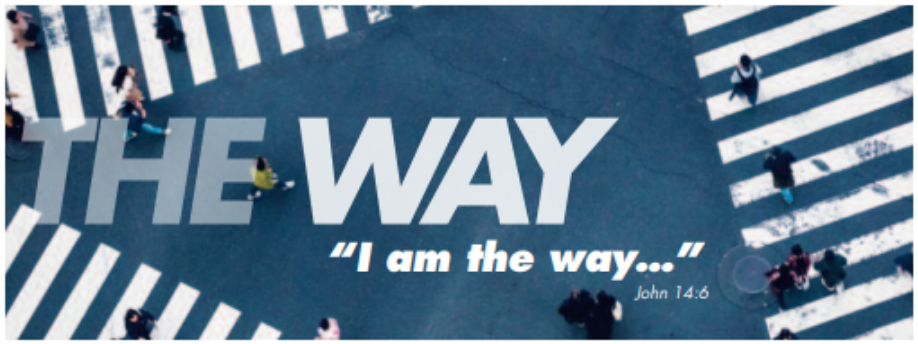


WAY OUT: THE WAY OF GRATITUDE

Jesus is not teaching us to stand at the margins and beat our breasts as a way of gaining religious certitude. ….He is declaring a new economy, one that neither character recognized. For the tax collector had also internalized the social identity epitomized by the Temple. It is not the tax collector's speech, but Jesus' "I tell you" that marks the irruption of the truth here.

Walter Wink,
"The End of Breast-Beating," *Sojourners*

A parable is a story that the teller intends to be compared with another. Jesus intends for the hearer to hold in parallel with their life these two caricatures of a standup guy and a shirker, the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14).

We know which of these characters our congregation relies on. We know which one pays the bills, teaches in the church school, pounds nails at Habitat, and visits the sick. The standup guy moves from practicing the way of righteousness to being self-righteous with his us-them language and thanking God that, "I am not like other people."

From the parable, we don't know if the shirker even notices the contemptuous comparison of the self-righteous one as he cries out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Unlike the self-righteous one praying from the abundance of his achievements, the shirker is praying from his need.

Knowing our proclivity to live by comparison, whether it is the Joneses or the person 25 years our junior, Jesus tells this story. What is the way out from living by comparison? Gratitude.

People who are genuinely grateful are never greedy or jealous, never bitter or small, not self-centered or hateful. If they can see every day as a gift from God, see what they have done or achieved as made possible by the gifts of God and see what they own as what God has given them for a while, they are who we call gracious people.

The way of gratitude is the way out from the bitterness of comparing and measuring. Being grateful leaves you free and transformed. From there, stepping into generosity is a small step.

> *'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'*

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WEEKLY GIVING IF THE PERCENTAGE IS

(Rounded to the nearest dollar)

Annual Income	Monthly Income	Weekly Income	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%	15%
16,000	1,333	308	6.00	12.00	18.00	25.00	31.00	46.00
20,000	1,667	385	8.00	15.00	23.00	31.00	39.00	58.00
25,000	2,083	481	10.00	19.00	29.00	38.00	48.00	72.00
30,000	2,500	577	12.00	23.00	35.00	46.00	58.00	87.00
35,000	2,917	673	13.00	27.00	40.00	54.00	67.00	101
40,000	3,333	769	15.00	31.00	46.00	62.00	77.00	115
45,000	3,750	865	17.00	35.00	52.00	69.00	87.00	130
50,000	4,167	962	19.00	38.00	58.00	77.00	96.00	144
60,000	5,000	1,154	23.00	46.00	69.00	92.00	115	173
75,000	6,250	1,442	29.00	58.00	87.00	115	144	216
100,000	8,333	1,923	38.00	77.00	115	154	192	288
125,000	10,417	2,404	48.00	96.00	144	192	240	361