*ENOUGH*

Proverbs 30:8.9

I would like by a show of hands to see how many of you have in the last year thought about winning a lottery. The South African lottery Jackpot regularly goes to R25 million and has been as high as R100 million but the European and American Powerball lotteries have yielded winners in Rand terms of between R3 billion and R4 billion. Imagine that! What would you do with that money? What dreams could you fulfil? What bucket list items could you live out?

I for one don’t gamble because I did a course in second year maths at University which I think was specifically designed as a therapy to cure anybody of a gambling addiction. I have since figured that there are far more productive means of throwing money away.

Now. if someone here won the lottery and tithed 10%, what would we as a church do with the R5 million or R10 million that the church got. All maintenance on our buildings could be done quickly; we would have a great looking campus. We could get a vehicle or two to go on outreach projects. Stained glass windows would be put in, the properties around us would be purchased for future expansion. All of these great things would be done.

Sadly none of you have won the lotto, (that we are aware of), so Wilhelm sorry, wake up from your dream now.

I think though that we should all sit down and thank the Lord that it didn’t happen! Because there is a great spiritual danger in having too much. And so, strange as it sounds, we must thank God that none of us have won the lottery prize.

The most famous study of the lives of lottery winners was done in the 1970’s by Brickman, and Coates and they found that not long after winning the lottery, these winners were no happier than they were before. They were numbed to the enjoyment of the simple things in life. According to wealth counsellors, roughly one-third of lottery winners find themselves in serious financial trouble or bankrupt within five years of turning in their winning ticket.

There is equally a spiritual issue about being too rich, and there is a spiritual issue about being too poor. What should we ask for, then? Enough. Just enough.

Our prayer should be our reading for today from Proverbs 30 versus 8 and 9.

“Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’, or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

This is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

What a wonderful reading of the human condition Agur the writer had!

It is always difficult to preach to a congregation on issues related to money and wealth, because people are sensitive to it, and don’t like to hear some inconvenient truths. As a non-ordained minister and someone involved in running a business, everything I say today applies to me as much as anyone else, perhaps especially me. Please accept therefore that I am not being a hypocrite in this sermon, I am not judging anyone, but I hope to lay down a foundation for us all to live by.

I am reminded of a talk that was given at the Global Leadership summit a couple of years ago by Bill Hybels, head of the Willow Creek organisation. He described how he had gone to an affluent congregation in New York and preached a sermon about wealth and money and what God expects us to do with our money. He said that he realised that the sermon had hit home when he was greeting everybody at the door when a well dressed women approached, looked him in the eye and said – You Bastard. So I guess I too may know within an hour whether this sermon has hit home.

Let us start with a few definitions here. If I say wealth and poverty what do I mean. I discussed this issue with a statistician and we concluded that because of the dramatically skewed distribution of income, that the top 20% of a population by earnings would be considered wealthy. Equally the bottom 50% would be poor, and the middle 30% would be neither rich nor poor.

Now consider this

If you earn more than R3,100/month you are in the top 50% of earners

If you earn more than R13 500/month you are in the top 20% of earners

If you earn more than R40,000/month you are in the top 8.5% of earners

If you earn more than R110,000/month you are in the top 1% of earners

By the way, the World Bank defines poverty as earning less than R2,000/month for a four member household.

Now I don’t pretend to know what anyone here earns and equally I don’t want to know, but looking in the parking lot I strongly suggest that the majority of this congregation fits well into the top 10% - 15% of society.

Even the majority of our church ministers in our Presbytery fit into this bracket. The uncomfortable message here folks is that when we read scripture, by far the majority of this congregation are considered to be wealthy, and those relevant and often uncomfortable scriptures apply to us, not just the kings and rich fools.

The issue about wealth is that it leads us to a set of illusions. First of all, we think that whatever we have, it’s ours, ours to keep and ours to use for whatever we want. And that’s not true. It’s not ours.

Psalm 24,1 tells us “The earth is the LORD 's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

The more people have, the more they want. In Eccl 5:10 Solomon, the richest man ever writes ““Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.”

Equally when our bellies are full we have a tendency to get too relaxed. The result is that we get a feeling of independence. This applies to the church as well.

