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Thriv'era | We Are...Creative

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We are moving with a deepened sense of identity—that we are spirited, creative, and connected, called to be present, grateful, generous, and missional with our lives. We're exploring what it means to intentionally live into this particular series of life rhythms, which help us bring some good to each moment, something better to each day, and our best to each other as we encounter the world around us.

As image bearers of the Divine, we are creative human beings created to be creative. We thrive as creative people by discovering our identity and purpose in the world, exploring our creative impulses, delighting in the wonder of imagination, and engaging the power of innovation.

The Louvre in Paris. Sounds cool to say. Louvre. Sounds sophisticated. And this past January my wife and I were there... so that means... well maybe I'm sophisticated? Probably not... but it is cool. It's a museum filled with all kinds of amazing art, sculpture and other stuff that human beings have created. It's where the Mona Lisa is and yes... her eyes seem to follow you wherever you are in that room. Kinda creepy.

The collective creativity that is represented in that room is mind blowing. We only had about four hours to spend there, and we barely scratched the surface of that place. However, we made our way just down the street from the Louvre to the Impressionist Museum. Artists like Monet and Renoir pushed the creative element to a whole new level. It was so amazing that I made the choice to not take any pictures as I wanted to simply remember all of it for what it was. The creativity was, can I even say, too holy for a camera. However, one of the most creative things I witnessed was in the old town square in Prague. There were several food kiosks surrounding the square and they were selling sausage, and ham by the kilo. I'm telling you that ham, by the kilo, or at least I bought it by the kilo... I think you were supposed to buy it by the gram but go up the ham guy and say "I'll take half a kilo" they won't just smile the will grin from ear to ear and I like making people happy.

But down at the end of the food kiosks, was a lady turning these pastry sticks and she looked like she had been turning those sticks for decades. This pastry I learned later learned was called Trdelník, and it was pretty good but the thing that caught my eye was how she made it. Someone at some time in history took the creative step, had the creative idea, made the creative decision to rotisserie pastry. Amazing. Simple but amazing. Will never make it into the Louvre but one of the more creative things that experienced that whole trip. And the smile that was on this woman's face when I ordered a half kilo...

There is this story in the book of Exodus, a book that tells us how God frees a group of slaves and spends deep intentional time with them changing their identity from slaves to freed, covenantal followers of God. And one of the ways that God helps them change their identity is to help them see and experience their own creativity. Helping them turn all their skilled craftsmanship that they had to use as slaves for their owners into creativity that they could use to bring joy, hope and community for themselves. There are long stretches in Exodus where God gives these meticulous instructions on how to build a new relationship between God and the people. They build and tabernacle, they build a tent of meeting. A mobile church structure that would travel with the people so that they always knew where God was. They could point to God.

But in order to build this amazing structure God needed the creativity of lots of people.

²¹ And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the LORD's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. ²² So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold objects, everyone bringing an offering of gold to the LORD. ²³ And everyone who possessed blue or purple or crimson yarn or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or fine leather, brought them.

²⁴ Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's offering; and everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in

the work, brought it. ²⁵ All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linen; ²⁶ all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats' hair. ²⁷ And the leaders brought onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece, ²⁸ and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. ²⁹ All the Israelite men and women whose hearts made them willing to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD. (Exo 35:21-29 NRS)

² Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the LORD had given skill, everyone whose heart was stirred to come to do the work; (Exo 36:2 NRS)

There is so much detail in all of this. The last half of Exodus is filled with creative detail. God is moving God's people to be creative, to imagine themselves as no longer slaves but artists. The phrase that pops out for me is the phrase – everyone whose heart was stirred. That's all it takes to be creative. A stirred heart. And God does the stirring.

There is an author named Robert Fluhum who during his research found that when he visited kindergarten and asked them who can draw, who can sing, who can dance all the kids raised their hands. However, when he would ask the same questions of middle school kids and then high school kids and then college kids and then adults those who would raise their hands would shrink and shrink the older the group along with lots of qualifiers. The idea of creativity would be limited to college majors or our professional careers. It's almost as if we've become slaves again, unable to imagine ourselves as artists.

However, God is still stirring our hearts but sometimes we can't feel it because we've been to the Louvre, we've been to the impressionist museum. We compare our creativity to the creative giants of history, and not just in art. But we, all of us are called to be creative not so that our creations will end up in the Louvre. We are called to be creative in ways that builds the house of God. We are called to be creative to build God's church.

And God's church needs us all to use all that we have. We are all called to use our creativity in this building project and this building project never ends. Every generation is needed, and God is stirring all our hearts. And who knows, maybe it's as simple as rotisserie pastry that we give away by the kilo.