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Psalm 139:11-12

John 15: 11

Wholehearted Living: “Cultivating Gratitude and Joy and Letting Go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark”

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Sometimes our first waking thought of the day is “I didn’t get enough sleep.” The next one is “I don’t have enough time.” Whether true or not, that thought of not enough occurs to us automatically before we even think to question or examine it. We spend most of the hours and the days of our lives hearing, explaining, complaining, or worrying about what we don’t have enough of ... We don’t have enough exercise. We don’t have enough work. We don’t have enough profits. We don’t have enough power. We don’t have enough wilderness. We don’t have enough weekends. Of course, we don’t have enough money—ever. We’re not thin enough, we’re not smart enough, we’re not pretty enough or fit enough or educated or successful enough, or rich enough—ever. Before we even sit up in bed, before our feet touch the floor, we’re already inadequate, already behind, already losing, already lacking something. And by the time we go to bed at night, our minds race with a litany of what we didn’t get, or didn’t get done, that day. We go to sleep burdened by those thoughts and wake up to the reverie of lack ... What begins as a simple expression of the hurried life, or even the challenged life, grows into the great justification for an unfulfilled life.” (Lynn Twist, The Soul of Money)

In the midst of that mindset and practice it proves difficult to be grateful and joyous. Scarcity is an illusion. It fails to face the facts that in many ways we have enough.

So, where does that leave us? It calls us to make sure we cultivate gratitude and joy as spiritual practices. Research shows and faith reports that those who practice gratitude have joyfulness. These two spiritual practices are spiritual because they believe in a and power greater than ourselves and in human interconnectedness.

Gratitude and joy are not human emotions connected to circumstances, but a spiritual way of engaging with the world.

Another myth about gratitude is that having an attitude of gratefulness is enough. Yet, the truth is, having an attitude of gratitude translate to a behavior.

So then, let's talk about some behaviors or spiritual practices you can do to move from attitude to life experience. It might look like:

keeping a gratitude journal,  
 doing gratitude meditations or prayers,  
 making gratitude art,  
 stopping amidst stressful, busy days, and say a out loud "I am grateful for..."

Gratitude without practice is like faith without works – it's not alive. It's not life giving. It more like death and being dead.

As long as we are doing some myth busting this morning, let's continue with that agenda as we look at joy.

In the language of the New Testament (Greek) the words for happiness and joy are not the same. Thus, they are not identical and we should not mistake one for the other. Happiness is about money and health, good circumstances. Joy in the Greek means good mood of the soul, culmination of being. And in scripture, joy is found only in God, and comes

with virtue and wisdom. It isn't a beginner's virtue; it comes as the culmination. And the opposite is not sadness, but rather, fear.

What gets in the way of gratitude, joy, and even happiness? Anxiety and fear manifesting as scarcity can get in the way. And before we know it, we might find ourselves thinking, "I am not going to allow myself to feel this joy, because I know it won't last." "I'd rather not be joyful than have to wait for the other shoe to drop." Most of us have experienced being on the edge of joy only to be overcome by vulnerability and thrown into fear. Until we can tolerate vulnerability and transform it into gratitude, intense feelings of love will often bring up the fear of loss.

If we are not practicing gratitude and allowing ourselves to know joy, we are missing out on the two things that will actually sustain us during the inevitable hard times.

Addressing scarcity doesn't mean searching for abundance but rather choosing a mind-set of sufficiency: We each have the choice in any setting to step back and let go of the mindset of scarcity. Once we let go of scarcity, we discover the surprising truth of sufficiency. By sufficiency, I don't mean a quantity of anything. Sufficiency isn't two steps up from poverty or one step short of abundance. It isn't a measure of barely enough or more than enough. Sufficiency isn't an amount at all. It is an experience, a context we generate, a declaration, a knowing that there is enough, and that we are enough. Sufficiency resides inside of each of us, and we can call it forward. It is a consciousness, an attention, an intentional choosing of the way we think about our circumstances." (Lynn Twist, [The Soul of Money](#))

What will we choose: gratitude and joy?

“Jesus said, ‘I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.’” (John 15:11)

Thanks be to God.

What will be let go of: scarcity and fear of the dark?

‘If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night,’  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.’” (Psalm 139:11-12)

Thanks be to God.

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