



Early in the spring of 1845 at the age 27, rejecting a conventional residence and what he considered the superfluous lifestyle of his age – author Henry David Thoreau, made his way to the Massachusetts woods and the shores of Walden Pond. A small glacial lake about 2

miles south of Concord (where my only sibling a brother lives), Thoreau, began to chop down tall pines that would soon become the foundation of his home on the shores of that now epic pond Thoreau lived in that spot for 2 years and 2 months, a mile from his nearest neighbor, earning a living by the labor of his own hands.

He went to the woods“ to find the finer or unplucked fruit as he described it.

In Biblical vernacular, Thoreau went to to find what John the Gospel writer and Timothy the apostle called “*the abundant life*” or ‘*life that really is life!*”

You likely remember how Thoreau wrote about his venture in Walden: Where I Lived and What I Lived For

*I went to the woods because I wanted to live **DELIBERATELY**, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and **NOT**, when I came to die, discover that I have not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is SO dear: not did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to **LIVE DEEP and SUCK ALL the marrow of life**, so to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, and reduce it to its lowest terms*

An **ardent abolitionist, naturalist, and sometimes Transcendentalist**, I was shocked to discover that in May 1862 Thoreau died at the

tender age of 44 of tuberculous (which had plagued him off and on since his college years)

For all OUR sakes, I'm glad he set out for the woods when he did. And that he decided to record his experience for all posterity (though It would be up to each of us to decide what to do with his experiment in minimalism)

CONTEXT

When Matthew's Jesus preached his most famous sermon on a Galilean hillside that day, UNLIKE Thoreau, Jes was FAR from alone. He was surrounded by a throng of folks. *Jesus had that kind of effect on people*. But LIKE Thoreau, Jesus offered a riveting message/a treatise about what IS ESSENTIAL in life! (*More on that in a minute...*)

I try to imagine how that first audience heard Jesus sermon?

Did they find his ideas too "off the grid" for them?

Was it the musings of a Counterculturalist?

Someone to get them in trouble with Rome?

Did they whisper/joke about his strange teachings?

Their fathers and their mothers before them had taught them that "one's keep was earned by the SWEAT of their brow. INTEGRITY!

Who WAS this romantic? Should they believe him?

At what cost?

If we were to take this pericope (or this extract from Jesus Sermon on the Mount), we could describe it as a teaching on how to be FREE from anxiety. For the naturalists among us, we notice that Jesus

illustrated the truth of his WORD by pointing to God's provision for all of nature: *Consider the lilies of the field or the birds of the air*

Even King Solomon's greatest duds could not hold a candle to what we find in God's wardrobe!

I can't speak for you but freedom from ANY form of anxiety sounds pretty good to me—HOWEVER God sees fit to deliver it.

That said, it's important to realize that Jesus is NOT advocating *laziness, irresponsibility or a government hand-out* as a way of life, here. Rather, Jesus IS saying that in the midst of doing what you must do to care for yourselves and family, don't let FRET and ANXIETY get a foothold. *It's only human to worry about provision/security!*

As those hillside congregants gathered that day were likely from the low-rent districts of their villages, Jesus' message was one they needed to hear! It was SAVLE for a tender soul!

And all this from a man who walked the talk!

An itinerant preacher with no parsonage as part of his salary package, *Scripture (Luke) tells us "that foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* Church, did ever think about that? Where Jesus lived? That he had no PERMANENT address? He depended on the HOSPITALITY of others. This seems almost beyond the call of duty. Isn't HOUSING one of life's essentials? Even Thoreau had a cabin?

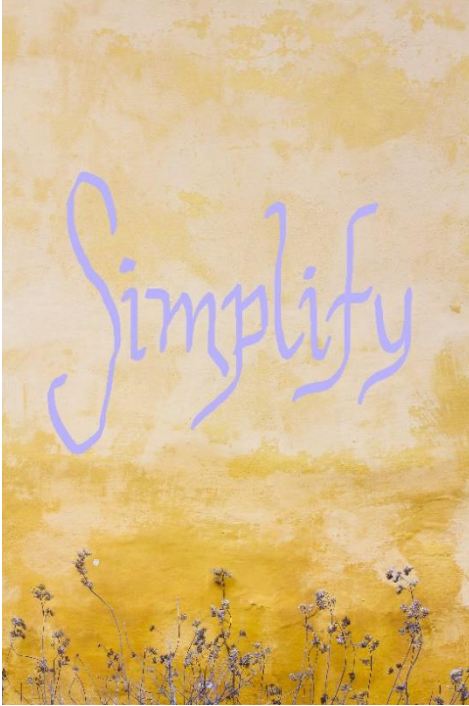
I'd be MORE than anxious if I didn't know where my next meal and bed were coming from.....

