

“PLEASE SIR, I WANT SOME MORE.”

Luke 11:1-13

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They must surely be among the most plaintive, heart-breaking words in both novel-writing and movie-making history: “Please sir, I want some more.” In one version of the movie, Oliver Twist is so hungry the night before he says he is afraid he will

eat the boy in the next bed over. The responses from the orphan masters vary from movie to movie, but in every case, Oliver Twist takes off running—scared. Not only will there be no more, there are consequences, dire consequences for asking for more. There are times in life when, I dare say, we feel like Oliver Twist. We have been given some, enough for a start, maybe even enough, for normal times, but now we need more. Let me explain what I mean.

The “In the Beginning” stories that the Ancient Writings have for us, tell a wonderful tale of being given what is needed for everyday life. “In the Beginning,” God spoke, and a Big Bang to silence all other Big Bangs shattered the silence and the darkness, a bang so big and so bright it’s power is still expanding the Universe today and it’s Light has not stopped pushing back the Darkness. God looked at all the celestial bodies swirling and spending in the galaxies and then saw one that God decided had some potential. It needed some adjusting and so God moved it a little further away from the star that is its sun and tilted it slightly so as to give it seasons. Then God shrunk down in size, waaaay down, till God could walk and work on this planet. God dug ditches that could become rivers. God planted plants to make the place green—trees and shrubs, flowers and vegetables, grass and cacti. Then God brushed the dirt off the divine hands and called it good.

Suddenly God paused, looked around, scratched the divine head, and pursed the holy lips. Something was missing. Just as suddenly as God had paused, God stuck a finger up in the air, as if to say: “Hold on a moment.”. God had an idea. If you would have been there, you would have seen a light bulb, or maybe a star, flash above God’s head. This Garden needed another kind of life. God remembered where She had found some clay while digging the rivers. God hurried over there, grabbed a large chunk and began playing with it and molding it into different shapes. When God was satisfied, God bent over, put divine lips to clay nose, and blew a puff of air into the nostrils. However, this was not just any puff of air. This was a puff of the Breath of Life, the Storyteller says, and the clay doll “became a living being,”¹ a human being. Of no other creature is it ever said that they were given this special puff of air, this Breath of Life. The lungs of the other creatures were all given the same capacity to pull in oxygen and push out carbon dioxide, but only of the clay doll could it be said that it was a “living being.” Something of God, the breath, life-energy of God was given to the doll. And the doll was the only thing made by God that was named by God. “I name you Clayton,” God said, “because you were made from clay.”²

That life-energy, that spark, that special Breath is at the core of every human being. Every baby is born with it. It is what is needed to stay alive under normal circumstances and go about our ordinary, day by day business of taking care of Creation, in whatever way we have been gifted to do so. However, like the porridge served Oliver Twist and his friends kept them alive but was not enough, so too, with us. We too need more, for life does not always remain ordinary or sometimes it becomes too ordinary. We want more. And so we go looking. Where we look depends on what more we need, porridge or stew, pudding or pie.

¹ Genesis 2:7. NRSV.

² The Ancient Story tells us God formed *adam* (man or a man) from *adamah* (the dust of the ground). I suppose an appropriate translation might be: “God made Dusty out of the dust.” I occasional tell our son-in-law—Adam—that his real name is actually Dusty.

Jesus tells us there is all kinds of “more” on offer in our world. In how I understand John 10, Jesus says:

“There is no end of salespeople with their offers,
their promises of life and excitement;
Snake oil salesmen offering patent medicine solutions
to real life matters.
Hucksters willing to sell you any baubles that catch your eye.
There is no shortage of stories & storytellers
with their re-written versions of what is good.
However, if you buy in, you will wither and die.
That’s what they don’t tell you.³

The list of patent medicines, baubles, and stories is long. I will point to three examples to help you know what I am thinking of and what I think Jesus was thinking of when he spoke to the people listening to him.

