

Albany Presbyterian Church

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Money is one of the hardest topics to talk about in the church. I don't know why, but it is. For this reason, many of us are reluctant to discuss money in the church. Eric's job is hard, but he does it beautifully and well. Once again, Thank you, Eric. We all need to understand this topic of finance because the stewardship of our resources, especially in the church, is not only about money but also about where our hearts and intentions lie.

Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth; rather store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... for where your treasure is, there your heart will also. (Mat.6:21)

Richard Rohr reminds us that in a world where scarcity is the worldview, we are led to believe that there is insufficient of everything: land, jobs, healthcare, water, money, housing, or security. Yet it is also true that "there is more than enough for our needs but never enough for our greed." He said the problem of living in scarcity comes from being unable to imagine abundance. We forget that our God who loves us is infinite in his love and everlasting in mercy. We forget that God blesses us freely with his limitless grace that keeps coming.

In psychology, scarcity and abundance are often discussed, especially nowadays. We live in one of the most difficult times, with limited resources, political and environmental struggles, and ever-increasing pressure on our day-to-day lives. This idea of scarcity and abundance is complicated and complex, yet they apply to almost everything in our lives; it was discovered or rediscovered in recent times when people studied the social and economic pressure that affects people's thinking and behavior, and this concept of the scarcity and abundance was used even in policymaking in the governments. This idea of scarcity came about, and it seemed to have something to do with what happens when we feel we do not have enough. This may be money, time, or physical or non-physical resources. This perception of 'not having enough', can easily lead us to this scarcity mindset. And it affects how you think or behave. For example, you might know someone who thinks they have nothing when it is only one or two things that they have little or don't have. This way of thinking is called trade-off thinking, which says, if you don't have one, you have nothing. And some also develop tunnel vision, which allows you to think only about what you don't have. This way of thinking can affect your behavior and even your decision-making process. A scarcity mindset can overwhelm you with fear and worries and keep you from living a full and abundant life.

This is interesting because it is exactly what Jesus says in verse 22: The eye, which could be interpreted as hearts, mindset, or world view; the eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness?

It is true that what is in our hearts and minds matters greatly in what we do and how we live.

As you know, this reading from Matthew 6 follows the sermon on the Mount, also called the Beatitudes, that started in Matthew 5 verse 3... "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the meek. They will inherit the earth." "Blessed are the merciful; they will be shown mercy"; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God," and so on. The beatitude was the new covenant, they said, that Jesus gave and taught his disciples as a new way of living and a new way of understanding the Torah. Jesus taught his disciples many things under that head, such as life, faith practices like prayer and fasting, the law, murder, adultery, divorce, loving your enemies, etc. And this concern about everyday things is a part of that teaching.

Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow, reap, or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you less valuable than they? Can any of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon, in all his splendour, was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not clothe you much more, you of little faith?" (vv. 25-27)

'You of little faith,' according to Emerson Powery, a New Testament scholar, is what Jesus uses only to the disciples. It was used twice before, once when Jesus calmed the storm in the sea and then when he walked on the water; in both times, Jesus said 'you of little faith' to strengthen and encourage faith in the disciples. And so when Jesus says, 'you of little faith,' it might also remind us that Jesus encourages faith even in our everyday lives with ordinary things.

Jesus already knows that we will always struggle between scarcity and abundance in our lives. Having lived a human life, Jesus knows what it is like to live in scarcity and how easy it is to fall back on the scarcity mindset even when we try to live in abundance of God. And yet, for this reason, Jesus encourages us to our faith, and Jesus wants us to live in the abundance of life free of worries and concerns of tomorrow.

Richard Rohr says the only way to eliminate the scarcity of mind is through consciousness transformation, through a personal experience of unconditional, unlimited, and infinite love and forgiveness of God. Only God can move you from the normal worldview of scarcity to the divine world of infinite abundance. That is when the door of mercy blows wide open. That is when we begin to understand the scale-breaking nature of grace.

So, First, we must remember what we already have in God every day. Trust that God gives us all things in abundance, and there is nothing we have little of or lack of. And that we are blessed every day with God's infinite glory, everlasting love, immeasurable mercy, and

abundance of grace. Write out these in your journal, and remember what God has given us every day.

Secondly, we need to come to God in gratitude and thanksgiving. We must give thanks to God for everything. We live, move, and have our being because of God's amazing grace. Therefore, our true response to God is with our thanksgiving and praise. We come to worship God-like. We pray and praise God every day.

Thirdly, we need to surround ourselves with those who are living in God's abundance, coming together in fellowship with those who know and experience God's grace, who work for a common purpose, which is to bring the Kingdom of God here on earth, that is, again, seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Lastly, we need to respond to God with our true and pure hearts. We must remember that God wants us to live in his abundance and give us everything we need. In return, God desires our love, obedience, and mercy. He wants our genuine and heartfelt gratitude, and he sees that everything, even what is in our hearts, will bless us with our good intentions and loving hearts.

For example, when Paul was writing to the church in 2 Corinthians 9, there were many churches in the region of Achaia helping to raise financial support for the church in Jerusalem. But, somehow, the church in Corinth, once enthusiastic, now became reluctant, maybe because of the tension between themselves and Paul that we talked about last week. So Paul writes and explains why Christian giving matters to believers and God's work. It's not just about money. Nor is it about fixing problems caused by a lack of funds. Christian giving is about the giver's heart and brings spiritual gains far beyond the physical needs that might be met.

So, Paul says in 9:6, "Remember this," "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Each one must give what you have decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God can bless you abundantly so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

And therefore, Our God wants us to live in his abundance, and that what we do with our resources is ultimately about the matters of our hearts. It is whether we have the scarcity or abundance of mind. The eye is the lamp of the body. If the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? Jesus says. Do not worry about life. But, seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will also be given to you. So, give what you have decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion. Remember, God knows us and sees what is in our hearts. Know that when we give ourselves in our offering, it must be from our hearts and with Joy, and God will bless you. And you will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God through us in Christ Jesus...

Thanks be to God. Amen.