

**Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation**

**Living Simply, Love Extravagantly**

**Sarah Mason**

**May 2, 2008**

Acts 4: 32-35, John 12: 1-8

Hmmm ....so, we began with the disciples ridding themselves of all personal property and then re-distributing the material things according to need followed by Mary washing Jesus' feet with costly Christian Dior (pun fully intended) perfume ..hmmm. My association with Reynold Nesiba, known by some as the campus communist, might leave people suspecting that I plan to preach on the wasteful, unsustainable ways of Mary and the goodness of the disciples, but I think instead these are "both/and" stories. Both lift up examples of how to live. The "both/and" scenario for this scripture brings us to consider how we can both live simply, and in mindfulness of others, while loving God and each other extravagantly.

First let us consider simplicity. Pastor Paul's profundity in simplicity was further reinforced when we sat down to discuss today's message, he said; "you know, there is bounty in simplicity". Wow. No doubt, this is something that we can all relate to. Imagine this: it is Christmas time, we could not find that perfect gift for someone, and so we make them a construction paper card. It is not just any card, we consider the cuts and think of the person for whom we are making throughout the process. And then in giving it, there is an overwhelming reaction by the receiver, they appreciate it in all its simplicity, the fact that you made it for

them, that you thought of them while creating it leaves both the giver and receiver with bountiful joy!

Not only is there bounty in spirit that comes from simplicity, but there is potential for sustainability and stewardship of resources. Mother Teresa was quoted to say “Live simply so that others may simply live”. This has spoken to me over and over again throughout my life, but especially in the last four years. I have heard stories from people who visited sweatshops during j-terms abroad and I too have seen how our excessive demand for goods is destroying precious ecosystems and cultures that reveal so much of God’s love of diversity! Simplicity may look like compiling all of your possessions so that they can be redistributed among the poor or it may look like limiting your trips to the mall to once a semester.

I simply couldn’t pass up the cliché of talking about study abroad during my senior sermon. During my sophomore year, I spent the spring in Ghana in West Africa. I had done my research so I had some basic ideas about what my living situation would be on campus. I recall arriving at 11 pm to our dorm after a few long days of travel. I entered my room and began to unpack. The room was decent, nothing fancy, two beds, two desks, two dressers, and a life-saving ceiling fan. I went to bed, got up in the morning, and prepared for orientation. I went to the bathroom and my first lessons in simplicity began...ah-ha no water heater for the shower, brush the teeth-time out, don’t swallow the water it is not drinkable, next to the toilet-oh dang, run back to my room for a crucial piece of the experience because is after all Ghana BYOTP (Bring your own toilet paper). These were certainly livable conditions-it was like I was going

to have a camp experience for the semester; sometimes however when the power was out for hours, or the water didn't work leaving showers and toilets and the laundry water pump out of commission for a few days, I admit that I wished it was a little less like camp. After I made some friends in class, I went to visit their rooms-suddenly I realized that I was living the life of a fluffy, American, princess. My friends had the same facilities, but shared their space and amenities with six times the amount of people as opposed to me and my one roommate. I hadn't grasped the depth of my privilege, especially considering that I was visiting one of the most developed African countries. After a few months my initial shock was gone, in no time my lifestyle had shifted drastically towards simplicity; I did things like hand washing clothes with amazing efficiency and I never left home without a little bit of tp.

The bounty in simplicity was evident in the overall joy that radiated from person to person.

One holiday we were returning home on a trotro, public transportation that consists of a modified van so that you can fit 20 some people in it, someone who was transporting drums and so they started playing a familiar song and the whole trotro full of strangers shared in song until it became time for each individual to alight. On days when I drive around Sioux Falls in my personal car I long for the abundant joy that came with the material simplicity that coaxed me onto public transportation. It is hard to understand where this joy that is so often associated with "the dark continent" comes from. Perhaps it is easier to smile when you do not have to or want to work 60 hours a week to pay for health insurance, house payments, car insurance, car payments, etc. I laughed when my grandmother was complaining about the stock market soon after my return; worrying about stocks seemed like a silly way to waste this gift of life. I told

her to either let go of that worry or get rid of it if it would make her life better. She still thinks I'm a bit crazy for comments like this, but perhaps Christ knew this kind of thing would be a struggle when he said; "Hey y'all if you want to join my posse, you're going to have to re-prioritize-sell everything. No, no, Philip, I said everything". Perhaps in verse 34, when Luke writes, "There was not a needy person among them", he is not just referring to material needs, but the reference may also be to spiritual needs. I loved Ghana and hope to return soon, I think it is because I do not have the discipline here to live in the same simplicity and I see how my cluttered lifestyle interferes with my ability to love God and my neighbors to the same extent. I encourage everyone to have a nonwestern experience because I presume that you too may be aided in reaffirming that there is bounty in simplicity.

Not only is there bounty in simplicity, but there is also the potential for great lavishness in times of excessive love, worship, and thanksgiving. The things we eat are fantastic examples of the daily luxuriousness that we have come to expect. Guilty as charged, I too have complained about the commons before. However, if the option of a casserole, pizza, pasta, salad, soup, cereal, waffles and hamburgers are at the swipe of a card everyday, then how will we ever really appreciate those celebratory meals where we come together in fellowship at the table over an abundant meal like turkey, potatoes, squash, cranberries, and pie?