1) *Those things that lead to addictions.* Alcohol and gambling. Porn and crack. Crystal meth and opioids. We need either something to bring excitement to a boring life or a crutch to get us through a difficult time. Sometimes those difficult times are shorter, sometimes they seem to last a lifetime. I suspect we all know of times when we came close to going there, maybe even went there, or saw others go there. I know I have come close a few times and I know of family and friends who did go there and experienced and the destruction, the death it brought to life till they overcame the addiction. Like everyone else, these people have the special Breath given at Creation but it is not enough. They need more.

2) *Buying our way to living more.* Every TV commercial is an evangelistic message from the God “More.” Buy more. Buy this car or that cream, this furniture or that vacation. I am not sure if any one of us is immune to the beckoning call of this more, the inclination to accept the whisperings as truth, to believing the promises made. Every shopping mall and online

³ My take on part of what Jesus says in John 10:7-10.

shopping site like Amazon is a temple to this God “More.” Surely one more book, one size larger TV, one more stay at an all-inclusive will take away the gnawing hunger inside, the hunger for more.

3) *Religion of Magic.* Lots of people have traded in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God revealed in Jesus for a Fairy Godmother who will show up on request, wave her magic wand and turn pumpkins into stagecoaches and rags into ballroom gowns. All it takes is enough faith on our part and enough people praying. Usually this religion has two gods—the Fairy Godmother and her partner, the God Enthusiasm. The God Enthusiasm pumps you up and makes you feel good, like the Riders winning a football game. The unfortunate thing is the Fairy Godmother, no matter the promises, does not deliver and Enthusiasm has to be re-energized repeatedly, from one charismatic service to another, one conference to another. Both the promise and the enthusiasm are only good till they aren’t.

Just this week I talked with an acquaintance of mine from Winnipeg who, I could quickly tell, was full of anger. His wife is dying of ovarian cancer and it’s only a matter of time. His anger was at life, at cancer, and at God. Anyone of us can get angry at God at times and it’s okay. The Ancient Book of Psalms has several poems that do just that, telling God in no uncertain terms that God has not delivered on the promises and not come through on the expectations. However, all this is made doubly difficult when from our youth we have been told God will do certain things and then God does not and then there is nothing. We need more.

In and amongst the shouts of the hucksters, the cow bells of the snake oil salesmen, and the megaphones of the storytellers, Jesus gently calls out and says: “Listen up. Are you hungry? Do you need more?” And then, not starting with the cruel orphan master encountered by Oliver

Twist who scared poor Oliver and the other boys with his: “MORE?! DID YOU SAY MORE?!”

Jesus starts with a loving father whose love calls him to provide for his family:

If your little boy asks for a serving of fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? If your little girl asks for an egg, do you trick her with a spider? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing—you're at least decent to your own children. And don't you think the Father who conceived you in love will give the Holy Spirit when you ask him?"⁴

That's the More that God gives us, the Holy Spirit, the Wind of God to fill our sails⁵ to get us through the places when the simple, original Breath of God is not enough. It's what the Ancient Folk Singer was getting at when he pulled out his guitar at a community gathering around the evening fire, tuned it, and began to sing:

Seriously now guys, Really?!
You really think God has forgotten about us?!
You've got to be kidding me!
This Creator God does not forgot.
This Mother God does not ignore.
Creator God will fill your sails with wind.
Mother God will feed you energy-giving food.
We all know marathon runners run out of energy;
Hockey players need to take a break.
But you, with God's Energy inside
And God's Wind in your sails?
Nothing can stop you
When you think you're tired
You'll discover you just started.
There is no running out of the More
You need to live and take on anything.⁶



The image of God the Ancient Folk Singer had in his imagination and that Jesus was working with was not the vicious orphan-master but rather the loving mother who will always give more, whenever her baby asks for it. That

⁴ Luke 11:11-13. *The Message*. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

⁵ The morning I preached this sermon at First United Church in Swift Current, the Community Learning Time (Children's lesson) was about the Wind filling a sail and helping a family in trouble.

⁶ My understanding of Isaiah 40:27-31.

is how God feels about us. In fact, God can hardly wait to give us more food for the journey, more breath for the working, more wind in our sails.

But God will not force it on us. We need to ask. But that is all we have to do, Ask. Ask and we will feel the breeze begin to rise and see the sail begin to fill. Our lungs will feel the breath and our muscles the strength.