

**Enough and To Spare**  
**Exodus 16.27-35 and Luke 9.10-17**  
**February 4, 2007**  
**Amy Jacks Dean**

All four gospels tell this story. Each tells it in its own way, but basically it's the same. In all four there's a multitude of people listening and learning from the teachings of Jesus. In all four it gets to be close to meal time and there's no food. In all four the disciples are able to scrounge up a little bit of bread and fish. In all four Jesus gives thanks for the bounty, and in all four the people are well fed with plenty left over – 12 basketfuls even. It's one of the greatest stories, and I love that all four gospel writers feel the need to include it. In this day and time of consumerism and materialism, and in a nation where we will watch a ballgame tonight being commercialized by enough advertisement money to feed the hungry in our country, we need this story today. It is a story that reminds us that we have enough and to spare. (READ TEXT)

“During the Depression, Americans often did not have enough to eat. People would say, ‘Oh, if only I had an egg or some bread, I could assuage these hunger pangs and make it through the day.’ Thanksgiving Day 1939 stands out in my own mind. Growing up on a farm in the Missouri Ozarks, I put out a rabbit trap every day because it was the only fresh meat my mother and I had. We had no electricity and could not keep perishable foods. As I went to check my trap that Thanksgiving, I hoped against hope that I might have a rabbit. When I picked up my trap, I trembled because it was very heavy, much too heavy for one rabbit. I thought, ‘Oh, no, I’ve caught a possum.’ And I can tell you that ‘possum meat ain’t good and sweet,’ as the old song goes. To my joyous surprise, however, when I reached into my trap, I discovered that I had not one but two

rabbits. You can't imagine my elation! Enough and to spare!" (Weavings, Volume XIX, Number 5, September/October 2004, "Enough and to Spare," Glenn Hinson, page 13)

"The story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand plus (since we should add women and children to the total) made a profound impression on Christians before the time of Constantine. A symbolic depiction of it appears in the Roman Catacombs just about as often as any other picture except that of the Good Shepherd. A major reason is that the Gospels' account of the feeding makes it sound like a prefigurement of the Last Supper with bread but no cup. Even more important, however, both meals say something significant about the covenant relationship we enter into with God. To those who have discovered the One who is Needful, there is enough and to spare. Early Christians *lived* this story. [Many of the early Christians were not affluent. The early church was mainly comprised of those from lower socio-economic levels.] Nevertheless, they managed. They not only 'got by'; they had 'enough and to spare.' Those bold believers astounded their contemporaries by their ability to meet human need wherever or in whatever form they found it. At the end of the first century Clement, a Roman Presbyter/Bishop, told of Christians who became indentured servants in order to buy freedom and to supply food for others. [And these kinds of stories from church history go on and on.] . . . How did those who had 'just enough' or perhaps even 'not enough' manage to find 'enough and to spare'? [Some belt-tightening, some fasting, some collection of generosity from the affluent.]" (Weavings, Volume XIX, Number 5, September/October 2004, "Enough and to Spare," Glenn Hinson, pages 15-16)

Our six member delegation returned this past Tuesday from visiting our brothers and sisters in Carlos Rojas, Cuba. There are no words to adequately describe our time with them. Pictures will fail to tell the story. There really are only three things we go there to do: smile, hug, and eat. I know. I know. Not your typical “mission trip.” These people who do not have enough of anything – including food – treated us like royalty. And not because we brought them things. They welcomed us with gracious hospitality – treating us like family – hosting us in their homes – stuffing us with beans and rice and chicken and pork and, best of all, illegal beef. You see, Cubans can’t buy beef legally. I guess they have to save the cows for the Canadian and European tourists, but nothing doing, they got us black market beef – and it was good. On our last night, Linda Hefner and I were eating in the home of Ida and Mario (Ida is the woman that I baptized last year.) Yarelis, (wife of pastor Adrubal) went with us as our translator. Our little eating club had already eaten a huge lunch in the home of Ovello and Noella earlier in the day – when we had the illegal beef – and now we loaded up on another fantastic meal of chicken that was so good that I ate more even though I was absolutely stuffed just because it was so good. And if you had seen the kitchen it was cooked in you simply wouldn’t believe it. As Linda, Yarelis, and I walked home down the dark and lonely streets, Yarelis spoke for all of us when she said, “I’m about to explode,” – in her best Ricky Ricardo Cuban English! From a people who have not enough to find some to spare and to graciously give it to us with such joy and celebration – it was indeed a miracle that surpasses the Feeding of the Five Thousand in my book. People are always asking, “Why doesn’t God act today the way God acted in the Bible?” I believe God does still act today – is constantly acting in miraculous ways. Being that full in Carlos Rojas is every bit the

miracle as feeding 5000 plus in Bethsaida! God is always at work – if we are paying attention we will notice. There we were – a 50-something, a 40-something, and a 30-something - three women walking down a darkened street in the middle of nowhere, Cuba, surrounded by poverty - laughing until we cried that we were about to “explode.” I try to give words to the whole event, and I come up empty every time.

It must be how the gospel writers felt when they tried to record all the happenings of Jesus – including that day when 500 plus were fed with only a little bit of food. It must have been what the people felt with that manna from heaven as they wandered in the wilderness. Always enough – and to spare. And we come to this table today, and it is enough – actually it is more than enough – grace, love, sacrifice – it is a bountiful feast. And when we find ourselves well fed in this place, we will be called on to dig in our pockets and put money into soup pots for the hungry as we leave. We do have enough – more than enough, really. And if in worship we don’t feel the nudge and the pull and the push to reach out beyond ourselves, then I think we may not be paying attention. This afternoon our brothers and sisters in Cuba will gather around a similar table. They will eat the bread and drink the cup. And they too will have enough – more than enough. And in them you can see it in the joy on their faces. Can the same be said for us?

This table has been set today with the common, ordinary pots from my kitchen. One pot was my grandmother’s. It’s the best one I own – they don’t make them like that anymore. It’s what I cook spaghetti in which we have at least once a week. Another pot is the one that I always make my soup in. I bought it at a yard sale. Another pot is from our Fellowship Hall kitchen. It feeds the children of our CDC every day and our church family on Wednesday nights. Another pot is one that my sister was throwing away. They

are the common and ordinary pots and pans of my kitchen and the church's kitchen that holds the bread on the "Souper Sunday." These pots serve as reminders that there are hungry people in this world – even as we fill ourselves until we are stuffed and waste enough to feed many. But these pots do not stand for guilt. They stand for grace. That in the economy of God's lavish grace, we are filled to overflowing with forgiveness and love. That in the bounty of God's feast – the ordinary has the power to become extraordinary.

In Cuba we went to visit the former missionary who had for many, many years led the church in Carlos Rojas. They call her the Ancient One. The people had taken up a collection for her. Some came with a few clothes. Some came with a small bag of rice and a few dried beans. Some came with a little bit of change. They brought out of what little that had – because truth be known – even in their poverty they had enough and to spare. It reminds me of manna from heaven and five loaves and two fish on a mountainside. In these stories, from Cuba, from a wilderness land, and from Bethsaida we catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God. Enough and to spare. May it always be so.