



Grateful Church

Grateful Church: Part of the “Slow Church” Series

- WEEK ONE: STARTING JULY 7 -

OVERVIEW:

“[The myth of scarcity] ends in despair. It gives us a present tense of anxiety, fear, greed and brutality. It produces child and wife abuse, indifference to the poor, the buildup of armaments, divisions between people, and environmental racism. It tells us not to care about anyone but ourselves—and it is the prevailing creed of American society.”

- Walter Brueggemann

Brueggemann doesn't mince words, as he calls scarcity the “prevailing creed of American society.” Yet, a quick glance at the headlines or the evening news sure makes a strong case that he's correct. We're as selfish and self-focused as ever.

What exact is scarcity, anyway? Well, Stephen Covey described a scarcity mindset this way:

“Most people are deeply scripted in what I call the Scarcity Mentality. They see life as having only so much, as though there were only one pie out there. And if

someone were to get a big piece of the pie, it would mean less for everybody else. The Scarcity Mentality is the zero-sum paradigm of life. People with a Scarcity Mentality have a very difficult time sharing recognition and credit, power or profit – even with those who help in the production. They also have a very hard time being genuinely happy for the success of other people.”

Such a mindset changes the speed we live at. Brueggemann states, “People who think their lives consist of struggling to get more and more can never slow down because they won’t ever have enough.” In other words, a scarcity mindset puts us at direct odds with the way of Jesus. Remember he told us, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light,” (Matthew 11:28-30).

The antidote to this mindset is a lifestyle of gratitude. Jesus, in fact, told us that we have much to be grateful for. He promised us that our Heavenly Father deeply desires to provide for us and that he deeply cares for us. He stated in Matthew 6, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.” He would go on, “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

So much of the New Testament seems to follow this theme. The Apostle Paul, in particular, seems to point a recurring theme that is foundation for faith. It is simply this:

1. Notice the grace and abundance of God
2. Offer up thanksgiving and praise
3. Discover a life full of love, generosity, and joy

For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 5 he says, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Or what about Colossians 3 when he says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

May we heed these words! Living out an American attitude of scarcity is literally the antithesis of what Jesus calls us to. When we pay attention to the gifts God is bestowing upon us, we'll be able to slow down and discover a fuller humanity (that we were designed for). Rest for our souls is waiting when we discover that this life is not merely a competition.

Our prayer is that this month reset the gauges for you, and that you discover the beauty of what God has done and is doing for you.

- Drew

DAILY READING:

Today: Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday: Matthew 6:26-30

Friday: Luke 17:11-19

Saturday: James 1:17

Sunday: Break

Monday: 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18

Tuesday: Ephesians 5:18-20

WEEKLY PRAYER:

Lord God,

Giver of all gifts, who loves and abundantly sustains the whole of your creation.

We come humbly before you, with gratitude for all you have given us in our churches and in our neighborhoods. We ask that you would guide us toward a deeper faithfulness to the way of Jesus.

- Grant us patience as you teach us rootedness in our neighborhoods and our places.
- Grant that we may use our God-given gifts and skills to work diligently for the flourishing of our church and our place.
- Grant that we may learn to slow down, resting and trusting in your abundant provision.

- Grant that we may practice gratitude, continually being mindful of what you have provided, and seeking to use these resources to bear witness to your reconciling work.
- Grant that we may generously practice hospitality, sharing the abundance of your provision for us.

In all these ways, we ask that you might draw us deeper into your love and compassion, and that your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

AMEN