In Thomas Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia in 1785 he comments about the church in Virginia in colonial times, that was supported by the British government. He writes that tax support “contributed mightily to the laziness of its ministers.”

It is only when God lets us do without that we’re constantly reminded of our need for Him. If all our bills were paid how would we look to Him in faith? If I know all my food for the next year is in the pantry, then why do I even need Him? But if I can’t see how I will make ends meet, then I’m forced to trust that He’ll provide, i.e when we become rich, we lose Faith.

I suggest to you that in our materialistic society we are in the same position today. Matthew 6:24 tells us :

"No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

In a nutshell, the issue about having too much is that we lose sight of our need for God. Those who have too much easily forget that it came from God and that God can take it away. God’s will is that we should use what we have in order to bless others. When we are wealthy we write God off as an irrelevant relic of a bygone age. Why do you think so many first world churches stand empty today? Look in Middelburg where La did a is situated, on the property of a now unused church.

Here are a few typical symptoms of excessive wealth:

Wealth can generate a sense of pride; we think that we did it all ourselves. Ezekiel 28:5 in his prophesy against the King of Tyre states “By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud.”

We develop a sense of entitlement – How many of us here think that we are not paid enough by our employers. This is a particular issue with the 18 to 35 year olds, the so called X generation.

We develop a false sense of security – We think, Phew we have saved enough for our futures. Ask any cancer sufferer about the value of a large pension fund. You see, we tend to view security as financial, not looking to God.

We have too many distractions and too little time for really important things like family, friends and most importantly service to God – You see wealth takes time to manage

Excessive wealth makes powerful people, and with very few exceptions, Power corrupts, and if you want to continue the line, according to Lord Acton, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."

The wealthy tend to be less appreciative because they have much of what they want – familiarity breeds contempt.

Finally wealth creates worry. Worry is the first symptom of a lack of faith. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 5:12 - The sleep of a labourer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

I read a passage about this while researching the sermon where a woman commented on something her husband had said, “I'm glad we're walking the middle line,'' my husband recently told me. ''We have enough to provide for our needs, but little enough to keep us humble.'' Nicely put.

In my mind one of the greatest fictional books ever written is Les Miserable. It is a fantastic social commentary and is as applicable to South Africa today as it was to its setting in Paris in the period 1815 – 1832. If I have any influence at all Callie, please teach this to our children as a set work. As much as it is a fictional and non scriptural book it has a huge amount of significance when considering our Proverb of today and how we as Christians ought to conduct ourselves rather than how we do.

In the introduction, Jean Valjean, a prisoner out on parole is ostracised by society despite having served his time for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his niece. Seeking shelter on a cold winter’s night he is not allowed to stay anywhere and the honest bishop takes him in. In the book this is the Bishop of Digne.

The musical has the verse which has the Bishop welcoming the paroled prisoner into his manse with the following words:

“Come in sir for you are weary, and the night is cold out there, though our lives are very humble, what we have we have to share.

There is wine here to revive you, there is bread to make you strong, there’s a bed to rest till morning, rest from pain and rest from wrong.

What an attitude. How many of us professing Christians would do this? It is a valuable mission work as this classic work goes on to describe.

Would we in this congregation consider welcoming a released prisoner into our homes or giving him second chance by employing him? Or, like in most company’s when the question of “Do you have a criminal record appears, is it automatically a case for rejection without further investigation.

In 1 Timothy 6:17 – 19 Paul instructs Christians as follows: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

If you think the behaviour of the Bishop of Digne in Les Miserable is outdated and a figment of Victor Hugo’s imagination, and does not apply to SA today, think again. Our minister in Johannesburg where I grew up was one of the best examples of a Christian I ever met. My mother still thinks that he is the closest thing to a Saint I will ever meet. His name was Father Hugh Harker, an Anglican minister, who bored us from the pulpit, but had a heart of gold. During my study years, I visited him in Grahamstown. Now understand that Grahamstown is a town full of poverty, by comparison, Middelburg has few beggars. He lived a very humble life in a very small semi detached home, and yet nobody ever left Father Harker’s home hungry. Word got around and on some days twenty or thirty people would knock at the door looking for food and counsel, and every one of them left with a sandwich and something to drink. What an example to us all, particularly because on occasion Hugh and Ruth Harker gave away all of the food that they had in the house and went hungry that night. Hungry physically but spiritually enriched. What an opportunity to minister to those so desperately in need of hope.

