"People are made to feel bad about so much," said Libby Roderick, author and composer of the song we just sang. "They're too fat, they're too thin, too poor, too old -- but I think that deep down inside they know they're better than others may think...."

We are enough. There’s a river in my soul tellin’ me that I’m somebody, we sang earlier. I am enough. As we explore abundance and its opposite, scarcity, this month, I invite you into that feeling of being enough. That feeling that Bonnie grappled with publicly this morning, getting to enough.

And I’ve been thinking how we are enough as Unitarian Universalists.

There is a tension in this movement we call Unitarian Universalism. On the one hand, we are very “secular” I’m very proud of our worldly, secular humanist side. I think there are a lot of atheists, agnostics, and secular humanists who have no idea this church exists and might be a comfortable home for them. I long to introduce those people to our way of religion. We’re very in this world and in some ways, you might say mainstream.

And we’re a religion. Like people of all religions, we tend to think of ourselves set apart — a little bit out there, difficult perhaps, or just different. We like to think of ourselves as radical and not so mainstream. Certainly, in the world of Western religion, to make room for atheism as an acceptable religious viewpoint, is a different perspective, heretical even.

And, however, sometimes when we are so in the world, so secular, we can forget what about our religion is religious. If we accept that a belief in God is welcome and not required, then— what makes this church a religion and not a social club? I think the answer lies in the reading by Walter Brueggemann in which he says that Sabbath is a profoundly subversive practice, that a Sabbath is “an act of resistance.”

Though our religion may not obviously distinguish us from the marketplace or the rest of the world. Though we may not wear special undergarments like Mormons or yarmulke like Jews or hijab like Muslims, we nevertheless like to think of ourselves as set apart from the rest of the world. Some of us may associate it with our religion, but many may just think we’re different and radical and this is a church where I can be as I am and it is enough – it’s not because of our religion that we’re different, but we chose this church because we were already feeling different.

I don’t think it matters much one way or the other, my point is that I think the church should help us with those radical acts, such as taking time away from work or setting time aside for a family dinner. Or voting. or reading. Church should be a counter-cultural institution. Challenging our most deeply entrenched and un-thought out ways. Religion should help us resist oppression. Sometimes that mean it should help you develop the individual strength for a single courageous act, and other it times that means working with others to help change the conditions that make up that oppression – whether it’s our own or that which affects another.
I’ve been profoundly moved by this #metoo movement started by Tarana Burke in 2007 as a grassroots movement to reach sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities, that has had an impact far beyond the original intent and is now helping mainstream culture name sexual harassment and violence as the scourge it is, calling out politicians and comedians, media, publishing and business men. The prevailing culture – whether you call it white supremacy culture or American culture – has permitted and promoted the sexual exploitation of women and objectification of certain, (mainly anyone who is not a white cisgender heterosexual male) human beings who did not go along... Certainly this is one way in which our religion seeks to be counter-cultural – seeks to resist oppression and change the conditions that make up that oppression, even as our own record has resembled the culture in which we are steeped....we know better.

This morning, as we enter a week in which the larger culture sets aside time – many, not all, people get time off work – to share a meal with family and/or friends – I’d like to explore how setting aside time for Sabbath, for rest and relaxation, for sharing a meal, can help us recognize that we have enough that we are enough.

Sabbath is time away from regular work – and depending upon your religious tradition, that can extend from no writing down anything on a piece of paper to not running a lawn mower or a car. Reading, however, has always been a welcome Sabbath activity. Scripture, of course, is preferred, but then in our tradition, scripture can refer to quite a broad spectrum of reading materials. Not talking on the telephone can be a Sabbath requirement, and not doing email certainly.

Often we see the traditional Sabbath as a list of things you are not to do, but I like the traditions that say you’re supposed to enjoy yourself on the Sabbath, cooking and sharing a meal, playing simple games with the family, or having sex with your partner.

There’s no doubt that it’s harder to keep Sabbath when your religious community doesn’t require it of you and when secular society no longer expects it. Which is one reason I like to preach on the subject. It is not in our nature to require it, but there is nothing holding us back from practicing it.

