

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Second Sunday of Easter: April 11, 2021

“Scarcity”

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Good Morning, this second Sunday in Easter. Today I am going to share something a little personal but also very important. It not only addresses the reading from Acts and the Epistle, but hopefully will give **you** insight about yourself, so that you may be a good steward to the church, the community, and also for yourself.

We have in our New Testament reading the disciples forming a community that is utterly a commune. Everyone shares, no one is starving, all are living through agape love as Jesus would have them do. Has anyone ever asked what happened to them? What happened to that lifestyle? Why did the church turn into a political and spiritual ruler, rather than an equal partner commune-er?

One of the first things you should know is that this lifestyle is not sustainable, it seems. People have inherited foibles, which include (but are not limited to) fear, scarcity, prejudice, and power. It is understandable that people could be carefree in our Gospels because at that time they believed Christ would return within their lifetime. Thus they would no longer need to worry about material things, as his return would create a new heaven on earth. But we know, this all fell apart over time.

This means that anyone can do anything for a limited amount of time. But then somehow, sin creeps in. The funny thing about sin (which I define as anything that interferes or damages a relationship, whether with a person, God, or even yourself) is that it can be a sneaky thing.

I have lived on my own for quite a while now, and I am going to share something that I learned about myself a couple of decades ago. It is also what I would describe as “original sin.” Now this is not a reference to a parental sex act of procreation, or even something really horrible, but instead a sin that sneaks up on you from another generation that you did not even know you acted upon. So sneaky, you don’t even realize it is causing harm to you or another.

For me, the sin is scarcity. I am aware of it, of course, or I would not be talking about it. And yes, it still shows up, but I recognize it and with God’s help, move forward. Scarcity. So here we go.

I go grocery shopping about twice a month, and I always buy myself a “goodie” - something that I really wouldn’t want to share, and something that represents just more than the item itself. So, this is the real story of how we unconsciously absorb negative things, believing we are doing something right. I used to go into the produce section and buy a pomegranate.

The mere act of buying the fruit would remind me of my childhood and that the stores would have them at Halloween time. I was raised in a place and a time when fruit was not always readily available. And somehow, in my child’s eye, a pomegranate had taken on a mystical feature of being a “rare” thing: one that only came around once in a while, and, as a child, I thought was probably very expensive.

So here I find myself in my forties buying a pomegranate. I would put that fruit out on the counter for a day or two, vowing I would eat it tomorrow. Then I would want to keep it a little longer and put it in the fridge. Again, stating to myself I would eat it after work, while relaxing in front of the TV.

Then soon, as you might expect, I would be throwing out what looked like a science experiment from my fridge. An item that could barely be recognized as a pomegranate. Silly right? But is it? What am I really talking about?

My childhood was pretty ordinary and in the scheme of things and mainly, thank God, uneventful. Economically my parents were stoic depression survivors with a Protestant attitude of hard, ethical work, and by the grace of God, He would keep you fed. We were middle class, and trust me, if I had really wanted a dozen pomegranates my parents probably would have thought it odd, but they could have bought them. So what's up?

After a lot of reflection (they make you do that a lot in seminary) I realized that I had never really had a personal struggle with scarcity. Even as a young adult I had always managed to pay the bills, as well as feed and clothe myself. Sometimes I needed to work overtime to do so, but it was all doable.

It seems that I somehow absorbed the original sin, scarcity, at a young age, from my parents who had experienced their own financial trauma. A trauma that wasn't directly taught, but more absorbed. Passed down a generation, even though the original trauma, which for my parents was the depression, was no longer present.

Scarcity. Feeling like there is never enough. Even the very richest of people can feel this way, while the poor homeless person will give you the last of whatever they have. Is it possible we all have absorbed unconscious traumas that make living in full communion unsustainable? When you get the little stewardship card are you afraid to tithe? When your community needs donations are you worried about your own needs first, possibly like my own scarcity problem, which when reflected on, is an unrealistic issue?

And yet, I have experienced the joy of giving, the amazement of being part of something bigger than myself. I have no doubt that God has a plan, even if it's one I don't understand. I have to trust that Jesus, even if not returning to earth on a cloud during my lifetime, will provide for me opportunities that I cannot even imagine. And scarcity is not one of them.

I have to believe without seeing - that God knows me, hears my prayers, and answers them in the way He feels fit. I have to eat the pomegranate the same day, and rather than stress about it being gone, be grateful for the experience to have had it in the first place. Isn't that the whole truth about being human? Nothing lasts forever, and maybe that is to teach us to be grateful for the present moment and whatever is in front of us.

I am aware that the generational scarcity issue could rear its ugly head at any time, making me unworthy of being a minister of Christ. Stingy, worrisome fears that are only in my head. Doubt. Are you struggling with similar issues? Do you have a habit or way of being, or style of thinking that keeps you from fully living into the glory God has created on this earth? Have you absorbed something that would make living as those first disciples more difficult than you realize? It could be anything from prejudices, scarcity, or fear, the need for attention or power.

There are many ways that sin creeps in. They are not capital crimes, they may not even affect anyone else other than yourself and your relationship with God. In my case, my fear of scarcity actually kept me from eating and enjoying my pomegranate. Imagine what a waste! That scarcity thinking kept me from being grateful for what was right in front of me, and enjoying it right then and there, and then thanking God for it.

Christ has risen, we are in Eastertide. The light of truth is now available to all after the darkness of Lent, the sorrow of death, the waiting, and then finally the empty tomb. I

offer you this time, as we continue to experience the slow opening up of the country after the pandemic lockdown, to reflect and let the Christ light shine on the ways that keep you from enjoying life to its fullest.

We know that nothing but God's love lasts forever, and we know we should be grateful for whatever is in front of us. We also know the promise of everlasting love that goes beyond whatever is missing here and gives us the hope of eternal joy. So why the scarcity? Whatever is keeping you from the opportunities that God is putting in front of you, whatever stops you from being grateful, even in the difficult times, I suggest letting the light of Christ in for a moment.

Let Christ's light show you what is possible. Let the light of Christ remove unreal fears and anxiety. Maybe as we move forward as a community, a church, and a country, we can rebuild and restructure ourselves just a little bit closer to those original communities in Christ where all are taken care of. Maybe pray, that our doubt that God will provide whatever it is we truly need, can be lifted. Pray that it is ok to have the pomegranate and eat it too! Amen.