

Abundance in the Face of Scarcity

2 Kings 4: 42-44 John 6" 1-21 Pastor Lentz
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How often have you seen, heard, read, or heard about the feeding done by Jesus? Did you know it was similar to this passage in 2 Kings? For me it magnifies the meaning to all of us throughout history. I hope that it does that for you as well.

These two passages point to how much it is that there is abundance in the face of scarcity. This is however a very different way of thinking about abundance and faith. This one wants to encourage you to recognize good things about yourself, your faith and the abundance of God's love. It is designed to help you see what is already there, even if it doesn't square with your view of reality.

For instance, what we see and are able to see isn't reality. I know you might think it is but much of what we see that we think is reality, isn't. It is the truncated version of reality that comes from fears, reducing our ability to see God's bounty to us. The Bible is very clear that our perception is not complete. The more that I know about neuroscience the more that I am amazed at how correct the Bible is, was and will be. You see what we see isn't all there is. In fact, science is clear that we don't see all there is. What we see is a major distortion depending upon how we are feeling, what we want, where we want to go, and even what we think is correct. Jewish thought views reality to be all existing only because of God's imagination. So the rocks, trees, oceans etc. are there only because God created them in his mind. When you think of that it puts a little different perspective on things, does it not ?

We have all misplaced something and went looking for it and even convinced ourselves it wasn't present. It was gone. Either someone

took it, or they misplaced it because it should be right where I put it. Then later when we were in a different mindset we realized it was right in front of us. Actually, at my house the scenario goes like this. I can't find something and I look for it everywhere I know to look, and then I ask Debbie, and she says, " Why it is where it has been for weeks." And then she tells me exactly where it is. It was right in front of me all the time. I didn't see it. It was gone. All sorts of things disappear that way. When you are in a particular state of emotion that is unpleasant, the learning and specifics may or may not be available to you when you are feeling well. And that is just one of the ways that reality is minimized by our emotions. It happens all the time in all sorts of ways. It only becomes a problem when we have felt frustrated, angry, hurt, sad or alone. The negative feeling may be a clue that we are not seeing all that we can see.

Feelings, fears, and false beliefs all get in the way of our seeing things that are right there. In fact, some folks believe that all problems are because of our not being able to recognize all our strengths and options when dealing with a difficulty. Some say that all mental problems, all relational problems, and all personal problems are because we have been focusing on fears, shame, anger, or what we don't have, instead of what we do have. The habitual ways of thinking that we develop are what cause folks to have diagnosis that are easily seen and verified by others. When the person gets out of that rut of thinking they literally are healed. You could say that their eyes were opened. Or you could say that they recognized who they were designed by God to be.. We are all wonderfully made with abilities, strengths, and options that sometimes we just don't see.

One of the ways that people block themselves from seeing their abundance is by comparing themselves with others. It is almost a given that when we compare ourselves to someone else that we will ultimately lose. The act of comparing our situation, feelings, happiness,

or anything else tends to negate what and who we are. It is one thing to notice others. We are made to be aware of and to at times look to others for direction, or even for comfort. That is very different from comparing ourselves. Consider that comparing ourselves implies that we are not enough unless we are more than or have more than someone else. That is ridiculous, and none of us would even consider it if we thought about it.

So if comparing ourselves to others is not such a good idea what about comparing ourselves to ourselves? You know that too is pretty hollow. I know a man who believes that because he used to be able to run a 7 min mile that today 35 years later he should be able to at least run a 9 min mile, even though he hasn't kept running. We all know that age takes a toll and that circumstances in our lives take a toll. We all know that being healthy makes a big difference in how we think, sleep, eat, and relate with others. When someone is ill they don't tend to be as patient, or have all their skills in relating as they do when they are well.

For a long time people have recognized that memory is state dependent. So if emotionally you were frustrated you might not be in touch with all your resources. In fact, the research says that unless you learned the knowledge while being frustrated you might not be as able to access it in a different emotional place. You might not even be aware of what you are not aware of unless you simply couldn't remember some fact.

So if we want to be more able to see abundance even in the face of scarcity, we would want to access the feelings that would lead us there. One way to do that would be to consider all the things that you are thankful for and what you are even appreciative for. Psalm 100 says enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. It is about us. We can access more of our full potential when we are in touch with God and have been recognizing how wonderful that God is.

