

2024 09 22 – *Giving from Abundance*

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

Today I'm doing something that I have never done before. On Thursday Rhonda asked me, "Is the bulletin ready?" and I replied, "Yes, I've checked it over and it's good to go." She had this quizzical expression on her face and she said, "But the scripture reading is the same as last time." She was right. You see, this fall I am planning to preach on the same scripture passage for not just two, but three Sundays in a row! This is something I have never done before.

As I explained a couple of weeks ago, this particular scripture passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is our biblical resource for this year's stewardship campaign. Each week we will hear it read by a different voice and then we will focus on specific verses and use them to highlight the Stewardship theme for that particular Sunday. First, let's remind ourselves what this letter is actually about.

In his letter, the apostle Paul is reminding the church in Corinth that they made a promise to raise a certain amount of money to support the poor in the city of Jerusalem. Corinth is a city in the part of the world that was then known as Achaia and is now a part of Greece. Jerusalem is, of course, on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. Paul is sending this letter, along with some of his coworkers, as a reminder that he will soon be coming to pick up their gift. It seems that he will personally be delivering this gift to the church in Jerusalem..

On September 22nd we looked at verse seven in this passage and talked about giving with intention and commitment. Today, we will be focussing on the

following verse eight to ten. In these verses Paul writes

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There are no limits to the grace of God, who will make sure you will always have enough of everything and even a surplus for good works, as scripture says:

“God scattered abroad and gave to poor people;

God’s justice endures forever.”

The One who provides seed for the planter and bread for food will also supply and enlarge your store of seed and increase your harvest of justice.

Paul is asking the members of the church in Corinth to trust in the providence, the generosity of their Creator and to give from a sense of abundance, of having and being enough. This concept of an abundance mindset is one that is quite popular in today’s business world. Many of you may be familiar with Stephen Covey’s book from 1989, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. In his book he talks about character traits that people need to have in order to end up with a win/win strategy where both sides in a negotiation or deal will benefit. He writes:

[A] character trait essential to Win/Win is the Abundance Mentality, the paradigm that there is plenty out there for everybody.

He goes on to say:

Most people are deeply scripted in what I call the Scarcity Mentality. They see life as having only so much, as though there were only one pie out there. And if someone were to get a big piece of the pie, it would mean less for everybody else.

<https://sourcesofinsight.com/integrity-maturity-and-abundance/>

I agree with Stephen Covey that most of us struggle with a scarcity mindset or mentality. It's something that is ingrained in us by the culture in which we live. We are constantly being told through all forms of media that we don't have enough, that we are not enough. We are told that we need to change how we look, how we dress, the car we drive, and the house in which we live. We are told that abundant living, a fulfilling life, that happiness itself, is connected to the things that we own.

But the reality is that people can live abundantly, can live with a sense of abundance at all levels of income. As Wayne Dwyer said, "Abundance is not something we acquire. It is something we tune into." One way we tune into that abundance is by being part of a community of faith. Worship as a congregation is about giving thanks for the seed and the bread that we have been given. It is about knowing we are loved just as we are. It is about praying and connecting with the infinite Love that is within us and around us. When we connect with that sacred core, that Holy Mystery, within ourselves, then we begin to get a sense of our own abundance.

Being a part of a community of faith is also about giving from that abundance. It is about giving of our time, our talents and our wealth. I think Mark Twain said it best when he wrote, "If you want love and abundance in your life, give it away." There's nothing that can give us a sense joy and expansiveness more than the act of giving, whether it is giving of our love, our time, our talent, sharing a smile, or giving from our wealth. As an example, I want to share with you a story that I

found this week on the Internet. I believe it has been around for a while, in different forms, so you may have heard it before; but it is worth hearing again.

A 10-year-old boy wanted to eat some ice cream. So he went to an ice cream parlor and checked out the different flavors on display.

"How much does this flavor cost for a double scoop?" – "\$5," the person at the counter replied.

The boy had a money box with him which he opened to count the money he had. He seemed dissatisfied. He returned to the counter, pointed to a different flavor, and asked, "How much does this flavor cost for a double scoop?" The same response came – "\$5."

The young boy kept checking every flavor on display and asking the same question until the exasperated server responded in an irritable tone – "All double scoops for all flavors cost the same – \$5."

At which point, the child meekly asked, "How much for a single scoop then?"

"Well, a single scoop is cheaper. It'll just cost you \$3," responded the person at the counter.

The boy perked up immediately. He asked for a strawberry-flavored single scoop cone and sat at a table to lap it up. After eating the ice cream, the young lad put his money on the table and left the shop. When the server counted the money, he realized that the boy left five dollars on the table –

\$3 for the ice cream and \$2 as a tip for him.

<https://ownmygrowth.com/2022/01/16/abundance-mindset/>

That young boy really wanted some ice cream, but he also wanted to be able to generously express his appreciation to the person who served it. He no doubt got just as much satisfaction and joy from offering his tip and thinking about the smile of the face of the server as he did from eating that single scoop of strawberry ice cream. He knew that one scoop was all or even more than he needed. At his young age, he was already learning the love and the joy that comes from abundant living, from abundant giving!

It is my hope and my prayer that we all may experience this love and this joy in our lives. That we may know the peace that comes from trusting in the generosity of the Holy Mystery and the joy that comes from sharing what we have been given.

Each Sunday, we are given the opportunity to give. Here at First United, we no longer pass around the offering plates during the service, but you will find them at back of the centre pews. Those who are not giving in some other way (by pre-authorized remittance, monthly cheques, or e-transfer) are encouraged to place your offering in the plates either before or after the service. However we give, whatever we give, may we all give from our abundance. May it be so. Amen.