

Paraklēsis : Scarcity

I've heard the assumption that poor people are poor **because** they are unintelligent. But, I have also heard a possibly less intuitive theory that people **become** less intelligent when they experience poverty. In fact, this theory has a name; it's called "**scarcity mindset**." There is some scientific evidence that this latter idea is true; and I think it makes sense. Sugar cane farmers in India are paid once per year at the harvest. Researchers studying scarcity mindset gave an IQ test to a bunch of these sugar cane farmers two months after they were paid for their year's labor, and then again two months before the harvest, when, after paying bills for the whole year and not having any income, they presumably had very little to live on. They found that on average, the same farmer scored 10 IQ points higher right after harvest - when they were "rich" - or when there was little scarcity.

I think it makes sense because, when I experience scarcity, (think about the Day of Atonement, for example) my thoughts are almost continually on what I don't have enough of. My mental capacity for other things is just not where it could be. And I **know** that breaking a fast is better for my health if I eat lightly and drink water - but that wisdom and self control seems to always allude me at sundown when it is time to eat.

Not long ago, my boys were asking me if they could get a game to play - a video game called "Fortnite." After learning about the game, I had a great conversation with them that led me to writing this letter. Here's what someone else wrote summarizing the game:

"In short, it's a mass online brawl where 100 players leap out of a plane on to a small island and then fight each other until only one is left. Hidden around the island are weapons and items, including crossbows, rifles and grenade launchers, and players must arm themselves while exploring the landscape and buildings. It's also possible to collect resources that allow you to build structures where you can hide or defend yourself. As the match progresses, the playable area of land is continually reduced, so participants are forced closer and closer together. The last survivor is the winner."

So, we talked about killing, violence, school shootings, and the people that do that and why, and if there might be a link to that and violent video games, etc. I told them that I did not believe that they were at risk of being one of those shooters because they were **raised with stability and love**. And, I told them that, regardless of stability and love, violent video games are still a bad choice. I am lightly theorizing here that some of those troubled folks who commit such violent crimes are suffering from a severe scarcity mindset. I think **they are living with a scarcity of love**.

"At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold." (Matthew 24:10-12)

I get the feeling that a scarcity of love is a devastating tragedy in this world and it is **far too common**. Love is the force that powers all things - that is another way of saying that **He who created all things is love**.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

But, what about the one who does not know love? In this fallen world, there are people in that category.

Love God and love your neighbor... But, Rabbi, Who is my neighbor?

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another**.(1 John 4:11)

"One another" is our brother, right? The folks "in the church," right? In fact, earlier in the chapter, John even says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**." (1 John 3:16)

No, our God is bigger than that. He is more compassionate than that. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing for any to perish** but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

My encouragement to you is to realize the abundance of love that you enjoy today and share it. Love is not something that we need to meter as we distribute it. When you give money, or time, there is only so much you can literally give. This limitation is not true with love. Love is not just a renewable resource, it is a **limitless resource**. Consider this: our infinite God, who is love, provides us with a limitless supply of it. Yet, many people live their lives lacking it. We are His instruments, His channels, His soldiers, who are commissioned to distribute it to the world. We are expected and commanded to do this above, in front of and before all other commandments. Yes, before keeping the Sabbath. Before telling the truth. Before being faithful to our spouses. Before taking only what belongs to us. Before honoring our parents. But all that sounds stranger than it really is - Messiah told us what the two greatest commandments are and by following them, we will inherently follow all the others.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.(Galatians 5:25)

and then...

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.(Galatians 5:18)

So, we have a job to do - that is, to combat the scarcity of love in the world. But, there is another point I want to explore regarding scarcity mindset. We are continually subject to it... not likely a scarcity of love, but of other things. I am thinking of the other fruits of the spirit (joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control) And there are other Godly "resources" that we can run short on - wisdom, endurance, courage, forgiveness... Wow, the list makes me wonder how I made it this far. How can we keep it all together? I believe there are scriptures to answer each of these specifically, but in general, here's a hint:

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

Also, consider this: Contentedness is the opposite of the scarcity mindset. If you live with the mindset that God gives you enough, then you can believe that there is no scarcity.

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," (Hebrews 13:5)

Peace to you and glory to God,

-Nate

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