How Much Is Enough?

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My plan for this teaching had been to talk about the theology of having fun. However, it turns out that over the past several weeks, I have had another question prodding me: *How Much Is Enough*? And when we discussed the question in Crisely and Luisely’s Discernment class last Thursday, I got some answers that I want to share with you.

For many, maybe most of us, living an intentional life has been part of our identity for years — some of us since childhood. At some point in our lives, we determined that it was critical that we live a life with purpose. And, unlike some others who decided their purpose was to make money or gain political power, our purpose had more to do with social justice and spreading the Good News. You can perhaps trace back for yourself to when that “call” became a conscious choice — perhaps as a child or young adult. It seems to me that one common denominator within our community is the call to live a purposeful life helping the disadvantaged, the sick, the disenfranchised. Even though I personally did not work in the social services field — and in fact, had my own for-profit company for 20 years — my “call” was to provide educational opportunities to the educationally disenfranchised: be they in rural areas, on Indian reservations or in prison. And my “call” has been to nurture those in this church.

So, once I retired and had no “real” work, what am I supposed to do with this call to live a purposeful life? Once you find yourself burned out, what are you supposed to do with this call to live a purposeful life? Once you no longer have the financial resources or physical or mental resources to live a purposeful life, what do you do?

Here is what Crisely and Luisely have taught me.

First, don’t ask: What is it the world needs me to do right now. Don’t ask that question. Ask the question that Howard Thurmond encouraged us to ask:

**Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.**

Really? Wow! I actually tried that and found it fairly easy for me to answer. I still need to hang around children. They make me come alive. Well, that’s a good insight. What immediately comes to your mind? If nothing comes up, please talk to a friend or two after the service. They will be able to tell you what makes you come alive. They have seen it!

Second, **say YES to what is yours and NO to what is not**. What? Many of us have a tendency to say YES to almost anything asked of us. Going forward, try not to do that. As hard as saying NO is for some of us, it is absolutely critical. NO is a very powerful word. Not only does it clarify your reaction, it allows for others to say yes.

And that brings us to the third point: **Trust. Trust that my (your) coming alive is enough.** Let me say it again: Trust that your coming alive is enough. Otherwise, your response is not coming from your inside, but it is being imposed from the outside. You must trust that you do not have to fill every need. Believe in our interconnectedness. Others will respond. It will not do anyone any good if you say YES to what is really your NO. There will be a natural radiance when I say YES to my internal YES. We actually can do violence when we say YES to what is truly a NO for us. We have a moral duty to tend to our inner being by protecting it from saying YES when it should be NO.

Etty Hillesum wrote:

Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it towards others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also in our troubled world.

One more thing: When we at Eighth Day say that prayer and meditation are required of all of us, what we are saying is that it is impossible — impossible — to claim the YESs, to decline the NOs that are not ours, to act out of the peace in ourselves, if we do not frequently pause. Especially in this day when our phone constantly beeps or rings asking us to pay attention to what the outside world wants of us. Especially in the midst of news or war and famine and heart ache. The pause may be turning off the radio so you can listen to yourself — even for a minute or two; even at a red light. In my case it may mean turning off the TV earlier so I can sit in the quiet to listen to myself.

Oh, and what is the answer to the question of How Much is Enough? Be open to saying YES to what is given to me. No need to go looking. No need to strategize. The opportunity to say YES to the invitation that is mine will come. And that will be enough.

Pause with the question: Is this a YES for me.