

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

THEME: ABUNDANCE VS. SCARCITY

⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, 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: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his 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 made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Dear Christian Friends:

Can you name the richest American ever? You’re probably thinking of Bill Gates. It’s not him! Without a doubt, the richest American ever was a man named J.D. Rockefeller. Ever heard of him? He lived around the turn of the century and founded the Standard Oil Company right as cars and gasoline and the need for oil was beginning. He amassed a personal fortune that in today’s dollars is estimated at between 300 and 400 billion dollars. That’s at least four times the amount that Bill Gates has today! One day, J.D. Rockefeller was asked, “How much money is enough?” With his hundreds of billions in the bank, do you know what he said? “Just a little bit more.”

“Just a little bit more.” Does that describe your life? Whether you have hundreds of billions of dollars or a little less, doesn’t it always feel like we just need a little bit more? There aren’t enough hours in a day. There’s not enough time to finish projects at work. There’s not enough energy to finish projects at home. Not enough money to get what we really want. Not enough friendships to feel like we’re truly loved. We’re close, right? But we’re always just a little bit short. I think this is our default human condition. Never quite satisfied. “Just a little bit more!”

I’ll admit that I feel that way a lot. There just isn’t quite enough of just about anything to stretch as far as you’d like it to go. The perfect word for it is “scarcity.” We go through life with a scarcity mentality. If I just had a little more time . . . If I just had a little more energy . . . If I just had a little more money . . . If I just had a few more friends . . . But I’m always a little short. Scarcity.

There’s just one problem: That’s not true! In fact, it’s an absolute lie that comes straight from the devil. Because if I don’t have enough, that can only mean one thing: God hasn’t given me enough. What a lie! If you want to see where that started, just go back to the Garden of Eden. Remember how that all went down? Adam and Eve were in the perfect

Garden of Eden surrounded by everything they could have possibly desired, yet the devil somehow convinced Eve and Adam that they didn't have enough. "I need that one more fruit . . . God hasn't given me quite enough . . ." Scarcity entered the world with devastating results.

Here's one more clear result of this scarcity lie: It hurts to give. Generosity has become painful. Giving has lost its joy. In fact, you could use that as a test for how hard you have fallen to the scarcity lie. How hard it is for you to give your money away? If it's hard and painful to give your money away—to anyone—you are living with an attitude of scarcity! How did talking about money become a forbidden subject—especially in church? Because I think I always need just a little bit more. The devil has convinced me that I'm always just a little bit short. Scarcity.

I'm so glad you're here today, because God wants to completely change your mindset! He shares something amazing with us that will free you from this attitude of always being short. He starts by taking us out to a farm. **"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."** Think of a farmer: If you don't sow, you won't reap. A farmer must give to receive. In fact, the more seed he gives up and plants in the ground, the greater his harvest will be. That takes tremendous trust, but it works! God says that it works the same with him. He who gives, receives. He who sows generously, reaps generously.

You don't need a little bit more. You have it all! **"You will be made rich in every way."** In the previous chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote, **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).** Everyone who goes through life thinking they don't have enough is missing the big picture. Jesus died for you. Jesus has forgiven you. Jesus saved you. Jesus loves you. You are rich—rich right now! We just sang, **"Jesus, your boundless love to me no thought can reach, no tongue declare."** We have a God of abundance!

But God's abundance isn't meant to stop with you. Here's how he puts it: **"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion."** God has blessed you with all that you need for a purpose. God wants to make you the greatest possible blessing to others. You are not an end in yourself. God's blessings are not meant to come to you and stop. He's got a much bigger purpose for you than that! Isn't that what we want to hear? We want a purpose in our lives. God gives you one: You exist to be a blessing for others. God wants his abundance to flow through you. **CUE 26**—He has given you everything you need to live in JOYFUL GENEROSITY. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

O God, the Giver of each good and perfect gift: you know the offerings we bring. You know the circumstances from which they come. You know, as well, the hearts with which we offer them. Preserve us from an attitude of scarcity that takes all the joy out of our giving. Purify our hearts, we pray, and continue to bless our lives, that our gifts may be true reflections of your abundant and gracious giving to us.

Lord of life, we ask you to bless Bob Schulz as he celebrates his 93rd birthday this week. May his special day remind him of just how special he is in your sight and just how precious your gift of life is to him. We thank you for watching over him throughout his knee surgery and recovery from his fall. May he be renewed in his joy of living and sing your praises all year long.

Death has struck close, O Father—within this family of believers. Comfort the family and friends of Lloyd Kramer, who grieve among us. Give them inner peace and assure them of Lloyd's bodily resurrection to eternal life. Cradle them, O Father, cradle them in the loving arms of this church family—a family empowered by your promise of the world to come.

Lord, we thank you for blessing the Men Alive! Rally yesterday with safe travel for all the presenters and participants. May our study of your Word, our fellowship, and fun with brothers in the faith strengthen and encourage all of the participants to be the men you want us to be, men who do justice, love through kindness, and walk humbly with you.

We boldly ask all this in the name of our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER in modern language