

*... learn from Me the unforced rhythms of grace...*

**LOVING** *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” (Luke 6:37-38)*

**Sharing** - How will God’s abundant generosity be evident in my words and actions in my workplace, church, neighbourhood and the wider world?

### **Talk/Video**

This lovely pair of scriptures are such an eye opener to the modern Western Christian for they show us just how far we have come from the spiritual understanding of sharing that our Jewish ancestors took for granted and into which Jesus speaks. Proverbs talks of the generous being blessed through sharing their food with the poor. If we are honest, we live in a culture where we think of ourselves as ‘going without’ or ‘sacrificing’ things rather than being blessed through sharing. Individual ownership simply wasn’t around then, people thought of themselves as being much more connected to their tribes and families which included their extended relatives and even their hired hands.

This was brought home to me when I was twenty four years old, out in India on a Missionary trip. We were staying with local families in Andhra Pradesh, a particularly poor region. I felt terribly guilty that we were prevailing upon our hosts’ hospitality but the Pastor had insisted we live as the locals do. Our first evening in a tiny village, surrounded by dried palm trees and muddy buffalo in the scorching heat, we climbed to the roof of the house for the daily meal as the sun’s fierce heat began to fade. Sitting cross-legged on the flat, soft earth wearing my now well-worn Salwar Kameez from Preston, I watched as the family members formed the beginnings of a circle much bigger than necessary for them and their palid guests. Suddenly, others began to appear from nowhere, poorer and thinner even, than those we had prevailed upon for food and lodgings. I watched, bemused, as they too, joined the circle. Amma (Mama) then proceeded to hand out large banana leaves to each and every one of us which would serve as our plate.

I began to feel anxious about the family being able to feed us all but out came the huge pot of rice and a second of curry; it didn’t seem possible to me that we’d all be fed and filled, so I braced myself to go hungry. Yet each banana leaf was receiving a fair portion of the food which seemed to multiply itself even as the food was ladled from a lovely hand-carved wooden spoon. I asked Vijayashree if there would be enough for her as she unconcernedly shared the food. She wobbled her head and smiled beautifully, ‘it is OK, Auntie, there is always enough,’ she said as if the pot were bottomless and they were wealthy.

‘Who are all these people?’ I asked. She looked at me with surprise, ‘these people live on the streets,’ she said, adding, ‘it is a great dishonour not to feed anyone who needs it. Everyone who needs food can come and they will be given the same as family members.’

I tried then, as I do now, to imagine tea-time, dinner-time or supper in any of our houses, with the homeless confidently arriving knowing that a place would be laid for them and freshly cooked food given to them as if they, too, were warmly welcomed members of the same family.