

What does it mean to live an abundant life? Our world has many competing ideas for what abundant life is. For some, the most toys or the most money at the end wins. However, the constant stuff that we fill our lives with seems to never be enough. Pandemic buying showed that we really did not need to stock up on all that toilet paper or whatever cans of beans were left in the aisle. When we operate with the mindset of scarcity instead of abundance, we end up filling our life with things we do not need.

In organic farming and gardening, some of the tasks that the farmer does seem counterintuitive. When you plant tomato seeds in their tiny growing trays, the seeds are so small that more than one seed will end up in each slot. You will have to pluck a few of the sprouts in order for one plant to grow. Then, when it starts growing vertical, you will have to prune some of its shoots, called suckers. The more you prune like this, the healthier and bigger the plant can get as it grows up with proper support, such as string or tomato stakes. Sometimes less is more. Plants need room to grow and often need pruning that in the end leads to more abundant life.

Sometimes, the best counter to the myth of scarcity is reevaluating our expectations. This is what Abram and Sarai were tasked to do when God promised that they would have an abundance of offspring despite Sarai's bareness. We take a leap of faith when we allow the glory of God to fill us in our everyday lives. When we choose to trust in God's plans which at first seem counterintuitive. The same is true with the life of our church. In what ways are we resisting to let God fill us with abundant life? What practices of the life of the church need to be pruned in order for God to work new things in us?

Jesus spoke in paradox when he said in Mark 8:35, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." Giving things away can be a very good thing. It fills us with joy when we can give someone something that brightens their day, but which did nothing but take up space for us. The art of giving is a lost form. Maybe, though, we are called to give more than we receive. We could possess this whole world and it would not fill us. Yet, if we give to others freely and allow God to fill us, we open our lives up for the abundance of life which God promised Abraham and Sarah and which God promises us. Less is more and giving leads to abundance.

Yesterday, I went to a record store after meeting with a congregant because I happened to be in the area and wanted a new stereo receiver and speakers for my turntable. An hour or so later I walked out of the store with a stereo receiver and speakers. Yet, that is not the part of the experience that gave me joy. During that time, I had the opportunity to talk to the audio tech who happened to have lived in Indiana during college. Through that opening, I was able to give of my time through conversation to a person I would have otherwise not known. I gave of my time which I do not have much of, but the experience left my soul filled from the conversation we had and I hope it did the same for him. Live not to save your life but to lose it. Find ways to be filled with God's glory and purpose for you by making someone's day better, not just your own.

May you have a blessed second week of Lent!

Pastor Ryon