

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.** 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 **Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.** 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people* to myself."

* -- alternate translation: will draw all things to myself

Let's review our Lenten Sermon Series based upon the RAINBOW COLORS OF THE COVENANT that God makes with humanity and with all of creation. We began with the Rainbow as sign of the covenant, that God revealed to Noah. And we are following the **ROY G BIV** of that rainbow. (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet)

R- Remember. God remembers our name; how much God loves us; everything but ONE thing, the Bible tells us: God forgets our sins

O – Open. God's covenant is open to all kinds of possibilities, so long as we are open to God defining the terms. We don't get to negotiate

Y – Yoda. Yoda taught us, when we read of Jesus getting angry in the temple, about getting back to the basics. In understanding what is really important in our faith – it's love, it's relationship. It is NOT sacrifice, in order to appease an angry God.

G – It's all about Grace. All that we have is free gift from God. We can't earn it. We can only receive it.

Today **B** is for **BOUNTY – CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF WE REALIZED THAT WE HAVE ALL THAT WE NEED, AND IT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH?**

Looking at today's scripture, let me lift up three things that it spells out:

- (1) **We must let something die** in order to experience great growth
- (2) **Verse 31 gives us an idea of what has to die – the ruler of the world; the view of life that is governed and determined by the ways of the world.**

Not all of these things we need let go of are bad things. It is just that when they dominate our living, they control how we see life; control how we live we live.

So there must be a letting go, in order to receive something more.

Let me ask: What are you holding onto, that you need to let go?

A simple example – it's always easier to see it if we look at the situation of someone else. **If you look at life as a thief**, then you look at life just in terms of what can be stolen. That makes you blind to seeing the other good things in life – the good things that are all around you that cannot be stolen, e.g. the sun, the heart, love.

Or **if you are a person who gets angry** quite often, then you are always seeing in the world things for you to be angry about. You even get angry at yourself for not being perfect.

When you can get over these things – **even things like the desire to always want be right** – then you begin to see the world a little bit clearer.

(3) Finally, Jesus says that in His Kingdom – when He is lifted up – he will draw ALL people, all things, unto him. The world is going to be reconciled. God will not lose a single one; ALL will be reconciled through the work of Jesus.

This means that there is a great abundance that God is opening up. When people hold onto the **NOTION OF SCARCITY**, it makes them blind to **God's WAY OF ABUNDANCE**.

Do you remember what kind of life Jesus said He came to give us? John 10:20 "I came that they may have life and have it ABUNDANTLY."

When Jesus told the **STORY OF THE SOWER OF THE SEEDS** – about the farmer who put seeds into every kind of soil, good and bad. **We miss meaning in the parable, if all we see is what kind of soil our lives might be.** Jesus was talking about an extravagant Sower, who abundantly gives and gives.

When Jesus TOLDa **PARABLE ABOUT A PRODIGAL SON**, we really have the story of a **PRODIGAL FATHER**. It's not just about a son who squanders – **it's about a Father who lavishes abundance on BOTH his sons**. It's God's **ABUNDANCE THINKING**, which is at the very heart of God's strange economy.

But we 21st century Americans sometimes have a hard time accepting **ABUNDANCE THINKING** because **WE HAVE BEEN EDUCATED IN SCARCITY THINKING**.

We start to learn the Theory of Scarcity very early in life! There are only five slots open for the junior high cheerleading squad -- for the starting lineup on the basketball team -- or for the *a cappella* ensemble of the school choir. The chosen ones become the school heroes -- the "in crowd." And the rest of us? Well, we are relegated to the "outer circle" with our noses pressed up against the glass of wishful thinking -- dreaming that one day, somehow, we might find a way into that favored group.

There **are two basic problems with SCARCITY THINKING**:

- 1. It is NOT God's Truth - it is a human made myth**
- 2. It simply doesn't work**

And besides that, it causes us to live in ways God did not create us to live. It **MAKES US LIVE IN FEAR**. It causes us to TRY to be **self-sufficient** which makes us **self-centered** – all this, **instead of following the two commandments Jesus gave us – focus on God and focus on others, in loving ways**.

