

## “God’s Abundance”

*Exodus 16:2-15, Jonah 3:10-4:11, Matthew 20:1-15*

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**Prayer for Understanding** Eternal Spirit, you flow through the ages from the pages of Scripture, healing with your comfort, transforming with your challenge and inspiring to love extravagantly. Open us to perceive you. We pray in the name of the Living Word. Amen.

God designed the cosmos, so all can enjoy abundance. Alas, humanity often perceives scarcity and refuses to share. God is infinite in forgiveness. Alas, humanity often seeks to be vindicated and get revenge. God gives blessings to all. Alas, humanity often devises complex systems, requirements, and religions for one to be blessed. God gives resurrection, eternal life to everyone. Alas, humanity often tries to limit, restrict, and exclude.

Walter Brueggemann’s theology of scarcity versus abundance focuses on the structural conflict between the "myth of scarcity" which drives anxiety, accumulation, and greed, with the biblical "liturgy of abundance" which proclaims that God’s creation provides more than enough for all, if we share. Walter wrote an essay entitled *The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity* and a book entitled *Grace Abounds: God's Abundance against the Fear of Scarcity*. The *Myth of Scarcity* is that the world operates under a false, engineered narrative of insufficiency. The narrative began in Egypt. Pharaoh is the first biblical figure to say, "There is not enough," leading him to monopolize resources and enslave others. Believing that resources are scarce forces people into perpetual anxiety, fierce competition, greed, and an insatiable desire to accumulate wealth. Real-world scarcity is rarely a natural condition of creation, rather the result of human imposed power structures. Scarcity is an artificial power arrangement where a few take too much, leaving others with too little. The liturgy of abundance. Against the imperial narrative, the Bible offers a counter-testimony rooted in the generosity of the Creator. Creation begins as a song of absolute abundance and blessing, affirming that life is a gift designed to keep on giving. The manna economy in the wilderness, God provides manna as a free gift. Those who gather much have nothing left over, and those who gather little have no lack, illustrating an economy of trust rather than hoarding. The feeding miracles, Jesus reaffirms this baseline of abundance by feeding thousands with meager fish and loaves demonstrating that resources multiply when shared rather than sequestered. You are invited to engage in covenantal practices that overcome scarcity and free you from the deathly grip of accumulation. Keep sabbath, regularly cease labor to actively trust that the world will survive without our constant, anxious production. Practicing doxology, offer unmitigated praise to recognize God as the true source of all sustenance. Openhanded neighborliness, intentionally choosing community distribution and forgiveness over “extractive” market capitalism. Extractive market capitalism is an economic model where value, whether natural resources, labor, or digital data, is extracted by a narrow investor class with minimal compensation to the communities producing it. Unlike "inclusive" capitalism that rewards broad innovation, “extractive” capitalism drives inequality and wealth concentration through practices like predatory finance and resource depletion. Key mechanics of “extractive capitalism is resource extractivism, mining and drilling operations depleting natural resources for global supply chains, often funneling profits to distant corporations while pushing environmental and health costs onto local populations. Financialization shifts from creating productive value to extracting excessive, short-term profits through Wall Street manipulation, private equity buyouts, and stock dividends. Labor and data exploitation, many corporations rely on low-wage workers or monopolize user data and attention to generate concentrated wealth.

All three of the lectionary recommend scripture readings that contrast scarcity and abundance. These scriptures also reveal how humanity often complains when we perceive that others are getting something for nothing.

Exodus explains: **Exodus 16:2-15 NLT** “There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron. “If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,” they moaned. “There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.” Then the Lord said to Moses, “Look, I am going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day.

**I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “By evening you will realize it was the Lord who brought you out of slavery in the land of Egypt. In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because God has heard your complaints, which are against God, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?” Then Moses added, “The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for God has heard all your complaints against God. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us.” Then Moses said to Aaron, “Announce this to the entire community of Israel, ‘Present yourselves before the Lord, for God has heard your complaining.’” And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud. Then the Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’” That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?” they asked each other. They had no idea what it was. And Moses told them, “It is the food the Lord has given you to eat.”**

“Give us this day our daily bread” is a prayer of humble dependence, asking God to provide exactly what you need to survive and thrive on a daily basis. When one sincerely prays “Give us this day our daily bread”, they are praying to share, live in the present, and be grateful. God provides all that we need and more. There is more than enough for everyone, if we share. By asking for “daily” rather than “yearly” bread, it is an exercise in living one day at a time. It encourages us to trust God for today and not anxiously worry about tomorrow. It stops greed and enhances appreciation for the abundance of wonders that are free for all to enjoy. Spiritual bread is grace providing sustenance so we can live abundantly. Notice the all-inclusive corporate aspect of the prayer. “Give **us** this day **our** daily bread” instead of “Give me this day my daily bread”. No one is excluded. It is a prayer for universal flourishing.

