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**Series: Into the Woods**  
**Sermon: Stop Floundering**

**Psalm 23:1 (NIV)**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**Philippians 4:11 (JUB)**

Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.

**II Corinthians 12:6-10 (The Message)**

Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, 7 or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Sermon**

Our passage this morning is interesting. You know how sometimes the Bible is helpful and inspirational, and sometimes the Bible is frustrating and tough? And then sometimes the Bible is both? Our text for this morning is both.

So there you are, reading along in 2 Corinthians, as you do, and it’s a little strange because Paul is talking about how he’s not boasting when, in fact, he just spent a chapter and a half doing nothing but boasting... but it’s Paul, right? So we tend to give him a pass even when he doesn’t deserve it.

Then you come to verse 9 of chapter 12 and Paul says, “The Lord said to me, ‘my grace is enough for you,’” and you’re like “Nice! Imma highlight that!”—and you highlight that part of the verse. “My grace is enough for you.” Perfect.

You cap the highlighter and you keep reading... “for power is made perfect in weakness.” Wait, what?... You look around the room, you stretch your neck a little bit, and you take a peek back at the second half of that sentence.

“For power is made perfect in weakness.” Eeeeeee, that’s tough. No one likes weakness. Paul must have meant something else. Good thing I didn’t highlight the whole verse! I’m just going to memorize the first part.

Now, it may seem like I’m kind of exaggerating that reaction a little bit, but you know this happens all the time, right? That’s how we end up with things like 2 Corinthians 12:9a...

When you read the whole thing together, it says, “The Lord said to me, ‘My grace is enough for you because power is made perfect in weakness.’”

The verse started out great and really easy, it was helpful and inspirational, it might even be “life verse worthy” if you’re into that sort of thing—my grace is enough for you—but it got heavy real quick.

We’ve all had times we’ve felt unworthy. Unlovable. Unforgiveable. Uncontent. Maybe it was your middle school years. Or maybe its where you are right now. Maybe you remember trying to dress a certain way, act a certain way, hang out with certain people. But even with all of that, there were a lot of times we didn’t think we were good enough.

That seems to be the way it is, doesn’t it? None of us fit neatly into boxes, we’re all unique, but still our culture is built around a certain idea about what strength and power is. Somewhere along the way, culture decided what physical strength and emotional strength would look like, and for some reason they chose the destructive version of those things. The world pushes us to do anything it takes to be imposing and powerful, to climb the ladder, to gain the approval of others, but whatever you do, don’t show any weakness.

I’m sure you’ve seen that before.

It’s the reason men’s body wash comes in scents like Pure Sport and Swagger and Locker Room and Gasoline... somehow guys have been convinced that it’s not ok to smell like something that actually smells good because the world doesn’t approve of guys who don’t fit some arbitrary definition of toughness. You can walk into any store and see that in the kids’ toy aisles, too.

This need to get approval from people so that we can feel like we’re enough is everywhere. It’s in politics. It’s in the workplace. It’s in our churches...

How many times have we all walked into this place with our lives feeling like a hurricane, but when someone says, “Hey, how are you?” we reply, “Oh, I’m doing well!” Somehow, being a Christian has shifted over the generations from sharing our needs in community to pretending like we have it all together all the time in every way.

How many times has someone said something about faith or the Bible or religion and you’ve had a question or a doubt pop up, but then you respond by shoving it down deep where it can hide because somewhere along the line people started teaching that good Christians don’t have doubts. You know what? Everyone in the room has doubts and questions AND doubts are a good thing. Doubts lead to questions, questions lead to a search for wider truths, and those are the things that help us grow. But we can’t do anything about it because someone else might not think we’re as faithful as they are if we express our doubts.

Our passage today is interesting because this is exactly what Paul is dealing with as he writes this letter to the church in Corinth. People that he calls “super apostles” have come in and convinced this church that Paul isn’t worth their time. These super apostles are dynamic speakers, they have a lot to boast about, and they have gotten the church in Corinth to partner with them financially.

So Paul spends an entire chapter and a half bragging about all of his credentials and trying to remind the church in Corinth why he matters. He’s playing the game. I was here first, I met Jesus on the road, I was tortured for my faith, I’ve sacrificed for you, I’ve never asked you for money. So you should respect me, not those other people.

