

Sermon Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written:

*“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.”*

¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Sermon Theme: Abundancy vs. Scarcity

Did you have enough? Depending on the situation will determine how you answer that question. Sitting at the dinner table and grandma asks if you've had enough, you better think carefully before you respond. Have you had enough? At the end of a hard day's work—in the field, at the office, with the kids—the whirlwind of schedules in the evening, then planning for tomorrow, and you finally get to sit down in your chair at the end of the night, yeah, I've had enough for today. Do you have enough? You hope so when you go to the store and you're buying groceries or when you put the check in the mail to pay the bills. Did you have enough? I love hearing stories about “the good ole days.” Those stories of how little they had growing up and the different ways family worked together to get ahead. Ah, the good ole days; they didn't have a lot, but they had enough...I am often reminded. But, do you have enough? It can be treated like a philosophical question debated back and forth of where that line of “enough” is. Last week we focused on how the earth is the Lord's and everything belongs to him. We saw from God's Word how all that we have—time, talents, treasures, things—are then gifts from God we use to serve him and each other. But do you have enough?

In this section of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he is writing to encourage the congregation in the collection of offerings. This offering was a special collection that was going to be used to support the work of the church in Jerusalem; much like we gather mission offerings to support the work of our churches today. Evidently these Corinthians had shown a great eagerness to help in this work, so much in fact, that Paul had been boasting about them to the other churches he was serving. And so, with this letter, Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to, as one might say, put their money where their mouth is. Don't just say it; show it. But Paul isn't trying to twist anyone's arm into giving. By sending this letter Paul says he is giving them time to get the offering

together beforehand so that, when he arrives, it's not being given with the wrong attitude and motivation.

So to encourage their giving Paul writes in v.6: **Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.** Makes complete sense. You may have heard it: "You need to spend money to make money." But Paul isn't giving a lesson in economics or business class. As when he used the word earlier in this letter, the word "sparingly" isn't stressing the outward action of sparing something or holding something back. He is calling our attention to the motivation. It doesn't just suggest the small amount of seed that is being used, but hints at a hesitancy of the sower to sow more seed.

Paul continues in v.7. **Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** Again, it's not just about the amount; Paul is speaking about what is in the heart. In the Old Testament God's Law required 10% from his people's income for offerings. In Jesus, you are set free from the Law. So Paul explains, as an individual, each one gives what you have made a decision to give. This is an expectation that each individual, as a child of God, will think about this giving and then choose their amount. Don't give reluctantly or under compulsion, Paul says. So we don't give because someone is guilt-ing you into giving or making you feel bad that you should be giving more. Don't give because otherwise the church doors and the school is going to close. God loves a cheerful giver.

But are we going to have enough? This really is the opposite way of thinking from the rest of the world. In order to sell a product, you want to convince the consumer that there is a need and they do not have enough. So you see it in countless commercials that you are missing out if you don't have this product. It's all over where we hear that there isn't enough. There isn't enough room for all the people in big cities, there isn't enough natural resources, there isn't enough funding, there isn't enough clear policies, etc. etc. We are led to question, do you have enough saved up for retirement? Have you been spending enough time with your family? Have you taken care of yourself enough? Do you have enough insurance? Do you have enough health?

And we are willing to listen to this because we want and need to be good managers of what God has given to us. But then we start seeing all those other places where we don't seem to have enough: there isn't enough time in the day to get everything done...I don't have enough energy to fulfill all these expectations and obligations...I didn't get enough accomplished today, or yesterday, or with my life...I don't have enough things, enough money...I haven't tried hard enough.

For some, this is good motivation. They then set the goal, try to reach for it, and always have something to shoot for in life. But what it really does is chain you with and to a lie. That lie is: you don't have enough. And why this lie is so deceiving and can be easy to

listen to is because you remember how things were tight in the past and it didn't seem like you had enough. You remember how you struggled to get by and you told yourself you were going to do better next time. You are reminded how your time was taken advantage of, how you feel it was wasted, or you wasted it yourself. You remember how you were left feeling used, abused, and neglected when you helped. And the devil comes in, along with our sinful nature, with those all too convenient reminders and realistic accusations and asks, "What if? What you are you going to do when _____ happens? Are you sure there is going to be enough?"

