

# *Living a Simple Life* with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

## **Episode 32 - A Gracious Plenty**

Hi, I'm Julie, and I teach folks how to live a Simple Life. When you live a Simple Life, you may just find that your world is filled to overflowing. It's what we call a 'Gracious Plenty'.

There are so many things that fly beneath our radar – mainly because our minds are running ninety miles an hour on at least a million different things at one time.

Some of those things that are allowed to slip by are those sayings that have been familiar to us since birth and we hear every day, sometimes several times a day. 'Bless your heart' and 'Oh, my Mercy' are a couple that I no longer really hear, as I have heard them and used them repetitively.

Well, I HAVE been known to listen a bit more closely to 'Bless your heart', as it can have either an honest, sympathetic connotation or one of extreme sarcasm, even if it is delivered in a super sweet tone of voice. And I truly want to know where I stand on the receiving end of those words. But there is one I heard recently that isn't used quite as often as it once was, and my mind zeroed in on it with the stealth and speed of a heat seeking missile – Gracious Plenty.

The more I pondered that phrase, the more I liked it. Even the feel of the words slipping off your tongue is soft, gentle, and pleasing to the ears. As these words filter through the air, they evoke an image in my mind of an older woman in an apron, standing on the wobbly steps of a rundown house, who is holding the screen door open, welcoming you into her humble home.

By all indications, she doesn't have much in the way to offer, but she offers a slice of a cake that is sitting in a place of honor in the middle of an old and scratched table, enthroned on an ancient (and slightly chipped) cake plate with a glass dome. The cake itself looks like a priceless gem, and my mouth waters at the thought of taking a big bite.

There is one woman who came into my life that is the epitome of Gracious Plenty - Mrs. Mae Ethel. She was in her late 80's when we met her, and passed on in her early 90's. But in the few years I was blessed to have her, she taught me quite a bit of how to put Gracious Plenty into action.

The stories Mrs. Mae Ethel told weren't of hardships, but of her child-like nature of running barefoot with her children and their friends through the woods, fishing poles in hand. The twinkle in her eyes was the bright spot of any day, and she was always quick with a hearty laugh and the offer of cake.

She could also be blunt and to the point, as we quickly discovered.

One of our most favorite memories of her started with a phone call to the Country Boy. The conversation went something like this:

Country Boy: "Hi, Mrs. Mae Ethel. How are you?"

Mrs. Mae Ethel: "You know tomorrow is the opening day of squirrel season, don't you?"

Country Boy: "Yes ma'am."

Mrs. Mae Ethel: "I need five. Be sure to clean them."

Click. She hung up.

The Country Boy stood there for a moment with the receiver in his hand, just staring at it. Then he slowly hung up and turned to me. "Well, my marching orders have just been issued," he said.

The next morning, he headed out back early, and finally came home with five squirrels. He cleaned them, packed them in a bag with ice, then headed down the road. One hour (and a piece of cake later), he came home. Around five o'clock, the phone rang again.

The Country Boy answered, "Hello?"

Mrs. Mae Ethel was on the line. She said, "Dinner's on the table. Hurry up and don't let it get cold."

Click. She wasn't much for carrying on a lengthy telephone conversation, apparently.

We just looked at each other for a second, then rushed to the car. Me? I admit I gritted my teeth, as I do NOT eat squirrel. But there was no way I was going to get around it. Southern manners, and all.

Still, when we arrived, I was stunned. Mrs. Mae Ethel pointed to the platter heaped high with fried squirrel and sitting all by its lonesome was a small boneless chicken breast.

“I know you don’t eat squirrel,” she said. “Now, sit down. Eat!”

My heart melted. A boneless, skinless chicken breast is a luxury to those who don’t have much to begin with, and here she made sure my preferences were catered to. Gracious Plenty in action.

That table was a true example of gracious plenty. There were about five or six bowls, each with a small portion of other offerings – turnip greens, corn, butter beans, smothered squash, pickles, mashed potatoes, and a plate of corn bread that had been cooked in a small cast iron skillet.

There wasn’t more than about a serving and a half per bowl, but somehow that meal filled us to the brim, with a little of everything left over. And yes. Her Pineapple Cake sat waiting on the counter, just waiting to be the ‘guest of honor’ for dessert.

It was a meal that said, ‘Welcome’. A table that offered Grace. A home that had a strong Heart. A friend who offered unconditional Love.

Gracious plenty. It doesn’t describe the amount of food on the table. It can’t be defined by just any cake sitting in a position of honor. It’s a feeling, like being wrapped in a warm hand-made quilt on a cold winter’s day. It slakes the thirst like an icy cold glass of lemonade in the throes of summer heat.

It’s giving everything you have to someone in need when you have little to nothing to give. It’s a soft touch. A gentle word. A joy-filled laugh when there is little else to offer. It’s a perfect blend of love, grace, mercy, generosity, family, friends, and compassion. And it always says, “Welcome”.

With the Thanksgiving holidays coming up, we tend to focus on gratitude a bit more. Our tables are often heavy with delicious food and surrounded by those we love. However, having a Gracious Plenty isn’t just for the holiday season. It is something we have every single day.

Don't just reserve a Gracious plenty for the holidays. Instead, look for it everywhere. Offer it to others every day. And even if it is a wealth of smiles and laughter – or a simple meal of squirrel and a boneless chicken breast, be thankful for every bit of Gracious Plenty in action.

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand, or get a transcript for this episode, just visit my website at [www.thefarmwife.com/podcast](http://www.thefarmwife.com/podcast). That is the Resource page for this podcast and I have it set up by episodes to make things easier to find. To help you out, this is Episode 32.

And while you're there, leave your comments at the end of the page. And be sure to rate, review, and leave a comment on the Podcast app you listen to. This helps me to know how well you are enjoying your visit!

If you have been graced with a Gracious Plenty, be sure to share it. You can email me at [thevirtualporch@gmail.com](mailto:thevirtualporch@gmail.com). I would love to visit with you more!

And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax & Enjoy!

*julie*