

Joyful Generosity 2

September 24, 2017

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (EHV) – ⁶This is what I mean: The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. The one who sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each one should give as he has determined in his heart, not reluctantly or under pressure, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work. ⁹As it is written: He scattered; he gave to the poor. His righteousness remains forever. ¹⁰And he who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed for sowing, and will increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be made rich in every way so that you may be generous in every way, which produces thanksgiving to God through us.

Sermon

Can you name the richest American ever? It's not Bill Gates. Without a doubt, the richest American ever was J.D. Rockefeller. 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 That's four times the amount that Bill Gates has today! One day, 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 admit that I feel that way a lot. I'm sure you do, too. 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... A little more energy... A little more money... 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 mouth of 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've 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.

Just think of the result of that mentality. We're never content. In fact, contentment can even seem like a *bad* thing. Can you imagine a presidential candidate standing on the debate stage and saying, **"I'm content with the way things are"**? What would the reaction be? No, we're never content. We're always frazzled, always running, always struggling, always searching for that one more thing. For just a little bit more. And here's the worst part: God begins to seem like he demands more than he gives. Ever feel that way?

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 can use that as a test to see if and how far you've fallen for the lie. How hard is it for you to give your money away? If it's hard and painful to give your money away – to anyone – you're 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 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. **"This is what I mean: The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. The one who sows generously will also reap generously."** Think of a farmer: If you don't sow, you won't reap, right? 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. The one who gives, receives. The one who sows generously, reaps generously.

So, what it all comes down to is trust, right? Is God good for it? Can I count on him? Check out this promise: **"God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work."** The devil wants to fill you with this "just a little bit more" disease. In contrast, just count how many times God says "all" or "every." **"God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work."** We don't have a God of "just a little bit more." We have a God of "all." God isn't a God of scarcity. He's a God of abundance.

It starts with this: **"God is able to make all grace overflow to you."** Whenever you hear the word "grace," I want you to think of Jesus. God's grace is his undeserved love for us in Jesus. How much of that love is there? God describes it like a flood – it's overflowing. **"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?"** (Rom 8:32). In his grace, he suffered and died to bring us eternal life. In his grace, he carried a cross down a sinners road and was lifted up on it for you and for me. How do we get past the "I need a little more" thinking? Grace!

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 although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich."** 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're rich – rich right now! We opened our service today with the words: **"Jesus, your boundless love to me no thought can reach, no tongue declare."** We have a God of abundance!

Because being rich isn't about a number. You could have all the money in the world, but still be poor. Being rich is an attitude. It's the gift of God's grace. You have something that even Bill Gates with all of his money doesn't have. You have God's peace in your heart. Your worth isn't determined by your bank account. It's determined by Jesus' blood. Your freedom isn't a result of your constant struggling. It's the result of Jesus' forgiveness. You're rich! You'll leave church today without a single dollar more in your pocket. You'll leave without a single hour more in your day. But you're not one bit short, because you have what you need most. You're rich with the overflowing love of God!

Sometimes people talk about different perspectives in life. Are you a glass half-empty or glass half-full kind of person? I hope you're neither. Because neither is right. The glass is full! **"God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work."** The glass is full! Whenever this scarcity nonsense creeps back into your mind, tell yourself, "God is able... God is able... God is able... All... All... All... I am rich! I am rich! I am rich!" We don't have a God of scarcity. We have a God of abundance. He has blessed you!

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 may be generous in every way."** God's blessed you with all that you need for a purpose. God wants to make you the greatest possible blessing to others. You're not an end in yourself. God's blessings aren't 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.

Have you ever heard of “**seed money**”? It’s money that’s used to start something bigger. You might put some “seed money” into your child’s college fund – and hope it grows. You might invest “seed money” in a business and hope it pays dividends. God’s blessings to us aren’t ends in themselves. They’re like “seed money.” The money and time and possessions and talents that God has given you are seed money to sow generously. He doesn’t want us to keep our blessings to ourselves any more than a farmer keeps his seeds to himself. He gives us blessings to plant them so that they grow and flourish and bless even more people with God’s abundance.

We’re going to spend some time in future sermons talking about all the practical advice God gives us for giving to him and others. But here’s a start today: “**Each one should give as he has determined in his heart, not reluctantly or under pressure, for God loves a cheerful giver.**” Giving is connected to your heart. It’s a decision that reflects your faith in Jesus. This is why we can’t ever tell you how much to give! But as you decide, ask yourself: Do I have a God of abundance or scarcity? Do I have a God who leaves me a little short or gives me all?

If you still need encouragement, I’ll give you one more passage. Jesus once said, “**Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.**” (Luke 6:38). Isn’t that awesome? God gives like brown sugar. At least how I measured out brown sugar as a kid. I would fill the cup full, and then pack it down. Then fill it back to the top and pack it down again. Then fill it up and pack it right to the top. And then, for good measure, heap some on top and dump it all into the cookies. That’s how God gives. “**A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over.**” Trust in him – our God of abundance!

I can’t end without sharing something else amazing about Jesus. He accomplished more than anyone in the history of the world. But out of all the things Jesus did, do you know something that you don’t ever hear Jesus doing? Running! Jesus never ran. In fact, Jesus had 24-hour days, and he only lived 33 years. But he had enough time. Let’s be honest, there isn’t a hint of scarcity in our lives. God has given you exactly the right amount of time to serve him. God has given you exactly the right amount of money to serve him. God has given you exactly the right talents to serve him. Don’t wish you had a little bit more. Rejoice in what he’s given you.

That J.D. Rockefeller guy – he was actually a very generous man. He gave away hundreds of millions of dollars in his lifetime. His desire to give led him to develop a habit: He gave a dime to every single person he met – from a tiny baby to the president of the United States. Everywhere he went, he gave out dimes. It’s estimated that he gave away \$35,000 in dimes. If you do the math, that’s 350,000 people he gave a dime to. That’s a lot of seed money. And he smiled all the way! Joyful generosity is our response to a God of abundance. Amen.