

“Grace”  
*Faithful Stewards of God’s Infinite Grace (1 Peter 4:10)*  
1 Peter 4:7-11  
November 22, 2015  
The Rev. Sharon Snapp-Kolas, preaching

Scripture. Prayer.

**Opening.**

With Thanksgiving on the horizon, we should talk about food. It’s a relevant subject for most of us.

The two biggest sellers in any bookstore, according to Andy Rooney, are the cookbooks and the diet books. The cookbooks tell you how to prepare the food, and the diet books tell you how not to eat any of it.

Orson Welles once said, “My doctor has advised me to give up those intimate little dinners for four, unless, of course, there are three other people eating with me.”

Champion archer Rick McKinney confesses that he regularly eats chocolate chip cookies for breakfast. He refers to “the four basic food groups” as a Big Mac, fries, a shake and a lemon tart.

A California scientist has computed that the average human being eats 16 times his or her own weight in an average year, while a horse eats only eight times its weight. This all seems to prove that if you want to lose weight, you should eat like a horse.

A young fellow watched as his dad finished a heavy meal and then loosened his belt. “Look, Mom,” he said, “Pop’s just moved his decimal point over two places.” (King Duncan).

First Peter takes a more serious look at the topic of “thanksgiving.” First Peter is a letter to Gentile Christians surrounded by non-Christian family members and non-Christian neighbors. Sounds like the Thanksgiving holiday I know and love! – with some heated arguments over

politics thrown in for good measure!

These Gentile Christians that First Peter addresses are met with continuing hostility from their families and neighbors because they “no longer” share in the common practices of their pagan culture (1 Peter 4:4; E. Elizabeth Johnson).

### **I. Above all...love. (vv. 7-8)**

If we listen to our own secular, commercial culture, we are urged to want ‘more,’ to need ‘more’ – right now!!!! First Peter reminds us that life is more than all that stuff we want. That stuff that we think we need. Especially as the stores and the airwaves bombard us with “buy, buy, buy” for the holidays, it is important that we remember First Peter’s priorities. In v. 8 he writes, “Above all,” -- **above all!!** -- “maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins” (v. 8). Love, it appears, is more important than things.

God understands that we are concerned about things. We work for our food and our clothing and other necessities. First Peter simply reminds us that there is more to life than all the material goods we think we need. There is more to life than all the material goods that are not truly necessities, but that we so desperately ‘need’ when those commercials hook us with their cleverness.

God knows that we need food and clothing. First Peter reminds us, “The end of all things is near...be serious and discipline yourselves” (v. 7). This Christian life is serious business. It’s about more than food and clothing and material things. The secular, commercial culture we live in is all about “more;” First Peter urges us not to be fooled, not to be drawn in, not to lose our focus.

An international gathering of youth met for a full week to discuss how to do a better job of sharing Christ’s message with the world. Those assembled for the conference read many

informative essays, heard many fine speakers, watched a few videos, and had ample time to discuss with each other. As the conference was beginning to break up and those attending were packing to leave, a young woman from East Africa arose and said, “In my country when we hear that a pagan village is ready to accept the Gospel we don’t send books, videos, a Bible or even an evangelist. Rather we send the best Christian family we can find because we have found that the example of a good family speaks louder and more clearly than all the books, speeches, and videos in the world.” (Richard E. Gribble).

While we are worrying about tomorrow and our ever-escalating sense of need, we can easily miss out on what is truly important. We want ‘more’ – more, more, more!! Our TV’s and our radios and our cell phones and our computers blare at us that we need ‘more’ – more, more, more!!! First Peter tells us there is more to life than all this ‘more’ that we obsess over.

## **II. God’s grace. (vv. 9-10)**

Did you know that you are God’s ‘more’? Did you know that you are worth more to God than all of creation? Imagine all that went into the creation of the universe. God has a lot invested in His creation. God’s creation is of infinite worth to Him. And God entrusts that creation to you and me. First Peter states that we are to be good stewards of God’s grace. He goes on to add that we are to use “whatever gift [we] have received” to serve one another (v. 10).

You are God’s ‘more’. You are a treasure of infinite value, more precious than gold in God’s eyes. He sent his only Son to die for you. He put you in charge, not only of yourself, but of everything He has created. You are God’s “more.”

Let’s pause and rest in this truth for a moment. [Pause. Pause.]

