



“Scarcity vs. Abundance”

25th Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, November 10-11, 2018

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

1 Kings 17:8-16; Psalm 146; Mark 12:38-44

Grace and peace be to you from our Father
and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In 1621 William Radford, the pilgrim governor
of Plymouth Massachusetts, offered the first
Thanksgiving proclamation. He invited his
fellow pilgrims to give thanks for surviving the

harsh New England environment and celebrating a good harvest a few months later. “Render Thanksgiving”, he said, “to thee Almighty God for all his blessings.” Earlier that winter forty-five of the one hundred two pilgrim colonists had died.

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln reinstated the presidential Thanksgiving proclamation in the middle of the civil war. He asked people to both give Thanksgiving to God, but also offer national penance in the midst of such a terrible conflict that had taken so many Americans.

And in 1942 Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the midst of World War II quoted that the Twenty-third Psalm where God is seen as a shepherd leading his people through the valley of the shadow of death, but also recognizing the goodness and mercy of God which follows us all the days of our life.

In spite of desperate circumstances each chose to thank God for his abundance.

How do you view life? Is it through the lens of abundance or the lens of scarcity?

Twentieth century French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, in his book “The Critique of Dialectical Reason” posits that it is scarcity which is the over riding rule of life. Scarcity is the lens by which most people view their existence. Scarcity thinking deprives people of the ability to make choices Sartre says, that might normally readily be available to them and it thus diminishes their freedom and ultimately their humanity. The lens of scarcity is to view the world like a glass that is half empty, lamenting on what you don't have. You see risk as something that is bad, and we get stuck in comfort zones because we feel that there is not enough of anything and we're not willing to look beyond the comfort zones for possibilities. Resources are seen as something that is finite and limited, time, money, opportunity. We tend to hold back and to clench our fist instead of sharing. Living in fears we lose before we even have the opportunity to lose, and possibilities are seen as dead on arrival. Living in fear is a terrible way to live.

The lens of abundance however sees the glass half full. There are always greater possibilities before us. We still have our comfort zones, but the walls between them are permeable, we can exit and enter as we need to to take advantage of opportunities.

In the sense of abundance there is always plenty to go around and there always will be. Abundance is like love, you always have more love that you can give. And generosity, the spirit of generosity is that which signifies the lens of abundance with open hearts and open hands.

We are alive to faith, we experience greater happiness and the blessings go around because there develops trust in the God who promises to provide us with every need that we might have. Abundant living overflows out of gratitude and generosity.

The word gratitude comes from the Latin *gratia* which means grace. That means that everything that we experience, everything that we have, everything that we are, our life, our resources, our family and friends come to us as a gift. And we recognize there is something greater at work in our lives. Gratitude and generosity connects us into a deeper living and loving relationship with God.

The holy scriptures bear witness to this. There story after story of God's abundance, and it begins in the very beginning with Genesis and the Creation. There comes abundance, abundant life out of nothing.

We heard the story of the widow and the child destitute and preparing their last meal and getting ready to die, and yet, there they are blessed by trusting in God's prophet, Elijah.

There's the story of the feeding of the five thousand where a whole community is fed by two fish and five loaves, and our gospel, the widow putting everything she has as a holy offering to God. And the greatest example of the life of abundance is Jesus himself who gave of his life to rise again so that you and I might have life and life abundant.

And yet, God knows how quickly we forget. We let scarcity scare us. Remember, how I brought you out of slavery God says over and over again in the Old Testament. And Jesus, do this in remembrance of me. Remember - the word *remember* and its varieties show up over two hundred forty times in the Bible. We are to remember God's grace, we are to remember his mercy, his forgiveness, his love, the purpose that he gives you and me. We are to remember especially when things go bad. We are to remember especially when things seem desperate. We are to remember especially when life seems limited. God is doing wonderful things in and through this ministry that we share.

The people of God offer their time teaching children in the city, going into prisons to share the word of God. A variety of community outreaches and missions that touch people around the world. The people of God are offering their talents with their instruments and with their voices, with technical know how and teaching both adults and children. And the people of God are offering their treasurers supporting this ministry and this congregation of \$1.5 million-dollar budget, but it's more than just money – it's people, it's pastors, information leaders, and musicians, and property, and finance caretakers, the support of volunteers and leaders in mission and in ministry.

And yet we recognize that over the last nine years our income has plateaued, and we experience expenses and cost of living that have risen, and as we get close to the end of this year and as we look forward to the next year, we recognize that it is filled with challenges. But the biggest challenge, the biggest challenge I believe is what lens do we put on? Will it be scarcity or abundance? And what will be our response to those challenges? I pray it will be the lens of abundance where we see options and opportunities as we face obstacles and challenges.

Do we believe that God is big enough to be able to handle our problems and challenges through us? So, brothers and sisters I challenge you to live a life of abundance. Cultivate among yourselves your passions and your purpose. Live it. Share it. Make a difference in a world that we share. I challenge you to grow. Pay attention to your own spiritual development, your own spiritual formation as you worship, listen to the sermons, pray, study, meditate, engage in spiritual conversation with your brothers and sisters who are seated all around you.

And I challenge you to live a life of gratitude and generosity for all that God has done for you through Jesus Christ. Live abundantly.

I choose to believe that the church is the hope for the world and God wants us to dream worthy dreams for our congregation as the Spirit leads us. And I pray that we would view life and ministry through the lens of abundance rather than scarcity as we practice our own gratitude and generosity. And I believe it will be you and me, God's hands and feet in the world who will accomplish his purposes. Jesus invites us to trust and to faith, to put our resources in his hands so that we can see what he can do with them, and with Jesus we will not fail.

Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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