God doesn't need us to be praising of him but we need it. When we do it alters how we see the world. It alters how we see ourselves.

Lots of folks encourage us to adopt a stance of thankfulness. They are right to because when we are being thankful to God and even thankful to others, for passing on God's blessings to us, we can then see what we can't see when filled with fear, of scarcity.

There are several ways that we can access a mindset of abundance. Being thankful is one of them, and being around people who think that way or reading what those people say are two more ways. Yet even remembering times when you did feel, and see a world of abundance can help us to see it today. There are lots of ways, and you may think of ways that I haven't yet.

One book I have speaks to the awe of God in poetic ways. It doesn't just list the ways that God is so wonderful. It doesn't make an argument about how wonderful that God is, it does something far more amazing. It is written from that perspective so that when you read it you too feel the amazement. When you realize that English was at least Heschel's fourth language it is even more amazing. He simply wrote while he was feeling those feelings of absolute amazement for God's being. He was so filled with it that when you read there are times when you simply feel that same feeling. That is one of the ways that poetry conveys emotion.

It is only one of the ways that Art is quietly powerful. Through art we can experience things that are difficult to experience on our own. It is as if the artist has found a path and captured it so that the rest of us can follow them. The experience that they give is one that helps to alter our experience of the world. It helps us to see the world differently. When it is the most helpful it opens the world to us in ways that expand our understanding and awe of the world, and life.

I know a woman who painted a picture that is unremarkable in every way except for one. The image is of a table two chairs and a in a corner with a window over the table. It is easily reproducible and wouldn't require any major talent to do. It was probably even done quickly. However, somehow she captured a wonderful mood on the canvas. When you look at it you begin to feel better. You begin to feel more at peace, and joyful. You feel hopeful and happy. She captured her mood on the canvas and as a result she produced something that is quite amazing. She captured a mood that can be replicated by looking at the picture. The picture gets you to a place where you can see what you could see if you were using that perspective but often we are not. She painted a very remarkable picture. As an artist she did what many people only hope to do.

The picture doesn't make you feel happy, it opens a door so that you can see the world through happy eyes. That is what Heschel's book does, and that is what being thankful and praising God does. It allows us to see what was there all along but we couldn't see it. It is what jokes do as well. Good jokes alter what or how we see the world. It becomes funny because in a brief moment we suddenly realize the world is different than we thought. Timing with comedy is what makes it possible for us to have the ah ha experience, or should I say, the Ha Ha, experience ?

A friend of mine wrote a book called the Ha Ha therapy book. It is lots of jokes that he has found useful to help people think differently. If the truth were known it is probably a book of jokes that have helped him to think differently. It has been translated into several languages, and is quite popular. Sometimes what made him think differently and more healthy translates to us when we read it, but sometimes it doesn't because we are all individuals. Each of us need the world expanded in different ways to alter our perception so that we can really recognize

our health, our abundance, or even our abilities so that we can help more people.

For the longest time I wondered how come that Jesus knew to have the people that day sit down so that they could eat. It was brilliant and while Jesus did some amazing things I wondered where he got the idea to do what he did. That is until I read the passage in 2 Kings and saw that Elijah had done the same thing. The Bible is amazing that way in offering us perspectives that change everything that we see and offer us new options. Realizing that Elijah did the same thing, I knew that Jesus was simply doing what the Greatest prophet did before him. Usually it takes something or someone that triggers our thinking so that we see options ourselves. Jesus took an obscure passage in 2 Kings and applied it to his situation over at least a 1000 years later and with a larger crowd. That is using innovation and it is using the Bible in a way that opens possibilities. That is what we are encouraged to do. Elijah

When we are drawing possibilities from the Bible and making them work, we are in a great relationship with God. God's reality and the way we understand the scriptures creates for us a pathway to doing good.

We are encouraged to surround ourselves with people who follow God's laws, and to distance ourselves from people who refuse to. The reason is, of course, that we as people learn from each other. When we surround ourselves with people who are what we consider better than ourselves we can then become better people. I have a way that I do that all the time everywhere. I look for your best qualities. That way I can be impressed all the time where ever I am with whoever I am with. I know that sometimes I am also overlooking some not so good qualities, but it is worth it. It means that there is an abundance of good qualities to improve in myself all the time given in examples through your life, and behavior.

