

blessings to us aren't ends in themselves. They are 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 man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, 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've got to share with 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. For with the measure you use, it will be measured 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 is not 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.

This Rockefeller guy I told you about—he was actually a very generous man. He gave away hundreds of millions of dollars in his lifetime. But 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.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Pastor Nathan Nass

Joyful Generosity
October 23, 2016

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And 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. ⁹As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰Now 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. ¹¹You 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.

Scarcity or Abundance?

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 found 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. It 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. I've felt that way a lot, but I've never known quite how to describe it until I saw that video that we saw at the beginning of our service. It had the perfect word: "scarcity." When I heard that, I thought, "That's it! That's my life!" 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, and yet the devil somehow convinced Eve that she 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 am content." What would the reaction be? "What! He's crazy! How can you be content? We're short on..." We're never content. And 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. Generously 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 has to 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.

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 abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*" The devil wants to fill you with this "just a little bit more" disease. In contrast, I want you to count how many times God says, "all" or "every." "*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.*" We don't have a God of "just a little bit more." We have a God of "all." God is not a God of scarcity. He is a God of abundance.

It starts with this: "*God is able to make all grace abound 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 abounding and overflowing. "*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he*

not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). Earlier, we sang, "What grace is this! My Lord and King has set his face to suffering. My God eternal dies to bring eternal life to me. What grace is this—that very God would stoop to lift a cross of wood and walk a road of rock and blood, a sinner's road, 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 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! Later on, we're going to sing: "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 is the gift of God's grace. You have something that even Donald Trump with all of his money doesn't have. You have something that even Hillary Clinton with all her power 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 are rich! You will leave church today without a single dollar more in your pocket. You'll leave without a single hour more in your day. But you are not one bit short, because you have what you need most. You are 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 abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound 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 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.

Have you ever heard of "seed money?" It's money that used to start something bigger. You might put some "seed money" into your child's college account—and hope it grows. You might invest "seed money" in a business and hope it pays dividends. God's