



October 21, 2018

Scarcity or Sufficiency: Do We Have Enough?
Pastor Lisa Kipp

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 NRSV

⁶The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. ⁹As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹²for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

I have a bit of a confession to make. This is my family's sock basket. Even though they are all clean, it feels a little bit like I'm airing my dirty laundry up here this morning. Please tell me that you all have a sock basket like this in your laundry room?

I hate matching socks. It's tedious and unrewarding and hard. I know it doesn't seem hard, but do you have any idea how many versions of black Nikes are in this basket that are similar, but not quite a match? Unfortunately, it turns out that nobody else in my family likes matching socks either.

On 9 out of 10 mornings, I hear at least one of my sons holler up from the laundry room, "Mom, we have no clean socks!" Really? And to make matters worse, a couple weeks ago - in all honesty - my husband declared that he also had no



socks and was going to the store to buy some more. Do you see how many socks we have?!? We have enough!

In her book, *The Soul of Money*, author Lynne Twist writes, “No matter who we are or what our circumstances, we swim in conversations about what there isn’t enough of.” How many of us wake up and our first thought is, “I didn’t get enough sleep?” Likely followed closely by proclaiming that there aren’t enough hours in the day. Not enough time for exercise. Not enough vacation. We’re not thin enough or smart enough. And certainly – we don’t have enough money. And on and on. By the time we finally lie down at night, our minds race with thoughts of what we didn’t get, or what we didn’t get done, until the cycle begins the next day. This *not enough* mantra takes over and without even noticing it, we’re living lives with scarcity as an underlying assumption.

This scarcity, according to Twist, “is an unquestioned, sometimes even unspoken, defining condition of life. It is not even that we experience a lack of something, but that scarcity as a chronic sense of inadequacy about life becomes the very place from which we think and act and live in the world.” And furthermore, “this mindset of scarcity lives at the very heart of our jealousies, our greed, our prejudice, and our arguments with life, and it is deeply embedded in our relationship with money.” And this isn’t what God ever intended.

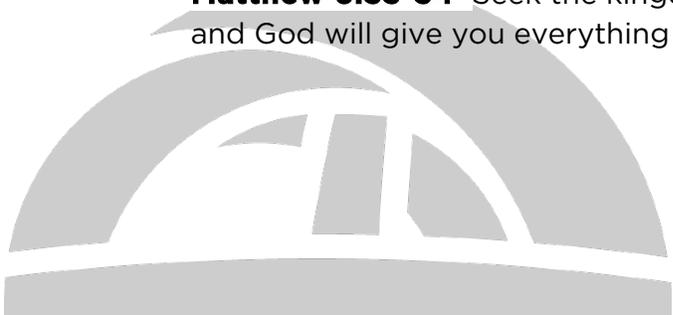
I suspect that at least a few of you scoffed when you saw the bulletin cover this morning. Who actually likes when the pastor talks about money? While it might be picking the lesser of two evils, I suspect that some of you would prefer that we discuss sex or politics from the pulpit. But Jesus had a lot to say about money. More, in fact, than anything else besides the kingdom of God. And for good reason. Our relationship with money shapes so much of our lives.

Scripture reminds us over and over that God promises to provide us with what we need *and* tells us that things will never satisfy us. If we’re striving for more of this or more of that, we will never have enough. Consider what the Bible has to say—

Ecclesiastes 5:10 Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness!

Proverbs 1:19 Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money; it robs them of life.

Matthew 6:33-34 Seek the kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and God will give you everything you need. So don’t worry about tomorrow...





And then from today's Bible reading, **2 Corinthians 9:8** God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work ...for God loves a cheerful giver (**2 Corinthians 9:7**).

God encourages us to share abundantly. As we do, we move from a scarcity mindset to one of sufficiency. One of *enough*. I love this quote:

“When you let go of trying to get more of what you don't really need, it frees up oceans of energy to make a difference with what you have. When you make a difference with what you have, it expands.”

And, I might add, it opens up a joy that can't be matched.

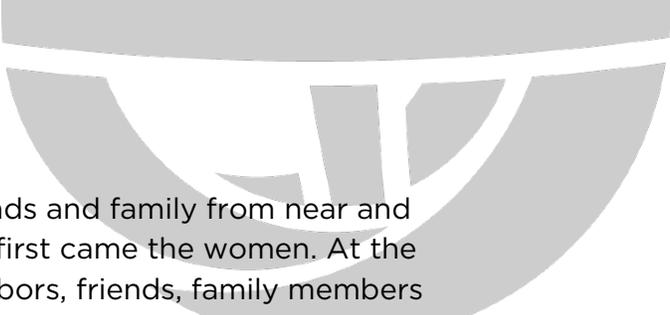
A couple of years ago we were holding a silent auction for Iambi Hospital. Zumbro member Maggie Bartels has never been there, but has a deep love for the people of the hospital. She was volunteering to help organize the auction. At the end of the morning as she was tallying all of the auction sheets she handed me a personal check. It was to purchase a new bed for the hospital. It hadn't been in her budget for the month, yet I've never seen such joy as someone gave generously. “I might have to eat cereal for the next week,” Maggie told me, “but I can do this!” She handed me the check, and off she walked, perhaps as happy as I've ever seen her. Maggie had an ocean of energy to make a difference with what she could give. And somehow she had enough that month.

Here's what I know – having enough has more to do with our perception and mindset than it does about anything we actually have.

This summer while I was on sabbatical I spent a week staying along the coast of the Indian Ocean in Tanzania. One afternoon I rode my bike to a neighboring village. I've traveled quite a bit, but the people of this coastal village are among the poorest I have ever encountered. They have nothing but the mud huts that provide shelter from the rains. This is a fishing village. As night befalls the sky, the men take to the ocean in these makeshift boats to dive for fish. They literally live hand to mouth.

As I made my way closer to the center of the village activity that afternoon, I heard loud music and came upon a group of women. They were dancing together, each carrying a basket raised above their heads. With curiosity, I watched this celebration and began to ask my friend some questions. What were these women doing? My friend knew instantly, and explained the ritual to me.





There was going to be a wedding the next day. Friends and family from near and far were beginning to arrive for the celebration. But first came the women. At the invitation of the mother of the bride, women - neighbors, friends, family members - gathered together, each bringing a basket filled with the best rice they had. After the first dance, the women sat on the ground and began to sort and prepare the best rice that they had now combined together. All the while they cleaned the rice, they took breaks to dance and celebrate. Look at the joy on their face as more women joined them and the children gathered to watch with a curiosity that matched my own. These women own next to nothing, yet in the spirit of generosity and community, they danced and celebrated that together they had enough for the wedding celebration. God had sufficiently provided for their needs.

Dear friends, my challenge for all of us this week, myself included, is to make steps to move from a mindset of scarcity to one of sufficiency. I'm convinced it starts with acknowledging that God has given us enough. As you wake up each morning, before you roll out of bed or turn on your cell phone, take some deep breaths and think about what you have enough of - enough shelter to grant you rest, enough coffee to wake you up, enough work to give you purpose, enough family to give you love, and maybe even enough socks to keep your feet warm. When we start with acknowledging what we do have enough of, gratitude begins to flow from our hearts and take over our lives, and we make a shift from looking at an overflowing basket of socks and seeing scarcity, to seeing a basket filled with only grains of rice and discovering generosity, abundance, and joy in the sufficiency that God has given us. Amen.