Yet PLENTY OF PEOPLE THIS WORLD OVER live like this!

For those of us who are brave enough to challenge the preacher:

Where is God's provision for the other ½ of the world that is poor and suffering? For trafficked women and girls? For children conscripted into armies? For those suffering from racism, sexism, abuse, neglect?

Maybe just maybe, WE are part of their solution? What would it look like to live with LESS anxiety? *And how might the practice of*



Simplicity contribute to the more worry-free living that Jesus was touting?

First of all, we have to understand both the INWARD and OUTWARD nature of SIMPLICITY. For SIMPLICITY to find a true OUTWARD EXPRESSION, something must FIRST change within us. (*And this applies to people of faith or not*) To live an outwardly simple life WITHOUT an inward intention or rationale becomes LEGALISTIC and can lead to sheer bitterness.

Consider this. Once we experience the inward intentionality and reality of simplicity, it cannot help but find OUTWARD expression in the way we live. *Just like FAITH cannot help but express itself in GOOD DEEDS. One of you called it MINDFUL LIVING.*

There's no better way to say this than to quote Richard Foster, the Quaker who wrote our series text: the Celebration of Discipline:

Experiencing inward simplicity LIBERATES us outwardly.

SPEECH becomes truthful, measured and honest

The lust 4 status and position is GONE

because we no longer need status or position.

We cease from showy extravagance not because we can't afford something, but on the PRINCIPLE of the matter

Our goods become AVAILABLE to others

Because we lack a DIVINE CENTER, our need for SECURITY has led us to an INSANE ATTACHEMENT to THINGS.

“We crave things we neither need nor enjoy. We buy things we do not want to impress people we don’t even necessarily like!”

OUCH?!! IS THIS TRUE?

Because there are SO MANY different angles I could take today's sermon, I will draw on this beloved Quaker's lead and zero in on **5 practical principles for OUTWARD expression of SIMPLICITY** (bullets)

Pam will have these posted on the Website for ur future reference. In Thursday's Quick News and this Sunday's bulletin: **additional resources on ways to practice SIMPLICITY** including WEBSITES, READING /COMMUNITY DONATION and EXCHANGE centers.

1. Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.

- **How BIG/COSTLY of a car do we need anyway?** What's more important: utility or status. And what about an ELECTRIC car? They can be spendy but: *act of love towards Mother Earth*
- **How big of a house do 2 people really need? 1? 4?**
Is it time to downsize? (Share a house with a family mbr?)
Are we really going to leave our kids to clean out our 50-60 years of stuff when we die (Granddaddy and my clock)
When was the last time we cleaned out the attic or the garage? *“Never waste a Pandemic as one of you said to me yesterday! The time is NOW to tackle the GARAGE or whatever YOUR ___*
- One of our congregation's MINIMALISTS said to me yesterday, when they decided early to **develop a décor theme for their home**, and **to CHANGE IT as life and circumstances dictated**, then it became EASIER to leave that gorgeous piece of furniture, artwork/ bric-a-brac at Home Goods than let it enter her home. It requires DISCIPLINE to live by a THEME/PRINCIPLE

- This one is an ACHILLES HEELS: (still POINT#1)
How many little black dresses, yellow purses or or polka dot rainboots do we need, really? (LOOK AROUND)

Can we wear things LONGER before we replace them?
Cancel our subscription to Stitch Fix? Trunk Club?
Fashion is great but if we wait long enough, it will come back in style. There's nothing wrong with VINTAGE. Second-hand..
Use window-shopping to get ideas, NOT to line our closets!

Here this bit of Quaker wisdom again

"Stop trying to impress people with your clothes and impress them with your life!" SHUT UP!

