

Abundance

[Genesis 25:19-34](#)

[Psalms 119:105-112](#)

[Romans 8:1-11](#)

[Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

Imagine a couple who struggled for twenty years with infertility. Finally, after years of praying, they have twins. But, from the beginning, the boys couldn't be more different. One is outdoorsy, athletic, the kind of kid who always comes home grubby from play. The other is artsy, stays close to home, and likes to cook. Mom connects naturally with one. Dad connects naturally with the other. It isn't intentional. They both deny they have a favorite. But everyone in the family knows. Dad has dreams for his favorite son. Mom quietly harbors different dreams for hers. The boys begin to notice. They learn how to get the attention and love they want. Years go by and the whole family begins living as though there is only one worthwhile future. One inheritance. Only one son can win it. And everything becomes a competition. Every success for one feels like a loss for the other. Every meal becomes tense. Every holiday carries an undercurrent of rivalry and resentment. Finally, one brother cheats the other out of something precious and the family fractures. The brothers stop speaking. The parents spend the rest of their lives grieving over what has become of their family. It is a heartbreaking story, and it is the one before us today. It is also laced throughout the pages of Genesis. But if we are reading the story of Jacob and Esau well, a natural question will rise in our hearts. Who convinced them that there was only enough love, approval, blessing, only a worthwhile future enough for one child?

If we are familiar with the stories of Genesis, we become used to the idea that an older son receives the father's blessing. We begin taking the rivalries for granted, as if they are somehow normal, as if the limitation of blessing is somehow God's design. After all, God is the one who told Rebekah that one of her sons would indeed serve the other. But the text does not say that is God's desire. It merely says it is what God knows will happen,

what was already unfolding within Rebekah's contentious womb. If we remember back to the story of God's covenant with Abraham we will remember the promise was that his family would become a blessing to every nation. God's intent was that Abraham's children would be the ones through whom blessing passed. And yet, when they began to portion it out as if it was a limited commodity, it ended up creating rivalries that continue to this day. When we imagine the world God wanted to provide, it was one of blessing, love, and abundance, so rich that it made the soil as fruitful as the lives who lived upon it. But what we believe about God, about the life of God available to us, will shape how we live and what we experience.

Today's parable of the Sower is one we all know well. What I find most interesting about this parable is what it does not say. It tells the story of a farmer who tosses seed, the various places the seed fell, and what happened as a result of those seeds being tossed in various places. But Jesus never critiques the Sower for being wasteful. He never says the Sower ought to have been more diligent about where the seeds landed. He never says the Sower was negligent in his soil preparations. He merely says he tossed a lot of seeds that fell in lots of places. The final line of the parable is not instructional for either future farmers or for plants. Instead, it recounts the yield from the seeds. Each seed that fell on good soil multiplied. This is a story about the indiscriminate generosity of God and the harvest that is reaped when we live from that abundance.

When we place that parable alongside our story from Genesis we see a stark contrast. In Genesis, Isaac feels that he can only bless one son. In the Hebrew Law, there was an assumption that firstborn sons would gain a double portion of the family inheritance as a means of protecting the strength of the tribe when the patriarch died, but that was a heavy responsibility and it was not in any way connected with the way God expected fathers to bless their children. And yet, it somehow becomes a social expectation, an accepted practice, and it became amalgamated with the way God's people understood God's own self. When there is only enough blessing for one person, everything becomes a

competition around obtaining a limited resource. But, in God's kingdom, blessing is not limited; blessing multiplies.

When Paul writes about our understanding of this supernatural reality, he tells us to have the "mind of Christ". When our minds believe only what our eyes can see, we cling to the things of this world, the things we believe we can control through our own scheming, our own ability to subvert and ultimately conquer others. That is the mind set on the flesh. But the mindset of the spirit is life. Life is vitality, it is strength and regeneration. When Paul says God will give life to our mortal bodies, he is making a strong and ironic statement about the supernatural reality of this new life in Christ. The very word mortality means being subject to death. Paul is saying that the "zoe", the vital life force of God that raised Jesus from the dead is what lives inside of us, whether we feel it or not. We look at the brokenness and limitations of human flesh. We see the vulnerability of our bodies, the brokenness, the effects of age and illness. And when we let ourselves dwell there, our minds get stuck on the limitations of flesh. That mindset, according to Paul, cannot please God.

Paul says that it is within these frail, sometimes dilapidated, often flabby, flesh pots that the spirit of the living God chooses to inhabit. And when God's spirit inhabits human bodies, just like God did in Jesus, we are resurrected into new life. The renewal of creation works from the inside out. It is **life** that pleases God, because God is the author of life. So, when our eyes are fixated on the brokenness and limitations of our own selves and of the world around us, it distracts us from the supernatural reality of God's presence within us. It is God's life through us that changes the world. Our eyes must be open, aware, and receptive of that life for us to access its resources.

The ability to see God's abundance is not always easy. Sometimes it is downright difficult. All of us face impossible situations. It's sort of the defining thing about our mortality. The Psalmist felt it too. Today's Psalmist talks about feeling deeply troubled and having traps

laid against him by the wicked. The Psalmist felt our same pull towards limitation. Every single verse in this, the longest chapter of the Bible, refers to God's direction. Today's small excerpt references God's Word, judgments, law, commandments, decrees, and statutes. These are all ways of describing God's communication to humans. This is not about rule keeping, but reorientation. This Psalm is 176 verses long and every single verse indicates the way to cultivate the mind of Christ is to keep one's heart open and directed to God. It is especially important when our mortality feels truer than God's abundant resurrection power.

Believing that resources are limited makes us grasp at them, cling, hoard, and see others as competition. Believing in abundance frees us to trust, to be generous, and multiply blessings outward. The world we create reflects the stories we believe about God. So, what could happen if we truly had the mind of Christ, if we lived from the story of abundance? What world could be created if we put our hands into God's deep pockets when we reached in to grab our seeds? What joy and blessing could flow from us if we recognized that our societal norms and our own mortal flesh are not what defines the limits of what we have to offer? What if we scattered seed in places where soil is parched, trusting that seed will take root and multiply? What if we blessed those our world says shouldn't or won't be blessed, rather than placing limitations on God's blessings. What story are we living from and does it reflect God's kingdom?

In a few minutes we'll come to a table where that abundance is enacted, where the same bread multiplies across every kind of hunger, and we leave fed enough to scatter seed in places we can't yet see. May that be the story we live from.