Even though Paul still feels the urge to defend himself and to brag about himself, what he’s learning here is that He. Is. Enough. Even with his flaws and weaknesses. And it’s precisely those flaws and weaknesses that make him an authentic person. And being an authentic person—being who God created you to be—is where real strength comes from and is where we find a true understanding of grace.

This text might be the best, most succinct presentation of the gospel, perhaps in all of scripture: God's grace is enough for you. For the real you.

Not for the one who wears the mask of "Oh, everything's fine" at church.

Not for the one who only presents the best parts of yourself on facebook because everyone else there also seems so perfect.

Not for the one who sells themselves short.

God's grace is enough for the real you, flaws and all.

In our fairy tale story today, we learn that we're never going to be content. It's a hard feat. Whatever you have, you want more. We always notice those who are just a little bit "more" than us. It's never enough. Go keep asking the Flounder for something else.

I'm taping this on Wednesday, and the billboard close to us tells us that the lotteries are at astronomical levels. Hundreds of millions. Just think, that many losing tickets to make those numbers possible. What would you do with 800 million dollars? Well, maybe 350 million after taxes. What would you do with 350 million dollars? Well, we tithe, so there's 35 million dollars down. What would we do with 315 million dollars? Our family would want their cut, of course, millions is what they would want, right? Sonny boy, you won 800 million, and you'll only give your dear old mother 1 measly million? So maybe we'll get down to 250 million. We'll have to get the 10 million dollar house, and all of that upkeep and staff and furnishings. Gotta get my lamborghini or Tesla or whatever. Somehow my college learned about the windfall and start sending letters, third cousins twice removed show up at the door, I have to tip super generously now or I'm stingy. And before you know it, I'm only down to 75 million. And if I still have a 800 million dollar mind set, what I'm going to do with only 75 million dollars?

Contentment. Stop looking for reasons to be unhappy! Focus on the things you do have and be patient for the things yet to come. It is enough.

In our passage, Paul reminds us of something we teach little kids in church—that God loves you just the way you are and because of that, God's grace is enough for you just the way you are. Then we become teenagers and adults and we forget that because we start to build our own little empires in order to prove to other people that we are enough and we matter, when in fact we've mattered all along and it's actually our weaknesses, our flaws, and the things that make us human that affirm our worth more than anything else.

The world wants us to jump through hoops to prove we are enough and we are worthy. But God has already made us to be enough exactly as we are. Be content. Stop floundering around.

You are enough.

We are enough.

And the family of God said, AMEN.

Intro: Filmed at Scotts Mills

Children's Time: The Fisherman and his wife story

Prayer:

Oh Lord, You are our shepherd and we should not be in want,  
but so often we struggle to be content and do want;  
forgetting that you have graciously provided us with every spiritual blessing in Christ and everything I need for  
life and godliness.

Thank you for often not giving us what we want  
because our desires would draw our hearts from being satisfied in You.  
Help us to be content in You with what You have given us.

Protect us from coveting possessions or people,  
talent or influence, relationships or prestige.  
Keep our hearts from being anxious for what we don't have  
and make us thankful for the people around us whom we forget.

In gratitude, we share in the prayer you gave,

Offertory:

Welcome to the Offering, our chance to give back. As United Methodists, we support many ministries, within the church, outside the church, at home and abroad. There are many church events and programs that I miss in these Covid times. Worship, children and youth, mission trips, weddings, celebrations of life, baptisms. But I really miss our kitchen. From special events to celebrations, appreciation dinners and bingo nights, youth talent show and Oregon City groups that feed their people and guests. Kathy Spainhower even commented the other day that she misses cooking our Wednesday Night Dinner. There's something special about breaking bread together - it's what friends do. It's what makes a family a family. While we might not be gathering now, your gifts help keep this kitchen stocked and ready for use and in good condition. John 6:35 says "Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." We know he meant that spiritually, but we Methodists take that both spiritually and literally. We like to feed people. And you help make that happen. God bless.

Closing: Filmed at Scotts Mills.