It certainly takes some strength to keep the Sabbath without the support of those around you. But that’s why it’s a radical act. It’s counter-cultural. It takes courage and strength to take a Sabbath, as we try to restore balance to the American overwork ethic. Taking time away, set apart, reminds us that we are not our work, that we are not of value only because of the things we accomplish – even volunteer work, I want to point out, that we are enough, regardless of some cultural standard of productivity. We are enough.

As we approach this week of Thanksgiving, a holiday some revere as special time with family and friends and others critique as a celebration of our gluttony and violence (football), I wonder if we can find that just right balance of enough. Enough time, enough food, enough family, enough worthiness.

Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Food movement in Italy, described slow food as “fighting for the right to determine our own tempos.”

As a society, we are out of balance. According to UU author, therapist and community organizer, William Doherty,

“we work more hours than medieval peasants did. Interestingly, two disparate groups in the population are hit the hardest: managers who are forced to be married to their job, and the working poor who often have to work two or more jobs to make ends meet. The Microsoft effect and the Wal-Mart effect, if you will. In
between are the millions of workers who are forced to work overtime hours they did not choose to contribute to their employer.”

The Microsoft effect and the Wal-Mart effect leaves no time for friends, family and food, the simple pleasures of life that take time. Instead, we grab what we can to eat to keep on working, and we feel trapped. We can get to a place where we neither enjoy our food nor enjoy our work, because of the time pressures upon us. We continually feel like we are not enough, that we don’t have enough – enough time or enough worth.

A few years ago, in Michigan, back when it was all the fashion, I took the Localvore Challenge. My family tried to buy foods grown locally, which is possible in both Michigan and Washington. We decided to eat dinner together every night of the week. I think that was the challenge which had the greatest effect on our family. It may sound simple, but we regularly ate in shifts three nights a week – twice because I was had meetings at church and once because my husband had night commitments. I won’t say we succeeded in eating together every night of the week, but we increased the number of times we ate together. We sat down together, enjoyed our food, and we talked more. We grew in our palates, and I’m not just referring to our son who was still at home then. I eat beets now, a food I thought I despised since childhood, and have discovered are really quite – well, I won’t go as far to say delicious to describe them, but they are tasty in a satisfying kind of way, especially when fresh and cooked right.

Eating locally should have a positive effect on the planet, but eating together has had a very positive effect on our family. Let me tell you, just having decided that we were going to eat together provided us some freedom. I really would never have even considered asking my family to wait until 9:00 at night to eat with me until we talked it over that summer. And we did eat that late a couple of times. Now that we choose not to eat that late together, it really feels like a choice, and not a burden. I know that if I wanted, I could ask my husband to wait until my meeting at church were over – and since I have that freedom and luxury, I don’t need to.

“What we are fighting for is the right to determine our own tempos” says Carlo Petrini.

And I agree with Thomas Merton that activism and overwork is a pervasive form of contemporary violence. He says that “it destroys our inner capacity for peace because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.” It is this violence turned on ourselves, which makes it easy to treat others with violence – as objects rather than as human beings. Ripe for sexual exploitation and harassment.

I think Merton’s words are really quite radical. I think most of us don’t think that committing ourselves to too many projects as violence, or wanting to help everyone and everything as violence, but let me remind me of his words. He says,

“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence, and that is activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone and everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

As a religious people, I think it is up to us to counter the pressures of our culture and determine our own tempos. We should go fast because we want to go fast, not because we have no choice. //piano under the final paragraph below
And we should slow down occasionally for rest and contemplation and connection, not because we’re too sick to keep going. “Honoring the Sabbath tis a form of witness. It tells the world there is enough.” I hope this week you are able to slow down, that you are able to turn off societal pressure to set the perfect table or shop until you drop, and enjoy a different rhythm, one of your choosing. Find your own tempo. Bask in your own enough-ness, and value those with whom you surround yourself this week.

**Benediction**

As we give thanks this week for time set aside and sabbath and food, family and friends, may peace grace our time with harmony and may all find true tranquility. May you both have and be enough.

* Sermons are meant to be spoken and not written. I have not edited this sermon to written form.