You see the words of Les Miserable can be lived out today in a practical way. Primarily the bit that says “though our lives are very humble, what we have we have to share”.

Think of that next time you are accosted by a beggar or a car guard in town. Yes you can justify to yourselves and anyone who cares to listen why you do not give beggars money, but it is not what God expects from us.

Mother Theresa put it this way, “Live simply so others may simply live.”

Let’s get on to the other part of the proverb. Remember the proverb stated

Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’, or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

Many of us here will have heard stories and will have told stories, particularly to our kids about how poor we were growing up. We tell them of all of the things that they have that we never had and of how easy it is today and how privileged they are. Believe me they need to hear this, but equally we need to do something about it because it is us who are spoiling our children because many of us are too busy chasing money to spend time with them.

In by far the majority of these stories though, what we had growing up was not poverty.

Admittedly we did not have all the consumer goods that are around today, life was economically not as easy as today, and speaking for myself, despite the fact that:

I was clothed out of the school’s swop shop and my brothers hand me downs,

my brothers and I mowed the lawn every week, (today this may be considered child labour),

I rode a old bicycle without mudguards to school in summer and winter

We never went to movies,

And we were given good hidings if we stepped out of line.

Despite all these so called hardships I never slept cold, (except at scout camps and veld school), I always had food, and I always felt secure, (even if by ignorance).

You see the stories of the hard times that most of us tell are not poverty.

We seldom hear the real stories of poverty, because few people ever break out of the cycle to tell them.

These are some of the stories we never hear? “My dad dropped dead at 45 from working so hard, and my mom was disabled and we had to beg from the neighbours and move every year because we could not afford the rent?” You don’t hear those stories because the people that lived them are so spiritually starved they aren’t in church, or, if they are, they know there’s no inspiring story to tell.

And then, what about other stories that might go, “My dad went to jail for stealing when we were little, and my mom had lots of boyfriends, and said that was the only way she could feed us.” You aren’t going to hear that story in church, are you?

But I’ll tell you what it does teach us. Exactly what the Proverb says, “.. I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

Let’s not romanticize poverty:

Poverty drags people down.

Poverty erodes people. For every person that can testify that their family rose above poverty and was rich in love, there are ten or a hundred families, for whom poverty was deadening, dulling, and dreadful.

Poverty steals childhoods

Poverty breeds addictions – look at the Cape flats

Poverty yields abuse

Poverty results in loss of family and high mortality rates

Poverty produces hopelessness

This is not what God wants for us; too have too little, any more than He wants us to have too much.

Folks we don’t have to look far to find poverty here in Middelburg. When last did you drive out from Aerorand to the Van Dyksdrif road past the Uitkyk squatter settlement? Have you seen the squalor, it is a hotbed of crime in the town and yes the prostitutes, (the mothers who need to feed the children), all this living within 1 or 2 kilometres of one of the most affluent areas in Middelburg, full of Christian brethren who are not sharing their wealth, or do we just not want to see it that way. We can find excuses not to help them, next time you do, please spare a thought for the scriptures and justify your approach to God.

I return to Les Miserable where a woman Fantine is dismissed from her work in the factory that she works in by a middle manager who wants to sexually harass her and she refuses to submit. As her life spirals downward, Fantine is eventually forced into prostitution to try to survive. Her daughter sent away to the care of a corrupt underworld innkeeper. In these depths of depravity she is abused because of her vulnerability to abuses by customers and by the nature of her profession she has no recourse to the law. She dies a miserable and painful death leaving her daughter an orphan. Fantine never got to Church to tell her story, more tellingly nor did the church get to her.

Yes Les Miserable is a fictional account, but the same story is playing itself out in Middelburg today, in Uitkyk, in Mhluzi, in Nazareth and under the eyes of our church.

It is right to pray that we not live in poverty. It is right to pray for a job, or for a better job. When we consider the strikes that are going on in the country at the moment, spare a thought for why they are happening before lashing out in your criticism of COSATU.

