



Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059
stjohnky.com

Message for November 20, 2022
"Immeasurably More: Running Over"
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Luke 6:38

Enough Is Never Enough

The story is told about Abe Lincoln being out with his boys one day when they started to scuffle. The scuffle led to crying which prompted a neighbor to ask, *"What's the matter?"*

Lincoln responded by saying the boys were simply doing what the rest of world does. *"They have three walnuts, and each boy wants two."*

It seems there is never enough or at least we have convinced ourselves of that.

A Masting Year

That's not the case when it comes to walnuts around the Grieb household. We have a walnut tree in our front yard, and they dropped walnuts like crazy. We have even lost a few branches because they were so weighed down with walnuts. I have picked up what seems like hundreds of them.

My young next-door neighbor, who takes an interest in anything that has to do with plants or trees tells me that every few years a tree will have a *"masting year."* A *"masting year"* is when a tree produces an overabundance of fruit. If that's the case, we had a *"masting year"* on steroids.

God's Abundance

If you think about it, God's abundance is all around us. His own Son made the claim that he came so we *"might have life and have it abundantly."*

There is nothing like the Thanksgiving Season to give us pause to count our blessings. In giving thanks, we become keenly aware that God is all about taking care of our needs. We realize we are truly blessed people and have every reason to thank God for that.

Blessings That Overflow

Jesus offers a wonderful word about the blessings God heaps upon our lives. Interestingly, he talks about that in the context of judging others. Jesus says, *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."* (Luke 6:37)

Jesus is clear about such things. Rather than judging others we'd do well to offer grace, which always leads to forgiveness. Grace also leads to generosity. As we experience the gift of God's love, we find ourselves at a much better place to give ourselves.

Generosity overflows from hearts that have been so touched.

Jesus says, *“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)

The image here has to do with the outer garment that was worn during the days of Christ. There was generally a fold just above the belt that would have been more than adequate to hold a certain amount of grain. Jesus talks about an amount of grain so great that fold couldn't contain it.

Love That Overflow

What Jesus is talking about here is the love God so richly bestows upon our lives. That love has a way of affecting us even when we are tempted to unfairly judge, if not condemn another person.

It also has a way of effecting our giving. *“Give and it will be given to you,”* says Jesus. The more we give the blessings of God become more apparent, and those blessings don't just fill us, but do so to the overflowing.

James states in James 1:17 that *“God is the giver of every good and perfect gift.”* Our cups *“runneth over”* when it comes to God's love.

Regrettably though, far too many are hesitant when it comes to receiving that love. They are weighed down with guilt convincing them they don't deserve God's love. They are right about not deserving that love. They miss the point, though. God's love is not earned, it is simply given whether one is deserving or not. Hence, the age-old truth: We give because God has first given.

Others, take an opposite tact. They feel they *do* deserve God's love, after all, they are so very righteous. They, too, miss the point. *“Hey, look at me and how righteous I am”* gets us nowhere.

Again, none of us deserves the overwhelming love of God. No one deserves anything from God, yet he gives and gives and gives again. Hence, the age-old truth: We give because God has first given.

God's love is given as a *“good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.”* As we have said all through this series, God's love is *“immeasurably more than we could every ask or imagine.”* It is left to us to experience it, and in experiencing it, we find our lives transformed.

That's why on a day where our focus is on giving, we draw inspiration from the fact God gives and gives again. In a word, we can never out-give God.

Paul writes in Romans 8:32, *“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things.”* (Romans 8:32)

Money and the Spiritual Life

Jesus talked a lot about money and possessions. He knew that what we think about money and possessions shapes what we think about stewardship and effects our giving.

Sixteen of his thirty-eight parables concern handling money and possessions. In the gospels, one in ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. You and I talk about money all the time, and if we are not talking about it, it is constantly on our minds.

Money is simply a part of life, and because of that has effect on our spiritual lives one way or the other.

