

JANUARY 20, 2024

Living in God's Abundance When Scarcity is All We See

Let us pray:

What belongs to God

- ▶ Psalm 50:10-12
- ▶ For every wild animal of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the air,
and all that moves in the field is mine.



Questions

- ▶ Do you believe that all that we are and all that we have belongs to God?
- ▶ How do you live this out in your life, in the congregation?
- ▶ Is giving to God (the church) an obligation or a delight?

Offering is not just (silly poem to make the point)

- ▶ We think of offering as just a pause
- ▶ In worship for paying bills or some other cause
- ▶ Yet it is not simply a break in the flow
- ▶ The purpose of the offering if you really want to know
- ▶ Is to give us a moment to recall
- ▶ What God has done for us all
- ▶ It is another way to worship and give thanks to the one above
- ▶ For all that we are, all that we have and mostly for God's unconditional love.

Why Give?

- ▶ "Generosity with gifts is the way to spiritual maturity. Sacred and secular history and literature are replete with examples of the crippling effects of gifts hoarded and unshared. People are not naturally disposed to giving, yet the life we all prize, filled with joy and spiritual depth, is closely tied to giving generously and with thankful hearts.

- ▶ Donald W. Hinze, *To Give and Give Again*
- ▶ *A Christian Imperative for Generosity*. P ix.
- ▶ Found in *Giving to God* by Mark Allan Powell

What's in your hand?

- ▶ Exodus 4:2
- ▶ The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, A staff."



Questions (Look Around)

- ▶ What do you have in your hands?
- ▶ What do the members of your congregation have in their hands?
- ▶ Have you asked them?

Show me what you got (silly poem to make the point)

- ▶ God of course had a plan
- ▶ So, God asked Moses what's in your hand
- ▶ A simple staff a piece of wood
- ▶ No one knew that this staff would do the people good
- ▶ God said, throw it on the ground
- ▶ It turned into a snake and wiggled around
- ▶ This is so the people would believe
- ▶ And God's word from Moses they would receive

2 Kings 4:1-7

- ▶ Now the wife of a member of the company of prophets cried to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead; and you know that your servant feared the LORD, but a creditor has come to take my two children as slaves.' Elisha said to her, 'What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?' She answered, 'Your servant has nothing in the house, except a jar of oil.' He said, 'Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not just a few. Then go in, and shut the door behind you and your children, and start pouring into all these vessels; when each is full, set it aside.' So she left him and shut the door behind her and her children; they kept bringing vessels to her, and she kept pouring. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another vessel.' But he said to her, 'There are no more.' Then the oil stopped flowing. She came and told the man of God, and he said, 'Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your children can live on the rest.'

Questions

- ▶ What is your jar of oil?
- ▶ What vessels can you fill?
- ▶ What are the gifts of your congregation?





Vessels Full (silly poem to make a point)

- ▶ Her husband had died
- ▶ And to Elisha she cried
- ▶ What do you have in the house he asked
- ▶ Nothing but oil just a little bit in this flask
- ▶ Elisha responds I'm going to tell you what to do
- ▶ Borrow all the vessels you can, more than one or two
- ▶ She filled every vessel the oil never ran over and it didn't run out
- ▶ The widow could pay her debts plus more, no doubt

John 6:5-12

- ▶ When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.'



Questions

- ▶ Who are the ones with little in the Congregation?

What are the demographics etc... of your congregation?

- ▶ Have you put the little together?



Loaves and Fish (silly poem to make the point)

- ▶ Five loaves and 2 fish is all they had
- ▶ With a crowd of 5000 things were about to go bad
- ▶ Jesus said, "you give them something to eat."
- ▶ What happened next was so sweet
- ▶ To Jesus they gave the little bit
- ▶ Blessed the fish and broke the bread and 12 baskets they did get
- ▶ A lesson for us today
- ▶ With the little we have, trust Jesus and give it away.

Resources

- ▶ ABUNDANCE: Creating a Culture of Generosity by Michael R. Ward
- ▶ Giving to GOD: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life by Mark Allan Powell
- ▶ Generosity, Stewardship, and Abundance: A Transformational Guide To Church Finance by Lovett H. Weems Jr. And Ann A. Michel
- ▶ A Spirituality of Fundraising: Workbook Edition by Henri J.M. Nouwen