The **restaurant business discovered the Theory of Abundance** years ago! Have you ever watched a new McDonald's going in on a previously vacant corner of your town? You can bet your french fries that it won't be long before Wendy's builds across the street...Burger King goes in next door with Kentucky Fried Chicken and Taco Bell just down the way. Counter-productive, you say? Absolutely not! The savvy marketing teams in each of these restaurant chains realize that when that corner of town becomes known as "restaurant row," more consumers will be drawn to that area

every day. They will decide when they get there which fast food will satisfy their craving today -- but in the end, all the restaurants will profit from the increased and steady traffic.

Here's **another example**. It was not too many years ago that **the not-too-handy homeowner was forced to hire trained professionals** to do things like hang wallpaper, lay a tile floor, remodel a bathroom etc. These professionals were often hard to find and very expensive to hire.

Enter the Theory of Abundance -- otherwise known as Home Depot! Instead of trying to control and monopolize the home repair industry, Home Depot's marketing team came up with a phenomenal new concept -- equip the Homeowner to do his own remodeling and repair.

Home Depot began holding classes on how to sponge paint, hang wallpaper, install a toilet, lay a new floor, or landscape a back yard. Each class -- and each department of the store -- was staffed by those trained professionals. They made remodeling and repair attainable, affordable and fun. The weekend handyman was able to look at a completed project with creative pride and a newfound confidence to try yet another project next weekend.

And did this new Theory of Abundance bankrupt the home repair industry? Only those who were unwilling to "go with the flow" and embrace the new creativity. Those who insisted on "doing it the way we've always done it" became as outdated as buggy whip manufacturers after the advent of the automobile.

But the ones who could roll with the punch started their own home repair classes, produced videos, manufactured do-it-yourself kits and got shows on Home and Garden TV -- and they still took care of the many homeowners who had NO desire to do-it-themselves!

Verse 32 of today's Gospel tells us that Jesus said he would draw all things, all people, unto God. **It's the ultimate ABUNDANCE GOSPEL.** Not just some.

I often wonder why it is that some Christians insist on somebody going to hell – like they're not going to be satisfied unless that happens – to set them apart, to make them different, to not allow for the ABUNDANCE of God's Grace.

I don't get to decide anybody else's ultimate fate. Each person has to decide for themselves how they will relate to God.

But Christians have been doing something from the beginning of the first Easter onward – talking about how with God ALL THINGS are possible. Death can be overcome. Bounty is God's way.

What do you need to let die in order to experience God's abundance?

- The need to be right
- The need to be in control
- The need to get more and more, instead of appreciating what you already have.
- The need for somebody to go to hell

What do you need to let go of in order to allow God to come in and work a miracle in your life – to open you up to get beyond fears?

What would it take for you to imagine it? It comes with just one little step at a time. Let go of just a little bit at a time, and see how God can change your stinking thinking. Let it die a little bit at a time, and see what takes its place.

How do you know if you spend too much of your time doing one particular thing? Here's a test: if you are thinking about doing something when you are not doing it – then this is something that has taken control of your life. Try letting go of it a little bit – and pay attention to what you have been missing.

If you spend so much of your life worrying about not having enough, and always worried about how you can get more – you are missing out on appreciating what you already have.

If you realize that you spend so much of your life being angry, ask yourself what you are getting angry about. And then let go of some of it. You don't always have to be

right. Pull in your desire to make others wrong. OR – just let them be wrong and you spend your time doing something else.

This week – for the rest of Lent – ask yourself: Is there something in my life that has taken control of me? Is there something that drives my way of seeing life? And then try to let go of just a little bit of it, and pay attention to what else you see instead.

And be prepared to be surprised by how God replaces YOUR WAY, when God supplies THE GREAT BOUNTY OF GOD'S WAY.

But I can't make you see the difference – only YOU can experience it – BY DOING IT. God's Bounty can never be known by mere description; it has to be experienced.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.