

Fourth Sunday of Creation Care
September 20, 2026 • 10:30am
Trinity Episcopal Church • New Orleans, LA

The Rev. Lex Breckinridge

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Let's talk about the economy. Now, I can already hear some of you saying to yourselves, do we have to? I mean, it's not a happy topic these days.

It's ever-rising inflation. Gas prices are over four bucks. Groceries are expensive.

Zonnie and I went out to eat the other night and the cheeseburger was \$25. No thanks. But even though the economy isn't a pleasant topic these days, it's one we shouldn't run away from.

You know, economics is often called the dismal science. You know the definition of economics? It's the social science that studies how we choose to allocate scarce resources. Resources like time, money, and materials are limited, but human wants are unlimited.

In other words, economics is the science of scarcity. So our human economy presumes scarcity, and that makes sense, doesn't it? But God's economy is very different. God's economy presumes abundance.

In God's economy, resources are overflowing. God's resources are unlimited. To see what I mean, let's take a look at our first reading.

It's a very familiar story. The people of Israel have escaped bondage in Egypt, and they're wandering in the wilderness on their way to their new home. Now, they're going to be wandering out there for 40 years as God uses this experience to create a new community and a new culture.

Their characters are being formed by this experience. But this morning, it seems they've run out of food, and they're hungry. They are very hungry and very unhappy with their leadership.

They're grumbling, we're told. So Moses asks God what to do, and God's solution is to rain bread down from heaven. Enough for each day.

But the catch is that it's just enough for each day only. Now, they're super grateful for a little while. I mean, the bread, the manna it's called, is sweet.

But you know, human nature being what it is, eventually some of the people begin to hoard it. They slip into the fear of scarcity. They slip into the fear that there won't be enough.

Not enough for me! And when they eat the bread they've kept for themselves out of fear that they won't have enough. They find that the bread is sour. They were given enough for each day.

They were given their daily bread. But then they got greedy and wanted more and more and more. That was a big mistake.

Their daily bread had spoiled. Now, this wonderful story shows the difference between God's economy and human economy. With bread from heaven, everyone has enough, but not too much.

The leaders and the people, the highest and the lowest, the rich and the poor, all get the same amount. Those who work all day and those who for whatever reason don't, they all receive the same amount. In just a moment, we're going to recite the heart of this story when we pray, Give us this day our daily bread.

Lord, give each one of us just enough for today. Jesus is later going to reenact this story out in the wilderness when he feeds 5,000 hungry folks with just a few loaves and a couple of fish. Everyone has plenty, but no one has too much.

Now, I suspect that there may be a few out there who are thinking to themselves right about now something like, wow, this all sounds like a lot of socialism and I don't like socialism. And if you're looking at these stories through the lens of human economics, in other words, through the lens of scarcity, I mean, that very well might be the way it sounds to you. But if you look at these stories through the lens of God's economy, which is an economy of abundance, these stories aren't so strange after all.

In an economy of sharing, an economy of enough, God is inviting us to imagine a new reality, a new reality that Jesus calls the kingdom of heaven. And it's this new reality that Jesus is teaching his friends and teaching us in this parable of the workers in the vineyard. Now, just before Jesus tells this parable, he's astonished his disciples by telling them that it'll be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Wow, then who can be saved, his disciples ask him. For mortals it's impossible, Jesus says, but for God all things are possible. And Jesus goes on to say that everyone who's left home and family and work to follow him will inherit eternal life.

And then here's the kicker, but many who are first will be last and the last will be first, he says. That's the interpretive key to this strange parable of the laborers in the vineyard, a parable in which Jesus describes God's economy, this new reality called the kingdom of heaven. Now, let's acknowledge right up front that the idea that the laborers who don't go to work until quitting time get the same pay as the guys who've been sweating in the hot sun all day, let's acknowledge that that just offends our sense of fairness.

It offends our sense of justice. I mean, I can't count how many dozens of times I've read this parable, my gut reaction is always the same, it's just not right. My gut reaction is to see this from the perspective of the guys who've worked their tails off all day in the hot sun and are getting the same pay as the lazy bums who went out to work at quitting time.

I mean, I'm just socialized that way, socialized to think in terms of comparison. I mean, who's hard-working and who's not? Who's an insider and who's an outsider? Who's a winner and who's a loser? You know, I practiced law for many years before I went to seminary. Most lawyers get paid according to the number of hours they work.

You get judged by how much time you put on your time sheet. Now, here's a dirty little secret. The money's the money, but there's also something deeper at work, competition.

I was comparing myself to other lawyers, I worked harder than he did, so I must be a better lawyer. Or, wait a minute, I work more hours than she did, but she got paid more than me, that's not fair. You ever heard the saying, comparison is the thief of joy? Comparison is the thief of joy, but I've been socialized to live in that world of compare and contrast.

Living in that world, the line in the Lord's Prayer we talked about a minute ago should give me this day my daily bread. Substitute me for hour, if you see what I mean, but that's a scarcity mentality. And that's certainly one of the reasons that the householder's odd method of payment in the parable, paying everyone who worked the same wage regardless of the hours worked, it offends our sensibilities.

The ones who worked all day complained they grumble just like the people of Israel in the wilderness. You know, their complaint is really about more than money, it's about what money represents. Money is how we keep score.

Remember what the guys who worked all day said about the ones who went out to work at quitting time? They said to the landowner, you have made them equal to us. See, work isn't just about earning our daily bread, it's how we establish superiority. Who's up and who's not.

The culture teaches us to connect hard work to status. I mean, that's how an economy of scarcity works. But like I said, God's economy of abundance is different.

God's economy isn't an economy of scarcity. God's economy is an economy of grace. Economy of grace.

And God's grace is there for everyone. No matter who you are, what you are, how hard you work, or don't work. In fact, you know how our prayer book defines grace? Grace is God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved.

By grace, God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills. Grace. Unearned and undeserved.

Unearned and undeserved. You can look it up. Page 858 in the Book of Common Prayer, but don't look it up right now.

Now, I have an old friend who's, whenever he's asked, how you doing? Oh, he says, better than I deserve. You know, that's exactly the right answer. I'm sure doing better than I deserve.

I tell you that. Maybe you are, too. But when I stop comparing myself and my situation to other people, and just open up to the abundance that's all around me, the beauty and the magnificence of the natural world, the goodness of the people who love me, the serendipity out of all the times and places in human history, that I'm right here, right now, in this time, in this place, with you people doing work that I love.

Man, it just knocks me out. I'm not wealthy. Not by a long shot.

But you know what? I have enough. I have enough. I have enough for this day.

I have enough love. I have enough grace. You and I are each living in God's economy, the economy of abundance.

How am I going to be thankful for all this abundance today? My dear sisters and brothers, tomorrow will take care of itself. How will I be thankful for all this

abundance today? The psalmist says, today is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Today, my dear sisters and brothers, is the only day we have, and it will be enough.

Amen.