



I want to begin with a digital painting entitled “Enough” by Hannah Garrity which is inspired by Exodus 16:1-18, the story of Manna in the Desert.

She says this about her art: We have enough. I have been contemplating this phrase for the last two years. We recently moved. In the process, we downsized. How could so many things that I remembered paying money for now become so irrelevant that I would chose to put them in the trash? My Honda Accord had to hold our bags, the inflatable bed, the two children and me. Sitting on my front stop, I slowly realized that I had to send everything else to the dump. I had two hours.

1-800-GOT-JUNK, was scheduled out for days, so was College Hunks Moving Junk. Glen from Stevens City was available. For \$50 a load, we would take everything left in the house in the back of his blue pick up. Four loads. I had always contributed one trash can per week to the landfill. This was different. It was jarring. I began to feel lighter, but heavier at the same time. Why had I purchased all of these things? Enough is better than more, more, more.

In this painting, I have overlaid my empty hand with sets of circles. The guilloche' style patterning is used by treasuries all over the world to secure paper currency by making it too intricate to counterfeit. Here, guilloche' circles represent my deeply personal relationship with the money that supports our lives. Some money falls past my hand, some into my hand. Moses advises the people: take only what you need, one omer each. In this piece, the idea of enough money is layered with the idea of enough sustenance through manna. The manna is portrayed by another set of circles, reminiscent of the wafers that are used in some traditions of Communion bread. Enough. Thank you, God for providing enough, that I would take what I need.

We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. When you consider the powerful influences over your life – if you have ever done that before now – maybe you list the books you've read, television shows you watched, college you attended, neighborhood you grew up in. Those are all real and potentially made an impact on you. But the most powerful force in your financial life to this day is quite possibly something you have never really considered.

Some experts call it your money story. Others call it your money script. Essentially, it's the impact your childhood had on your core memories of money. But your money story doesn't comprise the things your parents or the people who raised you tried to teach you. Your money story starts earlier, around age three or four. It crept into you as you watched, listened, absorbed. Every day. It was the fact that there was – or wasn't – tension in the air on payday, at holidays, at bonus time.

In the looks your parents shot each other when one wasn't pleased with the way the other handled something. A child's first view of how something is handled typically becomes, in their minds, the way something should be handled. Although sometimes it flips and becomes the way something should not be handled.

But no matter what your environment was like, changes are pretty good that your parents didn't talk much about money on a regular basis. That made what you witnessed, or thought you witnessed, your truth, even if it wasn't quite your reality.

Most people – if they've considered their money story at all – have just scratched the surface. They've thought back enough to run an if-then scenario that goes something like this: My father was very controlling about money. Therefore, I'm going to be a penny pincher for the rest of my life.

It's a start but let's go deeper. The first thing to understand is that children learn in one of four ways:

Imitation: children see something happening and they do it.

Listening: They hear words and believe those words are, in fact, true.

Specific experiences: There was an incident at school or at home. Maybe you remember a huge argument every month at bill paying time. You may grow up feeling that you don't want to deal with money because money creates arguments.

Absorption: Children tend to absorb the emotions of their parents.

I tell you this because as we go through a series of questions I want to ask, I want you to think about not just what you were told – but what you heard, saw, thought and felt. I want you to be introspective. Don't censor yourself. Whatever bubbles to the top is very likely the truth.

What was the feeling about money like in the home where you grew up?

What was the feeling like about spending money?

What was the feeling like about saving money?

What was the feeling like about giving money away?

What is your earliest money memory?

What messages did your mother pass down to you about money?

What messages did your father pass down to you about money?

Do you remember hearing your parents talk about, or fight about money?

Growing up, did you have more than, less than, or about the same as your peers?

And now here are the follow up questions: How is this affecting me in my life today? Maybe you still feel the tension. Whenever you're faced with any substantial money decision – whether its figuring out how much is reasonable to spend on renovating the bathroom or whether to take the job you don't really want but that pays more than the one that make s you happy, you get tied up in knots. You can feel it in your gut. It makes it difficult to move forward.

Next follow up question: How is this helping me? Maybe the fact that money causes you to shut down has stopped you from making some unfortunate decisions. Maybe you were willing to let your employer default you into a mix of investments for your 401k that were appropriate for your age, rather than choosing them yourself – and that turned out for the better.

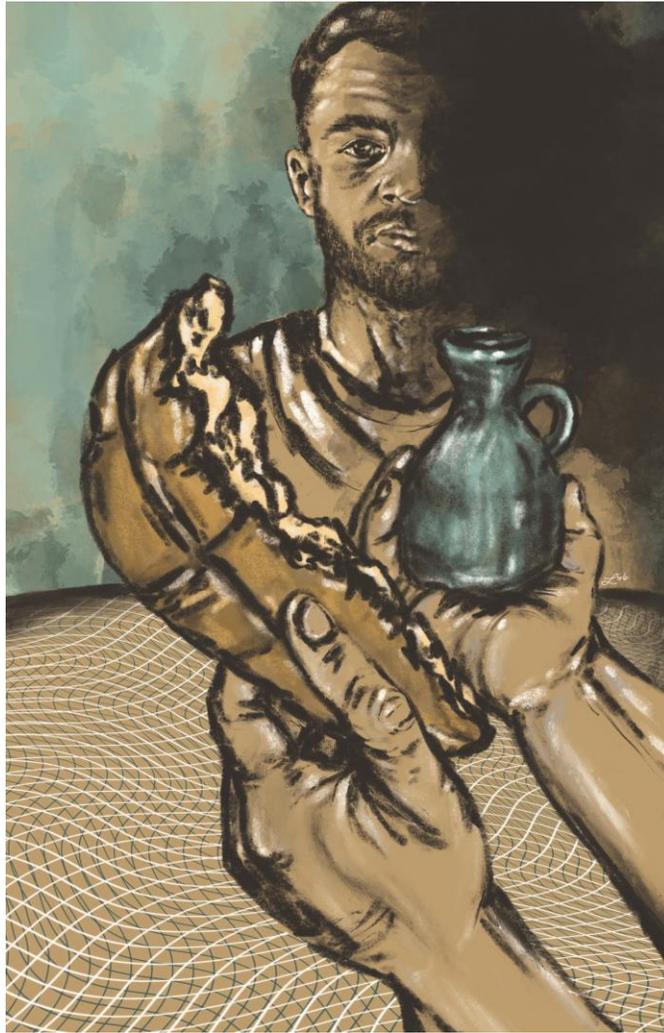
And last follow up question: How is this hurting me? Let's go back to that job decision for a moment. If you recalled or just had a feeling from childhood that the tension in your home tailed off in years when your parents had more money, then maybe you opted for the position that paid more, even though it didn't make you quite as happy. Or maybe the ramifications are simpler and more straightforward. Maybe the tension means it just takes you an insanely long time to shop for anything – because you have trouble making decisions.