Let us consider the lavishness that Mary exemplifies in her worship. Judas immediately calls her out on it, even though we parenthetically note that his questioning was probably not motivated out of a sincere desire for clarification. Jesus however explains that this act of

worship, this extravagant, sacrificing, act of love is justified. “The poor will always be among you” is not an excuse then to sit on our bums while the poor get poorer, while 500 children die of starvation before this half hour chapel service is over, while our neighbors to the west on certain Indian reservations live well-below the poverty line. No, I think Jesus is making the point that there are times when extravagant acts of love are justified, not that economic disparity is justified.

We love extravagantly when we sacrifice our time to listen to a friend in need. We worship extravagantly not when we add on to our church buildings, but when we ask newcomers to sit with us or open our doors to those who don't look like us, dress like us, speak like us, smell like us, or live like us. We love extravagantly when we splurge on a gorgeous new comforter to donate to the local women's shelter. We love extravagantly when we pester our congress people about relieving the debt of poor countries. Mary did not have to use the Dior perfume, Jesus probably wouldn't have called her out on using knock-off Ralph Lauren bottle. But because she was moved to do so out of sincere reverence for Jesus, he applauds her. She does not just follow the rules, she redefines the moment by sacrificing some thing precious. I believe that we are called to follow the rules-the big 10-don't murder, don't steal, etc., but if that is all we use in our relationship to God and to others, we miss the point. The law is minimalistic.

Jesus encourages us to be like Mary every now and again. Love God extravagantly. Love your neighbor extravagantly. The action to which we are moved by this teaching will differ. For some people there is a great deal of sacrifice involved with devoting time, for others it is hard to

give up money or material things, while others still fight the urge to stay within their comfort zones.

I am just beginning to accept the legitimacy of “both/and” thinking. The scriptures that began with the purging of material goods and then with Christ exemplifying the use of an expensive perfume no longer have to sit in absolute opposition, but can exist and further the meaning of the other so that we come to see that our call is to live simply and love extravagantly.

Let us pray: Thank you for texts that continue to push our imaginations and intellect. Thank you for the bounty in simplicity. And thank you for the opportunity to love extravagantly.

Amen

Let us stand and join together in singing hymn number 720-We Are Called

**MORNING WORSHIP**

**Friday, May 2, 2008**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**INVOCATION** congregation sings “Lord listen to your children”  
so as to invoke God in this place, but mostly to make ourselves aware of  
God in the present moment:

**Lord, listen to your children prayin’,  
Lord send your spirit in this place,  
Lord listen to your children prayin’,  
send us love, send us peace, and send us grace.**

**PRAYER**

**SCRIPTURE**

Acts 4:32-35,  
John 12:1-8

**MESSAGE** “Living Simply, Love Extravagantly” Sarah Mason  
Major: Interdepartmental (Government, Theater, Exercise Science)  
Hometown: Lincoln, NE

**HYMN**

*“We Are Called”*

ELW #720

**PRAYER**

congregation responds **“Lord, hear our prayer”**

**BENEDICTION**

**L:** Go in peace, live simply and love the Lord extravagantly

**C:** **Thanks be to God!**

## CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**LUTHERAN OUTDOORS OPPORTUNITIES** - As summer (and summer weather) are soon approaching your camps are putting the finishing touches on their summer staffs. This year the camps have been very blessed with some wonderful candidates, but they still have a few openings that need to be filled before campers arrive.

**At Outlaw:** (673-4040) [outlaw@losd.org](mailto:outlaw@losd.org)

- a. Arts & Crafts Coordinator
- b. Cook
- c. Camp Nurse - for June 15 & June 22 weeks

**At Atlantic Mountain Ranch:** (673-4040) [outlaw@losd.org](mailto:outlaw@losd.org)

- a. Two wranglers
- b. Adventure (over an open fire) cook

**NeSoDak:** (947-4440) [nesodak@losd.org](mailto:nesodak@losd.org)

- a. male counselor (2)

Rev. Layne D. Nelson  
Lutherans Outdoors in SD  
[www.LOSD.org](http://www.LOSD.org)

### CHAPEL CALENDAR

Sun. (4 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Kat Burdine, Sr. Spkr.
Mon. (5 <sup>th</sup> )	Sung Prayer, 10 am - Jennifer Falkenstein
Tues. (6 <sup>th</sup> )	Roman Catholic Mass, 10 am - Fr. Shane Stevens
Wed. (7 <sup>th</sup> )	Holy Communion, 10 am - William Nelsen; Augie Choir
Fri. (9 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Becky Schulz, Sr. Spkr.
Sun. (11 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul
Mon. (12 <sup>th</sup> )	Hymn Sing, 10 am
Tues. (13 <sup>th</sup> )	Koinonia, 10 am
Wed. (14 <sup>th</sup> )	Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Paul
Fri. (16 <sup>th</sup> )	All-Campus Worship, 10 am
Sun. (18 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Justin Moortz, preacher, Ann Pederson, presider