

Enough

by [Elizabeth Myer Boulton](#) in the [July 27, 2010](#) issue

My grandmother's name is Nellie Caroline Myer. In her prime she was a force to be reckoned with: tall, full-figured and bold. She loved a good hat, a pretty dress and fire-engine-red lipstick.

In the 1950s and '60s, with the threat of nuclear war looming, Nellie stockpiled her basement with cans of tomatoes, tuna and bean salad. During the sugar shortage of the '70s, she filled her cupboards with sugar: brown, refined and raw. When the energy crisis came, she became obsessed with keeping the needle of her Buick's gas gauge above three-quarters of a tank.

Every other day she would wait in long lines to fuel up. My grandfather could never understand this, and one day he'd had enough. "My goodness, Nellie," he said. "Do we really need to wait in line for gas again? We've got three-quarters of a tank."

Every member of my family can recite her answer word for word: "Well, Jimmy, of course we have to wait in line. We've got to get that gas before the hoarders do!"

This story came to mind the other day as I wrestled a gigantic package of toilet paper down the stairs and into our basement—only to discover two identical, unopened packages already there. Minutes earlier I had raced through Costco, hurriedly eating smoked almonds out of a fluted paper cup, convinced that we were about to run out of toilet paper, that there wasn't enough.

Sometimes it feels as if there isn't enough. With the death toll still rising in Iraq and Afghanistan, it feels as if there isn't enough peace. With all the pain and disappointment weighing down the Roman Catholic Church, it feels as if there isn't enough hope and healing to go around.

A few months ago I did a committal service for a homeless man in our congregation who had no family or loved ones to mourn his death. As his ashes were lowered into the broken ground, a wave of fatigue came over me, and I felt as if all the tenderness and compassion had drained out of the world. In times like these, it feels like there just isn't enough grace, and that all we have left are handfuls of dust and

ashes.

Like Nellie, we wait in long lines, working to get the things we cling to for solace: toilet paper, clothes, status, gadgets, praise or cans of bean salad. We wait and work and worry. In Luke 12, Jesus talks about these things. Just before this week's passage of scripture he delivers his most focused warning against greed and then twirls a lily between his fingers, waxing poetic about ravens and the kingdom of God. "Do not be afraid! Sell your possessions! Be generous and free! Trust in God's grace—for there is more than enough!"

Jesus is not the first to beat this drum: he picks up on a rhythm that's been ringing since the beginning of time. The good news of God's abundant, sustaining grace is like a heartbeat animating the whole of scripture, from the Tree of the Knowledge in Genesis to the Tree of Life in Revelation, with those emerald green leaves that hold healing for the nations.

Fear not! Your God is the God of Genesis, who poured out her heart to create giraffes and dragonflies and forsythia. You don't need to steal and eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge because this is all you need to know: the one who created you will sustain you, care for you and never let you go.

Fear not! God is the God of Exodus who hears you cry, takes you out of slavery and into freedom and feeds you with manna. You don't need to squirrel away sugar for the bitter days ahead: God will provide.

Fear not! God became flesh in order to touch us, teach us, heal us, take our ashes out of the ground and bring us back to life. You don't need to build bigger barns or hoard toilet paper: all you need to do is trust in the grace of God.

Today, all of Nellie Caroline Myer's hats, cars, lipstick and canned goods are gone. Everything she owns fits perfectly into the wardrobe of her room at the nursing home, where strong, kind people clip her nails, wipe strawberry jam from the corners of her mouth and transfer her three times a day from a bed to a wheelchair.

Sometimes, when I visit and find my grandmother looking small and insignificant, it hurts my heart. But if you ask her how she's doing, she'll tell you she has everything she needs: people who care about her, a warm bed and the inexhaustible grace of God.

It's enough. She has cast off all her possessions. The thieves and the moths no longer come around, because her treasure is already in heaven. She is waiting for her master and friend, the one whose gospel goes like this: Fear not! And be ready, for I am coming at an unexpected hour.