

October 8, 2017 – “Creation Consciousness: Scarcity and Abundance in the Desert” – Rev. Seth D. Jones - Scripture: Exodus 16:1-18

- What a “*Creation Consciousness*” looks like so far
 - The provision of a **good, creative, relational** Creation (God’s creation of the world & universe)
 - The provision of **resilience** (the story of the binding of Isaac)
 - The provision of **reconciliation** (Jacob’s ladder)
 - The provision of **names** (Moses and the burning bush)
- Last element of “*Creation Consciousness*”
 - The provision of **abundance**
- From Moses at the burning bush last week to this week
 - The Israelites have been led out of Egypt and across the river into the wilderness/desert
 - They are complaining, and today, we hear their 3rd complaint in a month
 - *You have brought us out here to kill us*
 - *Oh how we miss the ‘fleshpots of Egypt’ – the meat and grains of Egypt*
 - Forgetting that the only sacrifice one need make to go back to Egypt is one’s freedom
- Why do the people start complaining?
 - What are the people meant to learn in the wilderness?
 - The people start complaining because they are still living under the mindset of the Egyptian empire
 - What is that mindset?
 - *Scarcity*
 - We will never have enough
- What is a ‘*scarcity mindset*’? What does it mean to live in a ‘never enough’ way?
 - This, by the way, is the way of empires, isn’t it?
 - Empires exist because they need to acquire
 - They need things for the future in order to keep on existing
 - They need more and more resources to sustain the needs and consumption of the population
 - There are **perceptions of scarcity**
 - Is *what we think we need* something we need or just *something we want*?
 - Have I actually had enough?
 - Do I really need to store this and that for some future point?
 - There are many of us who live in a scarcity mindset out of fear, experience, and status
 - There are **realities of scarcity**
 - **Housing**
 - The cost of housing in the Midcoast has outstripped income since 2000
 - Leads to the people who serve the tourist economy unable to afford a place to live
 - Most of the people at Hospitality House *work!*
 - Scarcity of housing is an economic condition, not a problem of there being enough homes and space
 - **Food**
 - The problem with food around the world isn’t a problem of capacity
 - It is a problem of access

- The number of undernourished people since the 1970s has decreased from 34% of the world to just 15% in 2016
- The issue for that 15% is
 - Availability
 - Access
 - Utilization of supply
 - Stability of supply chains
 - Notice the issue isn't whether or not the world produces enough food to feed the world
- Scarcity of food for the hungry and undernourished is not whether or not there is enough, but how it gets to where it is going
 - Otherwise known as 'hoarding'
- **Money**
 - While it is hard to measure, just in terms of printed cash and measurable wealth, there is about \$250 Trillion in the world
 - Like with food and housing, the issue with money is not one of availability, it is an issue of access
 - Companies and governments and individuals hoard money
 - Economically, we can't really say there is \$250 trillion because money that does not flow through the economy cannot be of value since there is no transaction to determine its worth
 - Money is only worth something when it is moving
- Money, food, and housing are all used to enforce a *scarcity mindset*
 - Our economies of the world are all dependent on a scarcity mindset
 - A scarcity mindset demands there are people who **need** money, food, housing from people who **have** money, food, housing
 - The separation between the two allows the relationship between *those who need* and *those who have* to become a power relationship
 - Remember last week how we said the language of faith reflects the language of God, which is all about whatever is good, relational, creative, resilient, and reconciling?
 - *Scarcity thinking is the mindset of power*
 - This is why the resourcefulness of the impoverished is always so moving and inspiring
 - That resourcefulness comes from a Creation Consciousness, an *awareness of abundance*
- The people complain
 - *"If only we had died, by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread until we were full, because you have brought us out to this desert to kill all of this assembly with hunger."*¹16:3
 - Clues to scarcity mindset
 - "If only..." thoughts
 - In this case, "if only..." is a selective nostalgia that has led to a sense of not being fulfilled which leads to fantasies of death and dying
- God answers the Israelites' complaint

