All of the verses in today’s reading basically boil down to the last one – that greatest commandment, how to love your neighbor as yourself. I want to draw attention today to verse 9, which on the surface is an injunction against miserliness:

9 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:9)

It reminds me of an illustration I once heard, if you hold your fist so tight that nothing can come out, then nothing can go in either. The gift, however, flows through an open hand. One theory about the origin of gifts is that they are the product of excess. For example, in those good growing seasons when you have more tomatoes and zucchini that you can possible dispose of in the bellies of your own family, you feel compelled to give it away, lest it wind up rotting in the garden or worse yet in your vegetable bin (because at least on the garden floor, it’s giving something back to the soil). So, whether it goes back to the soil or out to your neighbors, from that excess comes a gift.

A couple years ago, I had a powerful and fairly weird experience that is related to this. I was coming to the end of a research agenda that I had been working on for some time, and I wanted to explore something new, but I didn’t know what, and I felt really stuck. So, in my desperation, I did something I don’t usually do when it comes to writing and research: I prayed. Eventually, the new thread of research didn’t just come to me, it rushed into me, so that I almost couldn’t get my thoughts and my writing down fast enough, and there were so many ideas, I felt like I couldn’t do them justice. If you do anything creative (and most of you are more creatively active than you realize), then you know what a gift an experience like this is and how much joy it can fill you with, but also how overwhelming it can be. Months after this started happening (and it went on for several months), I was lying in bed one night realizing how extravagantly my prayers had been answered, and I had another weird experience – I became so overwhelmed by this outpouring of creativity and felt so cared for and loved and blessed, I didn’t know how to contain it. Like all those tomatoes and zucchini in the garden, I didn’t know what to do with it all. So I did something else I don’t normally do – I turned to my sleeping husband and I prayed all that excess onto him. I prayed that he would experience the same inspiration and creative outpouring and feeling of unspeakable love and joy that
accompany it. You’ve all had these outrageously lavish surges of joy, I hope, joy that moves you to tears, joy that you almost don’t want to catch yourself thinking about, lest it disappear once you notice it. But it’s from noticing it that we feel gratitude, that we feel and know we are blessed. Also, in noticing it, we are, in a sense, setting or at least recognizing limits – because without these limits, there can be no excess – otherwise, how would you know there’s too much? Lewis Hyde, one of my favorite writers about gifts, likens gifts to a river you stand in – drink what you can, and let the rest rush past you. You can’t take it all in, or you will explode, and you can’t plug it up, or the gift will cease to flow.

Today’s reading brought to mind a chapter in Betty Smith’s excellent novel, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. It’s about a poor immigrant family living in Brooklyn in the early part of the 20th century. The main character is a little girl named Francie. Her family is very poor. They are often hungry. But even when there is no food in the house, what they always have around is coffee, which is her family’s sole luxury. Her mom brews a big pot in the morning, using very little actual coffee but putting in a bit of chicory to make it taste strong and bitter. As the day goes on, she reheats the coffee and it grows even stronger. Everyone in the family is allowed a cup of coffee with milk at every meal. Francie loves holding it warm in her hand. She loves savoring the smell of it, which she thinks is better than drinking it. And at the end of every meal, she pours it down the sink. To quote Smith, she “regally, she poured it down the sink drain feeling casually extravagant.” When her aunts come over, they criticize her mother for letting her waste like that. But Francie’s mother defends her choice, arguing that it’s important for people like them to have something to waste. By allowing her to do this, Francie’s mom leaves room for her to feel rich in some small way and to deliver her on a daily basis from the feelings that can accompany extreme poverty.

Notice that in today’s passage, it doesn’t say to harvest every last bit of wheat or pick all the grapes and give them to the poor and the foreigner (although there are certainly times for that), but it says to leave something behind, presumably so that others can help themselves. In our discussions around campus on poverty, we’ve seen there is certainly a consensus that we should give but often debate as to how. It can get very political, but I think we would all agree that loving our neighbor should include this kind of regard for them. In its bidding that the edges of the field remain untouched, Leviticus 19:9 is calling for leaving room around the margins, as it were, not just to meet needs, but with the result that it preserves the dignity and autonomy of the recipient.
Worship Service  
Wednesday, February 26, 2014

Prelude  
Fanfare by William Mathias  Marilyn Schempp

Welcome/announcements

Invocation

Litany  
adapted from the Service of Prayer for Justice and Peace, Iona Community

Leader: O God, who called all life into being,  
All: the earth, sea and sky are yours.

Leader: Your presence is all around us,  
All: every atom is full of your energy.

Leader: Your Spirit enlivens all who walk the earth,  
All: With her we yearn for justice to be done.

Leader: For creation to be freed from bondage,  
All: for the hungry to be fed,

Leader: For captives to be released  
All: For your captives to be released, for your kingdom of peace to come on earth.

Hymn  
O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate  ELW 722 vv. 1-2

Scripture  
Leviticus 19: 1-2, 9-18

Sermon  
Love and Excess  Rocki Wentzel, philosophy and classics

Hymn  
O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate  ELW 722 v. 3

Communion  
Hjertesår (The Wounded Heart) by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)  
Augustana Orchestra directed by Christopher Stanichar

Blessing
Benediction
Postlude  
Våren (Last Spring) by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)  
Augustana Orchestra directed by Christopher Stanichar
**WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

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<tr>
<td>Fri, Feb 28</td>
<td>Worship Service</td>
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<td>Julia Blue</td>
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<td>Sun, March 2</td>
<td>Worship Service</td>
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<td>Pastor Ann</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Catholic Mass</td>
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<td>Mon, March 3</td>
<td>Worship Service</td>
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<td>Larry Rasmussen</td>
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<td>Tues, March 4</td>
<td>Common Ground</td>
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**CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Larry Rasmussen, author of *EARTH HONORING FAITH*, will be on campus March 3 and 4 to speak to religious resources for responding to climate change. Larry brings interfaith, scientific, literary and historic resources to the crisis. . . and is a fantastic teacher. He will speak in chapel on Monday, March 3 and give a lecture on Tuesday, March 4 at 10 AM in the 3:1 room.

Lent begins with **ASH WEDNESDAY** on March 5. Worship will include imposition of ashes at 10 a.m. with a Catholic service following at noon. Watch for more details on other Ash Wednesday events.

**BETTER TOGETHER AUGUSTANA COLLEGE** will meet Wed, March 5 at 7pm in the Siverson Lounge. We will be brainstorming ideas for interfaith events, speakers, coffee dates and service projects for this spring 2014 and next fall 2015. Everyone is welcome to attend! And please bring a friend!

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY** - This year Augie has partnered with Pueblo de Dios—a Spanish-speaking congregation here in Sioux Falls. Our first event of the year will be a **theatre and story-telling workshop with Pueblo kids** on March 23rd 6:30-8:30 pm. We are currently looking for volunteers to help with the event. If interested, contact Jordan Dobrowski at jdobrowski11@ole.augie.edu.

**CAMPUS MINISTRY STAFF 2014-2015 applications are available!**

Applications are available in the office. Student leaders work approximately 3 hours/week to recruit participants, coordinate outreach and service ministries, lead chapel musicians, coordinate special events, and cover tasks like setting up communion and running the sound board. Applications are due by March 7.

Augustana (SD) Campus Ministry