls us deeper—so that the work we do flows from a centered, resilient, Spirit-anchored place. Lent is where God shores up our interior foundation so that our exterior lives don't collapse under the weight of all we're carrying.

And that is why the wilderness matters.

At a party on Shelter Island, the novelist Joseph Heller was once standing beside his friend Kurt Vonnegut when someone made an offhand remark meant to impress and diminish at the same time. Swirling the wine in his glass pretentiously, their fellow partygoer quipped that their host, a wealthy financier, had earned more money in a single day than Heller's "Catch-22" had made in all of the decades it had been published. It was the kind of comment that assumes value can be measured cleanly and publicly—numbers in a bank account, zeros after a comma.

Heller didn't flinch. He didn't compete. He simply said, "Yes—but I have something he will never have: enough."

That word lands with particular force in a culture that rarely slows down long enough to ask what enough might look like. We are trained to assume that if something is good, more must be better—and that if we feel anxious or dissatisfied, the solution is to acquire, produce, or consume more and more and more.

But Lent dares us to ask a different question: What if the problem isn't that we don't have enough—but that we've lost our ability to recognize it? We don't need a global crisis to know how quickly our sense of security can unravel—but many of us got a vivid reminder in recent years.

Do you remember the toilet paper hoarding of the early days of COVID?

When the world begins to feel unstable, something primal wakes up in us. We look for what we can secure. We grasp for what feels tangible. We try to insulate ourselves against uncertainty. And at the very same time, many of us notice a restlessness that doesn't go away—no matter how much information we gather, how much we know, how much we distract ourselves. There is a hunger that isn't satisfied by consumption.

That tension—between the urge to secure ourselves and the ache that nothing quite fills—reveals something true about us. We were not created to live by self-protection alone. We were not designed to

anchor our lives in accumulation. And we cannot sustain lives of love and justice if our inner lives are ruled by fear. This is where the biblical story meets us.

### **The First Temptation: Appetite**

Genesis tells us that the human story begins with abundance. A garden. Plenty. Beauty. Communion. Humanity placed there not as owners, but as caretakers—creatures invited into trust and relationship.

And into that abundance comes a voice that says, Are you sure it's enough? The serpent doesn't begin with rebellion. It begins with doubt. Did God really say...?

That same tactic shows up in the wilderness with Jesus. "If you are the Son of God..."

If. If is the devil's favorite word. If you really mattered, you wouldn't worry. If God were really good, you wouldn't be afraid. If this were really enough, you wouldn't feel this ache.

So Jesus is tempted first at the level of appetite. Turn stones into bread. Fill the emptiness immediately. Silence the hunger.

And Jesus refuses—not because hunger is bad, but because hunger is not a master. "One does not live by bread alone."

Lent invites us to notice what we reach for when we're uncomfortable—and to ask whether it's feeding us, or consuming us, whether it's drawing us deeper into integrity or numbing us.

### **The Second Temptation: Power**

If the first temptation is about what we allow to consume us, the second is about power. The lesson is not only about hunger; it's about control. The devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and says, You can have all of this—without limit, without relationship. Safety. Security. Your way.

This is the temptation to shortcut the long way through. To believe that if we just had enough leverage, enough influence, enough authority, we could finally make the world safe.

But power untethered from trust and relationship always corrodes. The Israelites learned this in the wilderness when manna fell each morning—enough for the day. Not enough to hoard. Not enough to dominate tomorrow. Those who tried to store it found it rotting by morning.

The lesson was never about food. It was about formation. They needed to learn who God was before they could handle abundance.

As Dr. Sean Tobin says, "They needed to learn dependence before they inherited prosperity. They needed to know the Giver before they possessed the gift."

One lesson here is that power, which often manifests as control, can't lose sight of dependence. One just needs to look at the headlines to know just how nefarious unchecked power can be. In rejecting the temptation to power, Jesus models for us the grace of mutuality rather than dominance.

### **The Third Temptation: Pushing Beyond Our Limits**

Finally, the devil takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple and says, Prove yourself. Jump. Force God's hand. This is the temptation to live without limits. To confuse faith with spectacle. To believe we are most alive when we are exceptional rather than faithful.

But limits are not failures of faith. They are features of being human. Genesis tells us that shame entered the world when humans tried to become more than they were meant to be—when trust gave way to self-definition.

