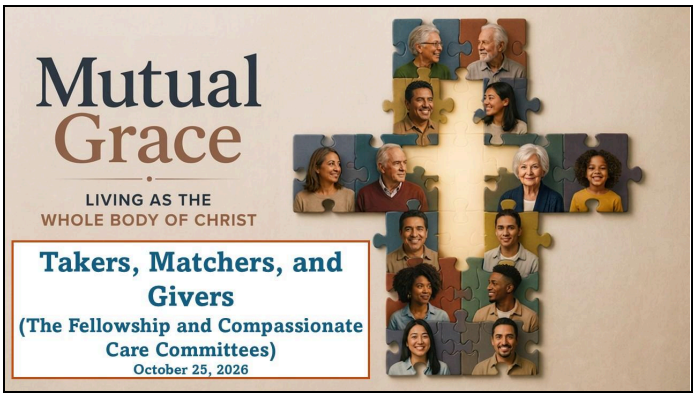
Mutual Grace (Week 4) - Takers, Matchers, & Givers



Yesterday's Sermon Summary

1. We've spent the month of October 2026 focused on Christian community, and the major teams/committees at KirkWood that make community happen here. As a reminder about Christian community, consider this from the former archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, "Christian community is the place where every person's gift is required if the body of Christ is to function properly, where no one is redundant and no one is self-sufficient."

2. As a way to pull together what we've said about living in community, we took a look at the key points from the book, "Give and Take" by organizational psychologist Adam Grant. (And his ideas are going to sound VERY biblical to you.) He identifies three chief ways that we interact with each other, what he calls "reciprocity styles." At any given time, we may be utilizing all three in different spheres of our lives. And often we aren't aware of how these styles show up in our lives.

3. The first style is the Taker. Their motto or prime directive is a question: “What can you do for me?” They function on a relational dynamic of extraction. Here are some telltale signs of a Taker: a) they are more focused on what they get out of you or community than what they contribute to you or it; b) they tend to exaggerate how much they’re contributing to the wellbeing of others; c) they want others to think better of them than they think of others; d) when they speak about the community or group, they primarily utilize first person singular pronouns – “I,” “me,” and “mine” – which sheds light on their general point of view.

3. While few of us would ever willingly self-identify as Takers, the consistent witness of the scriptures gently holds a mirror to our hearts, suggesting that we are far more susceptible to this impulse than we care to admit. Hence the consistent reminder to turn our attention to the interests and betterment of others, e.g. Philippians 2.1-5. So it's not if I am a Taker, but when, where, to whom, how, and why am I a Taker?

4. But also remember this - there is an essential distinction between being a Taker and being a vulnerable receiver. There are times when it is not only permissible but spiritually vital to allow ourselves to receive from others.

5. The second reciprocity style is being a Matcher. They see everything through the lens of “quid pro quo,” give and take, this for that. This is the default mechanism behind most human relationships. That’s especially true in our consumer society: what we expend toward others we expect to see returned to us in equal, if not greater, measure. Someone who is operating like a Matcher is constantly keeping score. They are also the enforcers or watchdogs within any group, keeping track of who is pitching in and who isn’t, who meets the criteria for community contribution and involvement and who doesn’t.

6. When we reduce our relationships to transactional terms, we risk turning our hearts into marketplaces. We end up loving conditionally, serving when and where we can see a tangible return, and offering mercy only when it has been earned or when we are confident the balance will eventually be restored.

7. Moreover, the Christian life calls us to step out of this commercial arithmetic and inhabit a completely different reality: the realm of grace. Jesus repeatedly turns our transactional instincts upside down, inviting us to love our enemies, give without expecting repayment, and serve those who can offer nothing in return. As theologian Miroslav Volf reminds us in Exclusion and Embrace, "Grace is the opposite of merit...Grace breaks the cycle of payback and opens up a space where new possibilities can emerge."

8. And style #3 are Givers. They ask, “What value can I add to someone else’s life?” They are less concerned about how much of the pie they themselves get to eat or hide away from a midnight snack, and are more concerned with making sure everyone gets some pie, or they go to work in the kitchen to bake more pies if there’s not enough to go around. You know a Giver by the effect they have on others: in a group, they build trust, help others flourish, unleash creativity, engender psychological safety, verbally encourage, and so on.

9. Grant's research reveals that Givers are the most likely relational style to burn out and become less impactful. Why? Because if they're not careful, they give and give without measure or break. Wise Givers practice "chunking" - concentrated periods or blocks of giving, followed by intentional times to rest, be renewed, and be refilled. In scripture, we'd call this Sabbath; we also find Jesus practicing the same rhythm (e.g., Mark 6.30-31). Continuous, uninterrupted outpouring is not fidelity - it is functional self-idolatry that forgets human limitations.

Want to learn more about the "Give and Take," by Adam Grant? Try this summary - Give and Take Summary.

The Fellowship and Compassionate Care Committees

The Fellowship Committee
Biblical fellowship is “a deep spiritual partnership, shared life, and mutual participation among believers rooted in their common union with God through Jesus Christ.”

Some Fellowship Committee key functions:
- Create and prepare for Church wide events including purchasing needed items, table set up, decorations, advertising and clean up;
- Coffee Team for fellowship time on Sundays;
- Receptions for funerals and memorial services;
- Organize interest groups in the church;
- Coordinate, purchase and keep inventory of paper supplies needed for events.

Do you have ideas for how we build fellowship better or in new ways, or would you like to help out? Contact Susie Egyud - chikabe1226@gmail.com.

The Compassionate Care Committee

Christ told us, "Be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate" (Luke 6.36). Sister Ilia Delio of Villanova University expands on that as follows: “Compassion shows itself in care for the other; it is not mere sentiment but a sense of responsibility to strengthen the weak and lift up the fallen by creating a space of support and comfort.”

Here at KW, our Compassionate Care Committee provides meals for those who are sick or rehabbing, visits those who are homebound or ailing, writes cards to express thanks and encouragement, distributes flowers week by week, and has a core group who walks with those who are hurting or grieving.

Have ideas for how we can live out Christian compassion more, or are you interested in learning more how you could help out? Reach out to Pastor Mary - pastormarykwpc@gmail.com.

A Blessing for KirkWood as a Community

The following blessing is written in the style of a Celtic blessing, and more specifically Irish priest, poet, and philosopher John O'Donohue:

A Blessing for the Body We Weave Together

May we recognize that our single lives like threads
Are woven into a wondrous tapestry,
Each stitch the light, the grief, and the love
Of all who are knit together by God’s own hand.

When the walls of self-reliance begin to crumble,
May we not reach for brick and mortar to rebuild them,
But instead stay open to the strange, unfamiliar grace
of knowing our need for one another desperately.

May we find here the holy courage
To do the slow work of living together,
By which we remember that each person
Is a holy mystery and a divine threshold.

And as the Spirit moves within our gathered life
Like wind through the leaves of an ancient grove,
May each of us know ourselves to be an essential limb,
And a necessary pulse in the living body of Christ,
Amen.