The announcement that Angloplats is set to downscale and shed 14,000 jobs this year is a major blow. Why, because they cannot make enough money, I repeat enough money. Platinum had many boom years prior to the recession, where Angloplats literally raped the country for profit, but as we spoke last week, they did not take the view of the ant and prepare for the future, they took the profits for shareholders and ran, and now, when there is a downturn, they simply shed jobs, easy as that. There is not enough provision in the pantry. Commodities are cyclic, Anglo of anyone should know this, but it is greed that drives the business, predominantly international first world greed. And incidentally don’t forget where your pension funds are invested, we are all part of the same system. What will happen when 14,000 jobs are lost, more poverty, more crime, and more prostitution? I for one am with the unions and Government on this one.

We often wonder why the likes of Julius Malema in all of his wisdom are so popular. Perhaps it is because the likes of Anglo do what they do and get away with it. The current system drives the gap between rich and poor further apart. Should we as Christians accept this evil or stand up for the poor?

To quote Albert Einstein: The world is a dangerous place, not because of evil people, but because of those who watch and do nothing.

It is right to pray for an opportunity to advance. John Wesley preached in the Eighteenth Century: “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” Not a bad formula.

But the key word is “enough”. How much is enough?

Jesus taught us to pray, in the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread”, not “Give us this day the bakery, so I can have it all.” He also did not teach us to pray, “Give us this day one little old stale crumb.” It is right to pray for enough, because people who have enough have time for the things of the spirit.

The Apostle Paul says in Phillipians 4:19, “My God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Your every need. But not your every whim. Our prayer could be: Lord give me enough,

Enough so that I can share with others but not feel smug and self-righteous about it.

Enough so that I can invest in the community where I live and can help shape it and mould it into a growing place for its children.

Enough so that I can freely and joyfully give to my church, letting it redeem lives and help the poor and send the good news abroad.

Enough so that I can be a little lavish sometimes, just for the sake of celebrating.

Enough that Cynthia can spend a little money on plants out here so that there will be colour and beauty in our Church garden.

God also wants us to enjoy life as Ecclesiastes 9:7 states – Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favours what you do.

This is not a call for unbridled indulgence as it balanced by a call for hard, smart and skilful work.

So now some of us have enough and in most cases more than enough.

How do we apply enoughness in biblical way.

Let’s go back to Les Miserable

The prisoner Jean Valjean had by his meeting of the Bishop of Digne, been brought to God. Through a great deal of hard work, innovation and wisdom he had built himself up to be a rich businessman and the mayor of the town, but a man of great dignity and grace. He lived a very humble and simple life despite his wealth. It was from his factory that Fantine was dismissed ultimately to end up a prostitute. During her final run in with the law, Valjean as the mayor of the town and judicial representative intervenes to find out the details of the case. Upon being told by Fantine of the circumstances that led her to this place in life and upon realising that he at least in part was responsible for not protecting this vulnerable woman against his manipulative staff he has enough grace and humility to repent of his wrongdoing and rectify the situation as best he can. Her health is too far gone to save Fantine, but he allows her to die with dignity in his home under his care. He further undertakes and does adopt her daughter at great personal sacrifice and expense to himself and raises her with love.

This is a great illustration of the behaviour that God would approve of for the wealthy. His life is humble, he behaves with dignity, he has the grace to admit his faults, and the integrity to make restitution for his mistakes at great sacrifice to himself.

In the story, as a result of his protection of Fantine, he needs to leave town despite being the mayor, and instead of taking his wealth with him, he turns his entire factory and fortune over to his staff and the poor in town because these are the people who helped him build it up.

What an example to the companies that are shutting operations or divesting from the country. I hope that the CEO of Anglo in his plush London offices takes time to see the movie this weekend.

Embracing enoughness will obviously result in a great deal of discomfort right now if we have to live according to what is written in the scriptures. Are we out of line if we live in houses with more than a bedroom or two and enough food to get by on? What about the big screen TV’s, fancy clothing, extravagant cars, and I can see Marina’s mind clocking over about my Whisky collection.

