



Leftovers

Week Two – ‘Diggin’ In

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... yup, it's finally November, so let do this: When is it okay to start celebrating Christmas? Are you already listening to your Chipmunks Christmas album and binging Home Alone movies? Or do you have a strict "No Christmas" policy 'til after Thanksgiving? Let the battle begin!

Opening Prayer

God of Provision, help us to give our lives over to you, for we know that you can do so abundantly more with it than we can.

Introduction

Well, regardless of which side of the debate you land on, we've agreed to give Thanksgiving its due with this series and talk about abundance and *leftovers*. More specifically, we're exploring the

question, “are you living your life with a mindset of human scarcity or God’s abundance?” And to help us do that, we’re looking at 4 aspects of scarcity vs. abundance... 4 ways that an abundance mindset can counteract what a scarcity mindset tells us. Last week, we started with a little “Dinner Prep” and defined what we mean by *scarcity* and *abundance*. A scarcity mindset tells us, “there’s not enough,” while an abundance mindset tells us, “there’s always more,” we just have to look for it. Today, we’ll look at the second way that these mindsets differ, but first...

Recap Question: Last week, we asked the question, “where in my life am I living with a scarcity mindset... what do I feel I don’t have enough of?” And we talked about time, relationships, energy, motivation, patience, as answers to the question. How did you do this week viewing them through a lens of abundance?

Scripture

We did our *Dinner Prep* last week, preparing our hearts to receive God’s provision by discussing the first aspect of scarcity vs. abundance: scarcity tells us there’s “not enough” while abundance tells us “there’s always more, you just have to look for it.” Today, we’re going to grab a fork and start...

~Diggin’ In

That is, after you've done all the prep and cooked the meal... it's time to eat! Once we've prepared our hearts, it's time to open ourselves to receive God's provision. And to get into that, we'll look at the second aspect of this mindset through another Bible story about abundance. This one comes from John's version of Jesus's life. He's been touring the countryside, teaching, and performing miracles. And even though it's early in his ministry, he's started to gain quite a following. He's got his 12 disciples, but there are hundreds, maybe thousands, who come to listen to his teaching and have their sick healed. He needs a bit of a break, so he and the Twelve go off to a quiet place to be alone. But wouldn't you know it, the crowds find them... and that's where our story picks up.

Read John, chapter 6, verses 5 through 14.

Philip, Andrew, and the rest of the disciples approach the problem with a scarcity mindset. "We don't have enough money to feed them." (v7) "What good is five loaves and two fish with this huge crowd?" (v9) But Jesus comes at this problem with an abundance mindset, asking, "what do you have?"

Question 1: Who are you in this story? Are you Philip, doing the math and reporting the facts? Are you Andrew, doing your best to please and help Jesus out, while still dubious about the possibility of success? Are you the boy, willing to give blindly, see what happens? Or are you Jesus, forever the optimist, assuring others, "forget the odds, it'll be fine!" What stands out to you about this passage?

Reflection

The first aspect of a scarcity vs. abundance mindset, from last week, is alive and well in this story, too. The disciples, like the widow, approached the problem saying, “there’s not enough,” while Jesus, like Elisha, came at it from a place of abundance, saying, “what do you have? You’ve got bread and fish? Sweet! There’s more where that came from. Watch this.” But there’s another element of this story that gives us the second difference between *scarcity* and *abundance*. And we find it when we focus on the little boy who offered up his “Rolls & Cod” Snack Pack.

Now, it’s doubtful he’s there alone. A child doesn’t bring 5 loaves and 2 fish for just himself. So, he wouldn’t only be giving up *his* lunch... it’s probably the food for his family, too. Which means, he has a choice. He can keep what he has for himself and his family, making sure they have enough for only them, afraid of losing it all. Or, they can open themselves up to what Jesus might do with it. This gives us our second aspect of scarcity vs. abundance...

~ “be afraid” vs “be open”

Scarcity tells us, “Be afraid of losing what you have. Hoard as much as you can for yourself. There’s not enough for everyone, so keep yours and fight to protect it.” When we start with last week’s mentality of “there’s not enough,” the natural reaction is to be afraid of losing what you *do* have and to protect it for yourself. The boy didn’t have

to give up his food... (besides, have you ever tried to take food from a kid?) It would have been perfectly natural, maybe even reasonable, for him to look at his little picnic basket and tell the disciples, "No. My family needs this." What's more, he'd have been completely justified in doing so. It was his family's food. See, often, these fears come from legitimate places, born from our own difficult experience. We fear losing relationships or time with others because we've been left or lost loved ones. We fear not having enough money to pay rent because we were once living paycheck to paycheck. We fear losing our health because we or someone close to us battled something life-threatening. These fears are normal and natural. And so, in that regard, a scarcity mindset is completely understandable. However, even when justified, it presents a problem. We'll come back to that. First...

Question 2: When it comes to this aspect of a scarcity mindset, what are you afraid of losing? What do you think is the source of that fear? Does it come from prior experience of loss or is the need to keep for yourself a new development? Discuss.

In some cases, a scarcity mindset *is* understandable. However, it still comes with a problem. See, when we approach even justifiable situations with a scarcity mindset, we miss out on the beauty of what we do have. For example, if we hold on too tightly to relationships out of fear of losing them, we risk missing out on enjoying the moments we do have. The fear prevents us from being present. When it comes to God's provision, it's a scarcity mindset, an understandable one, but

scarcity nonetheless. Instead, an abundance mindset tells us to be open to what Christ can do with what we have *when we give it over to him*. The boy gave his 5 loaves and 2 fish to Jesus, because he and Jesus knew what could be done if they came at the issue with the mindset of being open. And so, he brings his meager meal to Jesus. Jesus gives thanks to God and distributes it. And the blessing multiplies, and all the people get enough to eat... plus leftovers. When we give our situations over to Christ, he can bless and multiply it... with plenty leftover.

Question 3: Given your answer to Question 2, what would it look like to view that situation from a mindset of abundance? How can you let go and give it to Christ to be multiplied?

Closing

This story gives us one more beautiful element of how an abundance mindset can help us in these situations. Verse 11 tells us, “they all ate as much as they wanted.” (NLT) Now, this is a verse we often gloss over when we know the story. Jesus blesses the food, passes it out, everybody eats. Done and done. But there’s something really amazing hidden in this sentence, as well. When it says, “they *all* ate as much as they wanted,” sure, it includes the 5000-plus there, but (and here’s the kicker) it also includes the little boy. That “all” includes the one who gave his food over to Jesus in the first place. He could have come at it from a scarcity mindset, hoarded all that was his, born from fear of not having enough, and said, “nope, this is mine.” And yes, he would have had enough to eat. But when he let himself be open to what Jesus could do with it, everyone got enough

to eat... AND SO DID HE. The blessing multiplies for others... AND we get enough, too. So yes, you can approach your situations from a place of scarcity, and say, “nope, I’m keeping mine” and you’ll probably have enough. But when you come at it from an abundance mindset, and say, “Jesus, I’m trusting you to take this fear, to have this situation, my loaves and fishes, and multiply it to bless others,” others get enough AND so do you. So, this week, ask yourself, “what am I afraid of losing?” Scarcity will tell you, “hold on to it, be afraid of losing it.” Instead, be open to giving it over to God and receiving that blessing in return. Because just like the little boy’s loaves and fish, the blessing multiplies... and you’ll even get leftovers, too.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.