



Learn with Gratefulness

Toxic Myths of Scarcity: Counteracting Cultural Conditioning – transcript

From the eCourse, The Fundamentals of Grateful Living with Lynne Twist & Br. David Steindl-Rast interviewed by Sara Vetter – Module Two.

[Sara Vetter] You say that happiness does not make people grateful, but that gratefulness makes people happy. Can you tell us a little more about this?

[Brother David] Well, it's easy to watch oneself and see what happens. When do you get grateful? There have to be two things that come together to make you grateful. And one is, something has to be given to you, and it has to be valuable for you. If something unpleasant is given to you then it won't get grateful. So something that is of value. And it has to be freely given to you. If it is bought, you may appreciate it but you are not particularly grateful. You bought it or you have to work for it. But if it's freely given. So these two things: valuable and freely given. And the more valuable it is, and the more freely given it is, the more joy will arise in your heart. We call it usually joy, we don't even call it gratefulness, but that's what it is. And then you might say, "Thank you." But that's an addition that is sort of a social convention. The joy is already the gratefulness. Like with children, when you give them a gift, and they grab it and run with it and play with it joyfully. You say, "They were really grateful, weren't they?" And if they say, "Thank you," put it away and play with something else, you say, "They were well educated, well trained, but they were not so particularly grateful." So we also. If you do something with the opportunities given to you. Because the greatest gift, and the completely freely given gift, is the present moment with all the opportunities that it contains. And therefore we can live moment by moment and be grateful.

[Sara Vetter] Lynne, this question's for you. You've written so eloquently about scarcity and fear which impacts everyone. What do you mean by the condition of scarcity?

[Lynne Twist] Well, I think we live in a "condition," I'll call it, that's really a lie. So it's a strong word. But we have as a consumer culture, as a monetized culture in

this world today, we have a set of what I call unconscious, unexamined assumptions that are, what I call, it's like a mythology. I think it's a lie that we actually live in scarcity, in fear. And there's three toxic myths that sort of make up that fear in my view. One is this frantic fear that there's not enough. There's not enough time, there's not enough money, there's not enough energy, there's not enough love, there's not enough sex, there's not enough weekends, there's not enough weekdays, there's not enough of anything. And this 'there's not enough' is sort of a 'there's not enough to go around' and someone somewhere is always going to be left out and you have to be terrified that it's not you and yours. And that creates a sort of us-and-them world. That there's some people who are going to be left out and you want to make sure you're not one of them. So that's toxic myth number one. And the second toxic myth is 'more is better,' 'more is better,' 'more of anything and everything is better'. So we accumulate and take and grab and scramble for more of everything and we're just swimming in a sea of stuff that doesn't make us happy, that doesn't give us any satisfaction, that we're not grateful for because we're always trying to get the next thing. And then the third toxic myth is 'that's just the way that it is, there's nothing we can do about it.' And that set of unconscious, unexamined assumptions, that lens, that looking through life – there's not enough, more is better, that's just the way it is - traps us in a prison of fear. And it's part of the consumer culture. And I don't think it's who we are. And it's not that we really think all that. It's that we are living in a mindset, in a consumer culture that produces that way of viewing the world, and it traps us, makes us completely lost, has us scrambling for more, and no appreciation for what we already have. So it's tragic, it's tragic.

[Brother David] And I think these three toxic myths, as you call them, are really promoted by the media.

[Lynne Twist] Absolutely.

[Brother David] And also promoted by politicians, because it makes people more pliable if they are fearful.

[Lynne Twist] Right, then they can be controlled, then they can be controlled.

[Sara Vetter] What happens when people truly inhabit a sense of sufficiency and gratefulness? How do their lives change?

[Brother David] Well, the first thing, of course, is that they get joy because that's not something additional, as I said. To be aware that what is given to you, freely

given to you at this present moment, is the greatest gift that you can ever receive. Life gives you the opportunity of another moment. We cannot bring another moment about. It's a total gift. And to realize this moment, with all its opportunities, is given to me, freely given, it makes you so overjoyed. Even if you are in a situation where something is also given to you that nobody wants, for which nobody can be grateful, which nobody can enjoy like exploitation, or oppression, or infidelity, or a justice system that is unjust. Things like that. We're confronted with that every day. What do we do? We look for the opportunity. The moment gives us not only one but many, many opportunities. Of course, one can't start there. That would be like starting playing the piano with Chopin etudes, or something like that. You have to start with scales. But if you start with scales and look at this present moment and see what am I given, you will find that ninety percent of the time or more – ninety-nine percent of the time – the opportunity that's given to you is to enjoy, enjoy things that we don't normally enjoy because we take them for granted. And if we do that, then when we come to something very difficult that we certainly can't enjoy and certainly must even get rid of we will be grateful and therefore joyful for the opportunity to do something. To protest even, to vote with our bodies, so to say.

[Sara Vetter] Great, thank you. And Lynne, what do you see as the connection between people's individual sense of scarcity and the society we live in?

[Lynne Twist] Well I think people...You know, culture is very powerful, culture is way more powerful than we know. And the culture of scarcity that's promoted by the media, that's promoted by marketing and advertising, and the whole world of messaging is so intense, it's like a tyranny. And it kind of rains on you and drenches you with messages that you're not thin enough, or young enough, or you're not tall enough, or you're not this enough or that enough, and that you need more and more and more and more and more. So that people lose their sense of self. They lose...I think, we all have to really work to remember that we're whole and complete, that we're fine just the way we are. So, the society we live in doesn't give you a lot of affirmation for just exactly the way you are right now. This present moment, being perfect, being an opportunity to realize the fullness, the - as you say, Brother David - the great fullness of this moment, and being grateful for the great fullness of now. And so there's a very strong connection between society and the culture we live in and people's fear and constant scrambling out of scarcity. Unfortunately, there's very few sanctuaries – Gratefulness.org is a sanctuary, hopefully the Soul of Money work is a sanctuary – for people to find out that they're absolutely fine just the way they are. And in

that moment, there's a welling up of well-being, of feeling blessed, and being deeply and profoundly grateful.

[Brother David] And the third of your toxic myths is that it can't be changed. And that is what people learn when they're grateful. They see, they notice very quickly, overnight, it can be changed if you right now make up your mind I will look for the opportunity that this next moment offers me. And if you do that a couple of times in the course of the day, in the evening you will be a different person, you will be a more joyful person. So the feedback is enormously quick.

[Lynne Twist] Immediate, it's immediate.

[Brother David] Immediate.

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