To motivate you here are 10 benefits of making the mindset change to enoughness.

You will have more time – things need management, they break. Who of you today with all the technology you have that promised to save you time have more time than you used to. Who of the non retired people here today can take a 3 week holiday like your parents used to. (The Whitfields are specifically excluded from answering).

You will have more peace – Having more than enough rarely brings more peace. The rate of psychological disorders, broken marriages and suicide is far higher in the wealthy set than the rest of society.

You will improve your personal relationships

You will be content – This will occur because you will no longer feel that you need to keep up with the Jones’s. You may even find that your relationship with them improves.

You will have less or no debt – There will be no need to look at getting extra things that put us in debt. Trevor Manuels planning commission estimates that the average South African spends close to 76% of their disposable income on servicing debt. Further to this, he estimates that in the middle classes this now exceeds 100% so that group on average is borrowing just to fund debt repayments. In simple terms, the vast majority of South Africans are one salary cheque away from bankruptcy.

You will be better equipped to respond to need – God requires us to look after the poor and needy.

Your life will be simpler – The Bible clearly affirms the value of simple living. Ecclesiastes 4:6 says - Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind”, while Proverbs 17:1 similarly says - Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

So what do us as individuals need to do to embrace enoughness in a Christian sense.

If it is not obvious, here are some examples.

Be brutally honest in examining your own heart for the motive behind your next purchase or dream of an unnecessary item.

Be content with what we have, do not chase dreams of wealth and accumulate possessions. John Piper, the American theologian puts it this way, “hearses don’t have trailers attached.” 1 Timothy 6:7-8 says “For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”

Go on a spring clean of your house and all things that have not been used for 12 months and that you have no concrete plans to use, give away to someone who needs it.

Live closer to the earth. Home grown vegetables taste better than those from Woolworths anyway and the satisfaction of your labours is added to it.

Clear your debt as soon as possible. This will remove stress and make you easier to live with. If this means driving a car for longer than you might otherwise have done, enjoy it. It is only a means of getting between two points anyway. When you next buy a car, buy a fit for purpose car, not a status symbol.

When you next have a party at your house, invite someone who cannot reciprocate. Not to embarrass them, but to share the blessings that the Lord has bestowed on you.

Pick up a hitchhiker and give him a lift (without asking money). It is rewarding and what an opportunity for ministry. I have taken to doing this, it is rewarding in the sense that I have learnt a lot about the conditions under which the people live. And for those who say it is too dangerous, I am still here and kicking. You’ve got more chance of being hit by a taxi than being mugged by a hitchhiker. If safety is your primary concern, don’t drive.

Come to Vingerkraal and assist with the school. (By the way their matric pass rate for 2012 was 88%, up from 86% last year and 33% the previous year and they had a 100% maths pass rate). All help is well appreciated and very rewarding. Digging trenches and caring for the poor is not above any of us.

Go and help with soup feeding on a Tuesday morning at the hospital. Show that despite being well off we do care for those in need.

These are some of the examples of what you can do to embrace enoughness and serve your community as God would have it.

Now what can we s St Johns do?

Stewardship committee is charged with managing our finances, so they could and should embrace enoughness in their deliberations on how we spend our money. I am about to be purposefully controversial, but these questions need to at least be asked.

Wilhelm tells me that the church has an annual budget of between R1 million and R1.2 million rands.

Of this we spend about 20% on outreach through our various programs and Presbytery assessments. Is this enough for a congregation that I suggest is in the financial upper echelons of the Presbyterian Church.

Now here is a thing. In my time here I have heard many in the leadership and in the congregation grumbling about how much we pay over to Presbytery and we get nothing or little in return. The question is whose interests are we then looking to serve, are we not being selfish and self serving. Through Presbytery, amongst other things, we are assisting less fortunate congregations. We should be planting churches, this is part of our Christian duty, but we at St Johns, in my albeit relatively short time here, have not done this or tried to do this, and we are not currently active in doing this. And who do you think trains and mentors brilliant young ministers like Jaco to get to us when our ministers leave. Surely therefore we should be asking if we can give more to Presbytery because they are at least doing our dirty work for us, the work that we are charged to do but do not bother with.