2. Develop a habit of giving things away

- If we find something is developing an addiction in us then ESPECIALLY consider giving it away. Do we have something beautiful or practical that we have not used for some time? Then give it to someone who NEEDS it/ADMIRED it.
- Ladies and Gentlemen: How many DRILLS and HAMMERS do we have? Do we really need that many? Maybe Habitat for Humanity can use some of our extras?
- Do we have extra dining room chairs that we can share with our neighbor for their Thanksgiving feast that occurs Thursday at 5 p.m with ours occurring 5 hours before at noon? Then let them BORROW the chair later and discourage their purchase of extra. What ELSE can we share/buy with a neighbor or friend?

Listen to Foster's wisdom again:

Deaccumulate! Masses of things that are not needed only COMPLICATE life! Get this: They must be sorted, stored and dusted and re-sorted and re-stored AD NAUSEUM! Most of us

could get rid of HALF our possessions without any serious sacrifice!

A DECLUTTER PRINCIPLE (Stacey's mom, 5500-800sq ft)

Do I currently use it?

Do I really love it?

Would I buy it again?

BARTER: I need a bookshelf and you have a bookshelf? Can we set up a LOUMC Facebook PAGE: Community exchange, or small fee or free to good home?

Can we trade goods for services? What about purchasing a piece of art from one of our LOUMC artists? STACEY and Pam are in the process of working on this PAGE idea right now. Look for more info in weeks to come

- Don't forget Good-Will and other Off the Grid shops to take women's and men's business suits, kids toys/clothes/games, outgrown bicycles, Play it Again Sports

LOOK FOR LINKS for these too....

3. Learn to ENJOY things without owning them.

OWNING things is a bit of Western Hemisphere fascination
Maybe it has to do with our desire to CONTROL things
And if we CONTROL it, we think it may give us more PLEASURE
Truth told, it may lead to greater bondgae, debt and sleepless nights!

Can we just enjoy the beach without owning a piece of property or home there? And if we are fortunate enough to own a home there, consider sharing it with others who may enjoy some time apart there and who may not get to do so otherwise

Audible and Kindle are great but remember the beauty: library card!
And Walks, public parks and birdwatching are still free

4. Use plain, honest speech (as Jesus advised)

- Let our “yes” be “yes” and our “no” be “no.”
DO what we SAY we will do
Don't overcommit, however well-intentioned
(That means our HUBRIS or PRIDE is at stake)
Practice HUMILITY
KNOW our limits
Don't be afraid to say “No.”

One of our parishoner told me of a limit she'd recently learned:

“I need you to understand that what I WANT to DO and what I CAN DO are often two different things

Avoid flattery/half-truths
Avoid Superfluous talk. Flowery speech
Look for words to ILLUMINATE and INFORM
Not OBSCURE and IMPRESS

5. Reject ANYTHING that breeds the OPRESSION of others

That includes systems that are knowingly/unknowingly set up to promotes: *racism, sexism, agism, nationalism,*

Reject Food purchases that force people into crowded assembly lines in the middle of a global pandemic

How much meat do we really need? Really? Hold off?
(not just because I'm vegan)

What might it mean to eat closer to nature and buy things fresh vs. packaged in plastic?

What about a community garden who can't afford to buy fresh?
CHURCH, if the practice of some of these ideas does not lead to LESS ANXIETY and a way to show more LOVE FOR GOD AND

NEIGHBOR, then
we need to get up on the other side of the bed and try again!

What are we teaching our CHILDREN/GRANDCHILDREN
about SIMPLICITY?

What does it mean to work/earn what you get
rather than just have it handed to you?
How much is enough for us? For our kids?

FINALLY,

Jesus left his audience on the hillside that day with this
RESOUNDING POINT about non-anxious and faithful living

IF we seek to do God's will and to bring God's kingdom and
goodness to the earth

by the way we LIVE

by the GOOD we do

and by the HARM we refuse to do

THEN all the other things we NEED in life (not want)
will find their proper place. And our hearts will be so aligned.

In my life of **accumulating and de-accumulating**
all manner of EXCESSES
I have found it to be so.

When we choose to live less anxiously, more intentionally,
more faith-centered and less thing and security centered

it really DOES **FREE US and OTHERS To SIMPLY LIVE.**

That's what JESUS the houseless one said.

Let those with ears, HEAR!