And what does God do in response? God clothes them. Not condemnation. Covering. Mercy woven right into the consequences.

My colleague, Shawn Fischer, drills down on this concept of knowing one's limits this way: In the Gospel of John, Jesus described Nathaniel as one in whom there was no guile. According to Jesus, Nathaniel was a suitable disciple because he was lacking self-deception. It wasn't just that he was honest and forthright with others, but he knew the truth about himself and didn't pretend otherwise. That is, he knew his limits.

This is why we first must learn to live out of a place of being beloved by God. That should be our primary identity, the foundation of our being, the fount of our character. If we truly believe we are Beloved, then we don't need to compete or prove our worth to anyone. If we are fully and completely loved, then we don't need to be miserly with our love.

Why then do we live as if we have a limited supply of love or that God does? Why do we act as if our blessings are finite or that God can bless only America?

### **Wilderness Is Not Abandonment**

Now remember, the setting for all of this is the wilderness. It's interesting, throughout the scriptures, the wilderness is not where God disappears. It's where illusions do.

Hagar encounters God in the desert. Moses meets God in flame and silence. Elijah hears God in a whisper. Israel survives on manna. Jesus is led there by the Spirit.

The wilderness is not punishment. It is exposure. It strips away what cannot sustain us and reveals what can.

Which may be why this moment we're living in—marked by systemic cruelty, technological acceleration, economic anxiety, and cultural fear—feels so disorienting. We are being exposed. Our assumptions about productivity. Our habits of comparison. Our belief that more will finally make us safe.

When Joseph Heller said he had "enough," it was never about money. It was about interior freedom.

### **Beloved Before the Journey**

Before Jesus enters the wilderness, something crucial happens. He is named. "This is my beloved." Before the fasting. Before the testing. Before the temptation. Beloved is not the reward for surviving the wilderness. It is the ground we stand on when we enter it.

As poet Jan Richardson writes: If you would enter the wilderness, do not begin without a blessing... Do not leave without hearing who you are: Beloved."

Lent is not about proving ourselves. It is about unlearning the lie that we ever had to.

### **Enough for Love-in-Action**

We are not called to emerge from Lent leaner, tougher, or more spiritually impressive. We are called to be unbound. Unbound from fear. Unbound from shame. Unbound from the illusion that love is scarce. Unbound from all of the sinful temptations that we engage to try to insulate ourselves from those lies.

If we are beloved, we do not need to control. If we are beloved, we do not need to hoard. If we are beloved, we can bless without calculating the cost. And that blessing—the sincere willing of good into another’s life—is how the wilderness becomes a place of transformation rather than terror.

### **A Blessing for the Way Through**

Lent does not promise us an easier road. It does not spare us from hunger or uncertainty or fear. Faith does not guarantee clarity or safety or quick resolution. What it offers instead is something quieter—and far more durable. It reminds us that before we confront temptation, before we face the wilderness, before we try again to live lives of love and justice in a fractured world, we are named. Not productive. Not impressive. Beloved.

And that naming happens before we get it right. Before we are brave. Before we are certain. Before we are strong.

The wilderness will ask things of us. It will expose our appetites—what we reach for when we are afraid. It will test our relationship with power—how quickly we try to control when we do not trust. It will confront our limits—inviting us to stop pretending we are more than human.

But the wilderness is not where God leaves us. It is where God meets us—stripping away what does not sustain us, loosening our grip on what we thought we needed, teaching us, slowly, the difference between scarcity and enough.

So as we enter this season, may you go grounded rather than grasping. May you go honest rather than armored. May you go listening for the voice that does not shout or shame, but steadies you when the path feels unclear.

When you are tempted to believe you are on your own, may you remember that you are accompanied. When you are tempted to prove your worth, may you remember that you are already claimed. When the work of love in the world feels heavy, may your interior life be deep enough to hold it. And when you lose your way, when the future feels forbidding, when the dragons feel real, may you feel the gentle insistence of grace nudging you back to your feet, reminding you who you are. Sustained. Enough.

Go now to face this life’s temptations—not fearless, not perfect, but Beloved. May it be so through the Grace of God. Amen.

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**Genesis 2:15–17, 3:1–7; Matthew 4:1–11**  
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