What is your money story? Because we all have one. No matter how much of the stuff we have, or how much we love or hate it, we each have a money story and it begins in childhood and continues into our teens and adulthood.

As we remember our own stories about money, we look at a story in scripture that is older than our money story. The fearful religious leaders were plotting to kill Jesus. They were scared of the people. Rather than engaging in relationship, they worked with the impulse of evil that had entered Judas and instructed him on how he could betray his teacher. The religious leaders were pleased, and in exchange for his role in crushing the source of their fear, they gave him money. Money is used in a destructive act.

This is a story that has both a beginning and an ending, a story where in the beginning the money story is one of monetizing fear and corruption, juxtaposed with the ending one in which a meal is shared where Jesus gives wine and bread and there is enough for all.

Our second piece of art for today is entitled, Re-Member Me by Lisle Gwynn Garrity.



She writes this about her art: Peter and John go to prepare the Passover meal in the home of a generous stranger. Meanwhile, Judas satiates the desires of chief priests and legal experts by cutting a deal with them. Many of us quickly condemn Judas' betrayal as cowardly and weak. But we are privileged to know the end of this story, which makes judgment more enticing than empathy.

Judas did not know exactly how this narrative would play out. He knew what Jesus had told them about their fate, painting a vision of doom and terror; the temple demolished, nations at war, food shortages, epidemics, harassment and torture from the authorities, betrayal by loved ones, hatred from strangers, possible execution by the state. With the chief priests on the hunt and Jesus' disruptive death on the horizon, things were escalating quickly. Judas had to act fast.

In the face of so much uncertainty and fear for the future, how might you behave? Judas wants the nightmare to end. He wants security, assurance, quick relief. He wants to go back to how things used to be. And so, evil enters into Judas' story like ink spilled across the page.

But Jesus doesn't let Judas' story end here. Instead, he welcomes him to the table – a table where fear and doubt and difference have a place too. He offers him a meal where brokenness just makes more to pass around. He pours into a common cup that promises a new way forward.

Scarcity and fear and conflict will always threaten to dismember our story. But can we remember that God has a greater story to tell – a story that re-members us and makes us whole?

We remember this story. Jesus takes what is necessary for living, not for betrayal and splits it up and that act is what he asks them to remember until he is able to eat again – when the kingdom is achieved, when a new economy is brought forth.

We are a forgetful people and this week God is calling us to remember.

Remember Israel's covenant with God.

Remember that Judas was invited to the table.

Remember that our money stories shape our relationship to God.

Remember moments in each of our personal narratives where there was manna – there was enough.

Remember the contrast between Pharaoh's hoarding and God's "enough."

Remember Jesus' new economy of resources divided and given freely.

Also, remember those saints we listed earlier in our service that taught us so much about love of family, love of Church through their support financially, through their attendance in worship, their leadership, their witness, their love for peace and justice. We need to remember!

Listen to this poem by Rev. Sarah Are entitled, "Not Too Many Times:

My great-grandfather would come home from work

to find his love at the kitchen sink-

scrubbing potatoes or freeing the corn,

holy ordinary types of things.

And he would slide,

arms around waist,

to draw near enough

to ask her the phrase,

"My dear, Have I told you today?"

"Have I told you today that I love you?"

Day after day,

it was always the same,

because some things

you can't not say.

So she would smile

And with heartbeat to spine,

She would reply,

"Not too many times."

And it seems to be

That she must have known

That stories of love

Cannot be told

too many times.

So tell me again

of the love that serves

as beginning and end.

I guess what I'm trying to say

is that we are forgetful people most days.

We remember the melody but forget the words

We remember the past but forget the hurt.

We remember the face but forget the name.

We remember who God is but forget that God stays.

So when Jesus said,
“Do this in remembrance of me,”
Maybe he was standing with us at the sink
saying to us, “Have I told you today?”
For some things you can’t not say.

So tell me that story
and tell me again
until my whole world is caught up in
a love that lasts
And a God that saves.

And if you ask, I will say,
“Not too many times.”

This month we are going to be looking at our money stories. We are going to name what we are talking about and not skirt around it. To talk about money is to invite tension into the room. We want to avoid it. But this month I am inviting us to reframe it. Our money story is a spiritual story. Thinking about God’s money story should be liberating, inviting and transformative. So keep coming back to worship as we invite you to remember, release, reimagine and restore your money stories so that we can write the one God is begging us to live into. Amen.