



I love the story of two little girls, each looking for something. One girl stands atop a mountain of shining gold coins. She is desperately digging away and crying out, “Why aren’t there any *diamonds* in this stupid pile???” The other girl is also atop a pile, frantically digging away. Her pile is a mountain of warm, stinking horse manure. She is crying out, “There must be a pony in here somewhere!”

Our experience of life is determined by our attitude. It rests on stuff that happens *internally*, not stuff that happens *externally*. How we process the up’s and down’s of living day to day will shape just how we experience what it means to live. Science

has shown us that this works not only mentally or emotionally, but physically as well. People with healthy mental attitudes tackle life much more successfully, have more satisfaction, and live longer. Elements of a healthy attitude include trust, teachability, compassion, flexibility, humor, and generosity.

As we begin a new year, I’d like to invite you to reflect a bit on one of the most important elements of a healthy mindset: Gratitude. It’s the ability to be thankful for *something* even in the most trying of circumstances. Gratitude keeps our focus on what we already have rather than worry about what we don’t have. It is a positive outlook that colors everything. Gratitude reminds us just how truly rich we are! And it reminds us that life is essentially a gift.

I’ve been participating in a book discussion group studying Ann Voskamp’s book, “One Thousand Gifts”. Ann chronicles her journey as a wife and mom to six children on a farm. She is courageously honest in sharing her struggles with depression and anxiety. For her, a growing call to live a more thankful life is what liberates her, step by step, from her dark prison. This process happens as she begins to identify and write down in a journal specific experiences that bring her joy. They are often simply, everyday experiences where she is now taking the time to see their unique beauty: rainbows from soap bubbles, giggles from her youngest, fresh bread baking, gazing at a harvest moon with her husband. Sometimes the gratitude happens when life goes terribly awry. Deep pain threatens to overwhelm, suffocate. Yet she learns that within the whirlwind, there is a Whisper of hope calling her to abide.

I’m learning that too. I’ve been journaling and recording different gratitude moments and finding that there is a kind of grounding for me. I seem to be taken even deeper into the heart of what it means to live life more expectantly and joyfully... as a gift from a gracious Giver. Even when the sh@!* hits the fan, I find myself looking for the “pony”.

I’d like to invite you to join me in this adventure. If you’d like to read Voskamp’s book, there is an Amazon link on the home page of www.LighthouseChurchDrummondIsland.com to purchase. Also, there is a link to the Reflection Questions we’ve been using to get our minds and hearts to really engage the topic. But wait! There’s more! If you’d like, I’ll give you a free gratitude journal to jot down what you’re thankful for. It’s not fancy and doesn’t have a ton of pages but it could be a cool start toward developing an attitude that could really transform your thinking.

If you do decide to give any of this a try, I’d love to hear from you. What would Drummond Island (or your own home community) look like if people spent their energy being grateful and thankful? How might an outpouring of joy and gratitude change the landscape of our town (or planet)? Is it worth a try?

Happy New Year!

Scott