But as with the sower it is not just about numbers and seeds, it is the motivation and attitude of the heart. The devil wants you to believe that God has not and is not going to give you enough. The lie is that God has given you the short end of the stick: not enough time, not enough energy, not enough talent, not enough money. Because if we believe that God hasn't done enough, then that means I have to make it up somewhere. And what often is the first place we look to cut? Time with God and his Word is put to the side because you don't have the energy or there's not enough minutes in the day. Offerings to church might be cut or aren't consciously thought of because other things take precedence. Even money in the church and ministry is looked at through the lens of that question: "What if _____ happens?" Again, what's in the heart?

We try and convince ourselves that we are just waiting until we get to a certain point when we decide that we have enough time, money, things, talents and then we will be better off. But what we fail to see is, if I'm not content with what God has given to me right now at this moment in my life—if I don't think I have enough right now, I won't be content later—I won't ever have enough.

Changing one's mindset, one's attitude is a difficult task; sometimes almost impossible. You could try and use compulsion, use guilt, expect more, promise reward—and it might fix the issue right now. But it just makes someone even more reluctant, bitter, or leaves someone feeling like they have to give or else. Even worse it can give the false and sinful idea that by their actions, what they give, they can earn extra favor with the church and with God. And so the attitude and mindset isn't really changed at all.

But God is able. He is able to change our attitude and mindset. He doesn't do it by promise of a reward or with threats of punishment for anyone who doesn't step into line. He does so with His life-giving, joy-creating grace. A better way to understand in v.8 that God blesses you abundantly is that God is able to cause every grace to abound and increase for you. God doesn't hold back on how much love he gives—he pours it out so that it is overflowing.

Think about how he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all (Romans 8:32). He gave up his Son so that Jesus would do enough living under the law perfectly for you. He received the exact punishment for your sin; God didn't hold anything back

so that your sins would be exactly paid for by Jesus suffering on that cross. Jesus shed enough of his blood so that his innocent death was exactly what God required and what you needed to be saved from sin. And because God did not spare his own Son, Paul asks in Romans, “**How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**” (Romans 8:32). You don’t have a cap of the amount of forgiveness Jesus gives to you. You don’t reach a limit on the amount of love he is willing to share with you. And it’s that same God who is able to cause his grace to abound so that, **in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.** In other words the limits of God’s grace haven’t been reached. He still has more that he is able to give.

Why can we be cheerful givers? Because God did not and does not begrudgingly or reluctantly give to you. He doesn’t give out of compulsion or obligation. He gives freely, graciously, and cheerfully his Son, his forgiveness of sins, and everything we have in our lives.

Because of God’s grace, you have enough! This doesn’t constitute laziness, by no means. Quoting Psalm 112 Paul writes in v. 9, **They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.**” Being abundantly provided for by the Lord, the response is giving gifts. Because He in v. 10, **supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.** God enlarging the harvest of your righteousness means that he is giving you abundant gifts so that you in turn can share that with others. God doesn’t need your stuff. He doesn’t need you to provide for his people. It’s another act of God’s grace that you are able to support this work in whatever way you are able.

Your generous God gives to you generously so that you in turn can give generously. What that looks like is going to be different for each one of us. That’s why we are told that each of us is to choose in our hearts what to give. Understand that because of God’s grace you have enough, today, to do just that! This doesn’t mean stop being a good steward throwing money around, wasting time and talents. No, it teaches me to make use of what I have been given today, what I have right now, and to use it to God’s glory and the service of my neighbor. And God promises to bless your work. Paul doesn’t specify in what area you are enriched, only that you will be. In v. 11 he states: **You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.** Yes, plan for the future. Be wise and responsible with what he has given you. But do not let that hinder you from seeing that God has blessed you today with enough. Amen.