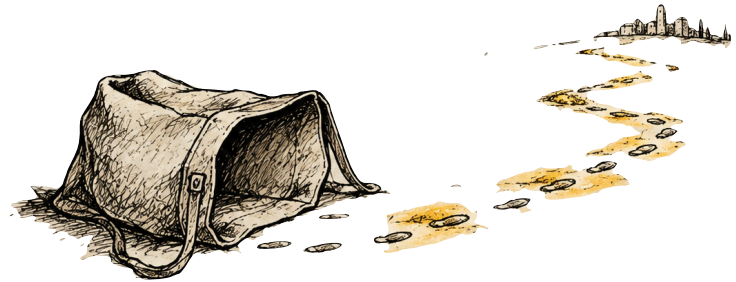


SCARCITY VERSUS ABUNDANCE

Enough Looks Different Than We Imagine

When I think about abundance, my first thought is usually having plenty. Plenty of money, people, resources, opportunities, and enough left over that I don't have to worry about running out. But I'm not sure that's how Jesus sees abundance.

There are stories throughout Scripture where God provides people with exactly what they need, when they need it. The Israelites woke up every morning to manna on the ground. There was enough for the day. They couldn't save it up just in case God didn't come through tomorrow. When they tried, it spoiled. They had to wake up the next morning and trust Him again.



Then there are the loaves and fishes. Thousands of hungry people and almost nothing to feed them with. Five loaves and two fish weren't enough. The disciples could count. They knew what they had, and they knew how many people were sitting in front of them. They were right. It wasn't enough. At least, not until Jesus got involved.

Everyone ate. Everyone had enough. And there were leftovers.

Then I get to Luke 10, and this is where it gets really interesting to me. Jesus tells His followers that *the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*. There is abundance and scarcity in the same sentence.

And what does Jesus do about the shortage?

He sends seventy-two people out and tells them not to take a purse, bag, or sandals with them. I've always found that fascinating. Jesus knows the workers are few, and then He sends the workers He does have into the harvest with almost nothing.

They would have to depend on what they found along the way. They would need someone to welcome them. Someone would have to feed them. They didn't know exactly what was waiting for them when they arrived. They went anyway.

And when they came back, Luke tells us they returned with joy. They had stories to tell. They left with very little and returned having experienced far more than they could have packed in a bag.

That's making me rethink what I mean when I use words like scarcity and abundance. Having little isn't necessarily scarcity. Jesus intentionally sent the seventy-two with little. Scarcity happens when what we don't have begins determining what we believe is possible.

I think we do this more than we realize. We look at the budget, the number of people, the available volunteers, the time, the experience, the opportunities, or whatever else we think we need. We take inventory and conclude that there isn't enough.

Sometimes we're right.

Five loaves and two fish really weren't enough. But our inventory doesn't tell us the whole story.

Abundance isn't pretending our limitations aren't real. It isn't believing everything will work out exactly as we want it to. And it certainly isn't assuming God is going to give us everything we ask for. I think abundance is much simpler than that.

What Jesus provides will be enough for what Jesus asks.

Sometimes He provides it before we move. Sometimes we find it along the way. And sometimes we don't recognize the provision until we look back. The Israelites couldn't gather tomorrow's manna today. The disciples couldn't see thousands of meals in five loaves and two fish. The seventy-two couldn't pack everything they would need for the places Jesus was sending them.

They had to go with what they had.

I wonder how often we're waiting to have enough before we move. Enough money, enough people, enough certainty, enough answers, enough evidence that whatever we're considering is actually going to work. We want enough for the journey. Jesus often seems more interested in giving us enough for the next step.

And that brings me back to the harvest. We can look around and see plenty of reasons to believe people aren't interested in Jesus anymore. We can point to skepticism, disappointment with the Church, changing culture, declining attendance, or any number of things and conclude that the opportunities just aren't there anymore.

Then Jesus says, "*The harvest is plentiful.*"

I've spent enough time in the harvest to believe Him.

The problem may not be that there isn't enough happening. We may simply not be seeing what is already there. So instead of asking, "Do we have enough?" I think I'm learning to ask a different question:

"What haven't we noticed yet?"

There may already be manna on the ground. There may already be something in our hands Jesus can use. There may already be someone waiting to welcome us. We won't always know before we go.

The seventy-two didn't, and they went anyway.

And they came home with stories to tell.