The great reformer Martin Luther once said about money, *“What people of faith do with their money is indicative of what they believe about God.”*

As people of faith, we believe that when it comes to stuff, it’s all God’s anyway. We are simply stewards over it. We came into this world with nothing and will leave with nothing. It’s what we do with what we have that makes the difference.

John Wesley said, *“Make all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.”* During his life and ministry Wesley made a fortune, mostly from the sale of his books. In fact, it is said that Wesley made over 30,000 pounds during his lifetime, a veritable fortune for his time. Yet upon his death Wesley had only a few coins in his pocket. He had given his fortune away

Wesley practiced what he preached. During his life he said, *“When I die if I leave behind ten pounds, you and all mankind may bear witness against me that I have lived a thief and a robber. I will leave my books behind, but whenever God calls me hence, in every other respect, my own hand will be my executor.”*

I have been tempted during stewardship time to have the congregation sing the great old hymn, *I Surrender All*. The first verse goes like this, *“All to Jesus I surrender; all to him I freely give.”* I figure singing that might be taken the wrong way.

Upon second thought, *I Surrender All* might be the very thing we need to sing. *“All to Jesus I surrender; all to him I freely give; I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live.”*

For the person of faith, giving is a matter of love and trust every time.

When We Give

When we give:

- We say a lot about what we think of God and his desire to meet our every need.
- We say a lot about what we think of his love and how that love sustains us.
- We say a lot about our awareness of God’s many blessings and how those blessings impact our lives.

When we give:

- We also say a lot about ourselves and the priorities we hold dear.
- We say a lot about what we really value.
- We also say a lot about the draw of the world and the influence it has upon us.
- In the end, we say a lot about the trust, or lack thereof, we place in God’s ability to look out for us.

People Give for All Sorts of Reasons

People give for all sorts of reasons.

- Some do so out of sense guilt.
- Others do so out of a sense of duty.
- Still others give out of a sense of gratitude.

The later always puts us at a good place. Gratitude puts us to considering God's many blessings. It also puts us to trusting that those blessings will continue. In a word, we make a statement of faith that God's good work will continue and will come as "*a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.*"

An Exciting Story to Tell

Last week, you should have received a mailing from Randy Scherer, the Chairman of our Finance Committee. Included in that mailing was an attempt at a narrative budget. I hope you read through it. Our interest was to share some of the many things that are going on here and the varied percentages of our Ministry Budget that go to support them.

It was gratifying to pull that together. We do indeed have an exciting story to tell. As you know there is so much more than what was written in that narrative budget. Just in the last week or so, I have heard someone say that the fellowship of this church is like "*a warm blanket.*"

I heard about a child who attends AWANA admitting that he was really getting into the Bible study when that wasn't so much the case when AWANA first started.

I was delighted to hear from the group who helped paint the kitchen at Grace Kids about how gratified they were to help.

Last Thursday, I looked out on the parents who had gathered to share in their child's Thanksgiving program. I could sense they were thankful for the good care and instruction their children were receiving.

I also heard from another person who had just lost a loved one and she couldn't stop talking about how much the church had come around her.

That's just a brief list. We have an exciting story to tell. God is working in our midst. We can all be thankful for the ministry of Saint John. Above all things, we can be thankful for the presence, power, and leadership of our Lord as he seeks to lead us into a new year of ministry.

Making a Pledge

Last week you also received from Randy a pledge card. You need to know that Cheryl and I plan to make a pledge. We are not asking you to do anything we're not willing to do. We have prayed, have discerned, and are prepared to take a step of faith, trusting God for the year ahead. We know he will prove himself true.

I hope you have spent time praying and discerning as well. I also hope you are ready to take a step of faith by making a pledge in support of next year's Ministry Budget. Let's take time to do that just now, and as you do, keep this verse in mind.

"You should give what you have decided to give in your heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (II Corinthians 9:7)

It's Masting Time

It's masting time, my friends. God's *immeasurably more* is all around us. Believe that for your life and for the life of this church, and as you do may find yourself responding accordingly.