Consider this, and it is only a personal opinion. When required we were able to raise, fairly quickly, R110,000 for a new kitchen. That is about 50% of our total outreach budget for a year. We had a kitchen that worked. I for one cannot taste the difference in the tea or coffee since the inception of the new kitchen, nor have I noticed more or improved fellowship since then. Equally and more importantly, I have not noticed it being used for any more outreach work than the old kitchen. So why did we spend the money, and why was it so relatively easy to raise. I suppose the real issue is that we need to examine our hearts as to the motive for our behaviour, were we not primarily self serving in this instance.

There was a famous interaction that happened in the thirteenth century between the the­o­lo­gian Thom­as Aquin­as and Pope In­no­cent II when the lat­ter was count­ing out a large sum of mo­ney. The Pope re­marked, ‘You see, Thom­as, the church can no long­er say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” Aquin­as contemplated this for a while and re­plied, “That is true, ho­ly fa­ther, but nei­ther can we now say, ‘Rise and walk.” You see by that time the church had become extremely powerful, wealthy and corrupt to the core. It had lost the need for God, and it had lost its Faith in God to provide.

We as a church and as individuals need to guard against this in our everyday lives.

So here is a suggestion!

Going back to my Grahamstown days. The Anglican Cathedral in Grahamstown used to operate a system whereby congregants could buy tickets from the church. These were then given to beggars and car guards and were redeemable for a cup of soup and a piece of bread at the church, but the most important thing was that at the church, they were able to receive ministry. This way those who were phoney beggars quickly realised that this is not what they were after and refused the ticket, but those in genuine need received real nourishment, physically and spiritually.

So how about making use of the new and improved kitchen for such a project.

Let me now give some consideration as to what happens if we do not embrace biblical enoughness. The simple answer to the question is nothing at all. Nothing will happen, and this is the point. God will reward those who do as they are commanded to do.

Psalm 112:5 says “Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.”

2 Corinthians 9:6 - Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

God promises to reward the generous and cheerful giver. I guarantee you one thing; you will never be able to out give God.

As Christians we need to ask what are the instructions given to us in the scriptures and how seriously we take this. If we take our faith, and I repeat loudly the word FAITH, seriously we will embrace biblical enoughness. If we are saved by faith, and through faith we are led to do good works, perhaps the extent to which we embrace enoughness is a direct measure of our faith, given the promises of God. Think about that.

I conclude the sermon today with a story that I received on e-mail this week. It goes as follows:

Recently I overheard a mother and daughter in their last moments together at the airport. They had announced the departure. Standing near the security gate, they hugged and the mother said, I love you and I wish you enough".

The daughter replied, "Mom, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I wish you enough, too, Mom".

They kissed and the daughter left. The mother walked over to the window where I was seated. Standing there I could see she wanted and needed to cry. I tried not to intrude on her privacy but she welcomed me in by asking, "Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing it would be forever?"

"Yes, I have," I replied. "Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever good-bye?". "I am old and she lives so far away. I have challenges ahead and the reality is - her next trip back will be for my funeral," she said.

"When you were saying good-bye, I heard you say, 'I wish you enough'. May I ask what that means? ". She began to smile. "That's a wish that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone".

She paused a moment and looked up as if trying to remember it in detail and she smiled! "When we said, 'I wish you enough', we wanted the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them".

Then turning toward me, she shared the following as if she were reciting it from memory.

I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright no matter how gray the day may appear.

I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun even more.

I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive and everlasting.

I wish you enough pain so that even the smallest of joys in life may appear bigger.

I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.

I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.

I wish you enough hellos to get you through the final good-bye.

She then began to cry and walked away.

Let us Pray

Father we pray the prayer of the proverb today

Give me not excessive wealth that we may deny You and say who is God, equally do not land me us poverty that we may profane Your Holy name. Give us just enough. Enough to grow in our relationship with you, enough to be able to help the poor and vulnerable, enough to joyfully do as you command. Father you know our hearts, we can hide nothing from you. Show us what we need to do with our wealth through our faith to be able one day to stand before you and hear the words “Well done good and faithful servant, Come and share your master's happiness.” We ask you this in Jesus name.

Amen