¹ Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J. A., & Wierenga, M. (Eds.). (2012). [The Lexham English Bible](#) (Ex 16:3). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- With abundance
 - Manna and quail
- Important point here
 - **GOD ANSWERS COMPLAINTS**
- Way of abundance
 - *Always just enough for the day*
 - *and they gathered, some more and some less. ¹⁸And when they measured with the omer, the one gathering more had no surplus, and the one gathering less had no lack; they gathered each according to what he could eat.² (16:17-18)*
 - Another clue to scarcity thinking
 - *Hoarding for the future*
 - Abundance means trusting that God will provide abundantly
 - A statement about NOW, not the past or the future
 - God provides *right now*
 - It is very hard to shift from a scarcity mindset to an abundance worldview
 - This is why the time in the wilderness is not about being lost; it is about retraining and reframing how people of faith understand the world
 - Different facets for reading the Bible
 - Here is one facet:
 - The *conflict between scarcity thinking* and behavior, which is also the behavior of empires
 - *And the worldview of abundance* that God intends
 - Creation is abundant *right now*
 - How does Jesus put it in Matthew 6?
 - That which is for today is enough for today?
- God ensures abundance, not scarcity
 - Manna is an expression of God's abundance
 - Part of the name itself
 - *Manna* translates as "What is it?"
 - God's abundance is always a surprise
 - The answer to *manna* is always "*This is the gift which God has given you*"
 - Imagine this as the answer to every time we ask
 - "*What is this?*" "*Why is this happening?*" "*What is happening?*"
 - What if the God who created
 - A good, relation, creative
 - Resilient
 - Reconciling
 - Spoken, named, and claimed creation
 - Is also the God who gives abundantly and answers our complaints with abundant gifts from God?
 - This is why Jesus answers questions about who he is with I AM statements, to surprise and assure us at the same time
 - Jesus using "I AM" is renaming and reframing the name of God, like last week
 - The claim of the name is also telling us that Jesus is '*the gift which God has given us*'

² Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J. A., & Wierenga, M. (Eds.). (2012). [The Lexham English Bible](#) (Ex 16:17–18). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- Jesus – I AM the bread of heaven (John 6:30-33, 35)
 - *So they said to him, “Then what sign will you perform, so that we can see it* and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’*
 - *32 Then Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, Moses did not give you bread from heaven, but my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven! 33 For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”³*
 - *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty again.”⁴*
- Statement about the abundance of God
- It is a **spiritual statement**
 - But it is also a **material present statement**
 - It is a **Creation Consciousness statement**
- When we follow Jesus, who is the bread of life
 - *We bring actual bread to people who are suffering and complaining*
 - *Literally, materially, in this world, now*
 - Because unlike other gods in the ancient world, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Sarah and Rebekah and Leah
 - *Responds to complaints actually, materially*
 - It is not just a spiritualizing idea
 - *Manna is a real, actual experience of the people of God*
 - *Celebrated as the Lord's Supper*
- During times of fear, suffering and nostalgia
 - Times of "if only..."
 - How will we adopt the ways of abundance instead of the ways of scarcity?
 - Scarcity = "if only..." - fear, despair
 - Hoarding
 - Never enough
 - Abundance
 - Trusting God now
 - Providing for others in the same way God provides for us now
 - Living into a Creation Consciousness
- Next week, we will explore the call of God upon us
 - God's call happens in the context of a
 - Good, relational, creative
 - Resilient
 - Reconciling
 - Story of creation
 - Which promises abundance, not scarcity
 - Even in the midst of our complaints and fears and despairs

³ Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J. A., & Wierenga, M. (Eds.). (2012). [The Lexham English Bible](#) (Jn 6:30–33). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁴ Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J. A., & Wierenga, M. (Eds.). (2012). [The Lexham English Bible](#) (Jn 6:35). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- Let us always remember that we worship a God who answers our complaints and fears directly
 - Materially, through God's very creation
 - Spiritually, through the bread of Heaven, the bread of life,
 - Jesus Christ
- Amen