The parable of Jonah is designed for you to see yourself as Jonah. You are to examine your life how do you resist God’s call to share God’s redeeming grace with all people?

God calls Jonah to confront their enemy by naming their fear, hate, violence, and lack of sharing. Jonah refuses and becomes depressed. Alone in nature, Jonah admits they are refusing to share God’s good news. Jonah repents, stops running away, is forgiven by God and is inspired to share God’s grace. Jonah goes to their enemy asking them to repent, to stop running away by doing evil. However, Jonah refuses to share that God will forgive and inspire goodness, because they want to see them excluded and punished. And mysteriously, God communicates grace and goodness through Jonah even though he is unaware of that aspect of their message. The enemy repents. Here we pick up the story in Jonah: **Jonah 3:10-4:11 NLT “When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, God changed God’s mind and did not carry out the destruction God had threatened. This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and they became very angry. So they complained to the Lord about it: “Did not I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry, sheer grace and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. Just kill me now, Lord! I would rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen.” The Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry about this?” Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as they waited to see what would happen to the city. And the Lord God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah’s head, shading them from the sun. This eased their discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But God also arranged for a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant so that it withered away. And as the sun grew hot, God arranged for a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on their head until they grew faint and wished to die. “Death is certainly better than living like this!” Jonah exclaimed. Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?” “Yes,” Jonah retorted, “even angry enough to die!” Then the Lord said, “You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. But Nineveh has**

**more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Should not I feel compassion for such a great city?"**

The parable concludes with a question for everyone. How will I have compassion for everyone? God loves everyone. God forgives, blesses, and is generous with everyone. Most of politics today are similar to Jonah's behavior. Instead of having compassion for all and serving for the wellbeing of all, each political party wants their party to win and everyone else to be punished. Instead of celebrating when something good is happening for everyone, some politicians get grumpy, angry that some people are enjoying life that they perceive they have not earned.

This parable implores you to examine your life for Jonah-like behavior. How do you flee from being gracious to certain people? Are you withholding compassion from some group? Is there a person that you would struggle to invite into your home as a guest? How are you complaining instead of serving? How do you want to be right instead of building community? How do you want your group to thrive at the expense of another? How do you become negative when things do not happen as you want them to happen? What other questions do you hear in this parable? What is the key question for you today?

God is generously giving a full day's pay, abundant eternal life, to everyone forever. Jesus explains in a parable in the good news of Matthew: **Matthew 20:1-15 NLT "For the Realm of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for their vineyard. They agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work. "At nine o'clock in the morning they was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. So they hired them, telling them they would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock they did the same thing. "At five o'clock that afternoon they was in town again and saw some more people standing around. They asked them, 'Why have you not been working today?' "They replied, 'Because no one hired us.' "The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.' "That evening they told the manger to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage. When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. When they received their pay, they grumbled to the owner, 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you have paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.' "The owner answered one of them, 'Friend, I have not been unfair! Did you not agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?'"** Another translation states, **"Are you envious because I am generous?"**

In this parable, all of us are workers who have worked all day or most of the day will receive a full day's pay. All of us will enjoy the glory of resurrection and eternity in heaven; and so will everyone, even those who do nothing. The question is will you grumble about this or celebrate God's grace? Are you jealous, or resentful, that people who are not doing anything good still are blessed by God? Comparison is the thief of joy. How do you fall into the trap of comparing yourself to others?

God is scandalously generous. The parable contrasts humanity's desire for fairness with the radical generosity of God's grace. It explores how God blesses all with abundance regardless of one's earned merit. How do you celebrate God's generous, excessive, abundance for all? Amen