For many of us, this is a difficult concept to grasp. This idea that you are valuable, that you are precious, that you are of infinite worth to God. That God would trade everything to have

you. To be in relationship with you. To make you understand how much you are loved.

Many of us here this morning do not feel loved. You may feel that if you work very hard and do what others want you to do that one day you may earn the prize of being unconditionally loved. But for now, many of you are on a constant treadmill of works righteousness. If you work very hard, maybe your parents will love you. Maybe your friends will love you. Maybe your family will love you. Maybe your boss and your coworkers will value you. Maybe, despite all your faults, you will be loved.

God loves you, not in spite of your faults, but including your faults. God knows every good, bad and indifferent thing about you. God sent His only Son to suffer and die on the cross for you. Because you are God's 'more'. You are of more value to God than the birds that He created and the flowers that He sends the sun and the rain to nourish. You are God's 'more'. You are His most precious, beloved child.

[Pause. Pause.]

Sometimes God's love is so amazing, so powerful, so overwhelming, that we cannot process it. Our bodies are too small to metabolize such love. Our minds are too small to comprehend such love. Our hearts and our souls are too small to contain such love. [Pause.]

We are called to be "...good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (v. 10). Or, in the words of our stewardship theme: Faithful Stewards of God's Infinite Grace. And what is "the manifold grace of God," or "God's Infinite Grace," if not love, expressed in such abundance as to be overwhelming. The beauty of creation; the joy of salvation in Christ Jesus; the wonder of waking up this morning to another glorious day of living in God's love.

The famous English preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon, on one occasion: "...was greatly worried about his ministry in the city of London and if there were necessary resources to

maintain this ministry. He became greatly depressed and filled with anxiety. Then God filled his mind with an image that made his anxieties and worries so insignificant. God gave him the image of a mouse in the large grain bins of Egypt under the leadership of Joseph. The mouse was worried about having enough to eat. Then in Spurgeon's mind came the image of a fish in the great river in London and how the fish worried about having enough water to breath and survive. As the images sank deep inside of Spurgeon he began to laugh and said, 'Eat away little mouse, swim away little fish. God will provide all we need and more.' And then addressing himself, he said, 'Stop worrying little man, God has enough and more!'"

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his death bed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which never happened." (Eric S. Ritz).

God cares for us on a level we can hardly fathom; meanwhile, we waste our time worrying about things that never happen, or things we can't change, or things that turn out better than we expected, or useless, petty, minor concerns. According to First Peter, we would do better to focus on God's grace, and responding to that grace with love, hospitality and service to others.

### **III. Our reponse to God's grace. (v. 11)**

You are God's 'more'. I am God's 'more'. God values you and me above all His creation.

So, it should come as no surprise that God is the 'more' that you and I are looking for.

Says First Peter, God supplies whatever strength we need to be of service to others. And whatever we do to be of service, we do it "so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ." (v. 11). Our strength comes from God; our purpose is to glorify God. That's all

we need to know.

The 'more' that we desperately seek can only be found in God. Not in acquiring more things. Not in achieving more success or a bigger paycheck. Not in creating more of a sense of false security. Not in accumulating more friends.

In Philippians 4:6-7 it says, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Peace is ours when we trust in God. That truth leads, logically, to gratitude. We are grateful, we are thankful, for the many gifts – for the manifold grace – that God has poured out upon us.

### **Closing.**

There's a great Peanuts comic strip on a Thanksgiving theme. Lucy is feeling sorry for herself and she laments, "My life is a drag. I'm completely fed up. I've never felt so low in my life."

Her little brother Linus tries to console her and he says, "Lucy, when you're in a mood like this, you should try to think of things you have to be thankful for; in other words, count your blessings."

To that, Lucy says, "Ha! That's a good one! I could count my blessings on one finger! I've never had anything and I never will have anything. I don't get half the breaks that other people do. Nothing ever goes right for me! And you talk about counting blessings! You talk about being thankful! What do I have to be thankful for?"

Linus says, "Well, for one thing, you have a little brother who loves you."

With that, Lucy runs and hugs her little brother Linus as she cries tears of joy. And while

she's hugging him tightly, Linus says, "Every now and then, I say the right thing."

This Thanksgiving, may we celebrate God's infinite grace, and may we remember with grateful hearts the abundant good gifts that God has showered upon us. May we share his love with each other, with our community, and with the whole world.

Amen.