

July 16, 2017  
2 Corinthians 9:6-10  
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## **“Enough to Share”**

**Good morning! I have a question for you this morning. I sure hope you know the answer, because I’m not sure that I do. I’ll share my reflections, but you’ll have to tell me yours after the worship service. Here’s the question: How much is enough? This isn’t a simple question. How much of *what* is enough? How much money, how much time, how much generosity, how much righteousness . . . what we think is “enough” of these things is going to have a lot to do with the choices we make about how we live our lives. If we are living our lives without asking How much is enough? then we are probably making some bad choices.**

**Money and time might seem like the easiest ones to figure out, because they can at least be measured and counted. And time should be the simplest, because we all have the same amount and we can’t get any more. There’s a lot of conventional wisdom out there about money and how much we need, but not a lot of agreement about a certain number. In fact, if you sit down with a financial advisor to make plans for your future, and you ask “How much money do I need?” they are likely to come back with a question like “How much do you think you need?”**

**There are all kinds of cartoons out there around the idea that money can’t buy happiness. Here’s just one of them. Most of us have probably felt like this guy, who says, “All I want is a chance to prove that money can’t make me happy.” When so much of our time is spent working for money or managing what we have worked for already, it’s pretty easy to assume that if we just had more of it, life would be easier and we’d be happier. It turns out that this is true to a point -- and then it isn’t. You’ve probably seen this graph or something similar. This is research which has been duplicated many**

times and done in countries around the world. And it's why Enough is more complicated than just finding a number. Happiness (defined simply in this sample as feeling happy) is correlated with income. When people in this country, or any country, do not have enough to meet their basic needs, happiness suffers and anxiety begins. But once you get to the point that your needs are met and there's some level of comfort and equality with your neighbors, happiness levels off and doesn't continue to rise as income rises. In fact, in some studies, happiness actually declines at the very highest levels of income. So how do we find that sweet spot where we have enough?

I said at the beginning that I don't think there's a simple answer to this questions, but I believe our text from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians has some wisdom to offer. Paul says, "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." It sounds like Paul is saying that we have enough when we have enough to *share*. Now, to be honest, in this portion of 2 Corinthians Paul is raising funds for the church in Jerusalem. In chapter 8, Paul tells the Corinthians that the church in Macedonia, despite their poverty and persecution have given with a wealth of generosity. Generosity is not calculated by a number that we give, it is calculated by our willingness to share what we have. The church in Macedonia, despite its poverty, had enough to share -- a wealth of generosity. The church in Corinth -- not so much.

This may not sound like it relates to the mission and possibilities I've been talking about and we've been hearing about from our ministry teams, but I think generosity and abundance have to be part of our mission. Without an attitude of generosity and abundance, we limit the possibilities of what we can do, and block the mission God want to accomplish through us. Paul tells the church at Corinth, "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us." It is generosity which produces the harvest of righteousness. When know when we have enough because we stop worrying about how much we need to keep and start wondering how much we can give to others.

As we prepare to come to the Lord's table this morning, I'd like us to consider generosity: not ours, but God's. Paul uses the imagery of

grain, and begins by pointing out that only if we plant abundantly will we have an abundant harvest. In verse 10, Paul reminds us that the seed and the grain and the harvest and the bread are all gifts from God. There will be enough bread and juice on the table for us today. Probably so much that we don't have to eat lunch after we leave -- don't worry, there'll be more to eat during the fellowship time But this bread and cup point to something much greater than themselves; this bread and cup are symbols of a generosity so great I can hardly comprehend it. They are reminders of Jesus Christ, a life that was lived for God's purpose and a life which was given for our salvation. The Church of the Brethren does not teach that these literally become the body and blood of Christ, but we remember Christ's covenant to bring us into his kingdom through these tangible things, this small reality which points to an eternal promise.

All who are in fellowship with God and their neighbor are welcome to the table of the Lord. I hope the implications of that aren't lost on us. Let me note a few of them: the only person who can determine whether I am in fellowship with God and neighbor is me. This means that in order to come with a clear conscience, I need to be self-aware enough to confess if there are relationships which are out of order, and humble enough to go to God or go to other people and try to fix it. That is what the Brethren mean when we talk about the priesthood of all believers: no priest or pastor or bishop is going to hear your confession or absolve you from having to make it right with God and your neighbor. If you are mature enough to commit to follow Jesus, then you have responsibility for that relationship, and your relationship to your sisters and brothers in Christ. That is one of the commitments we make as disciples, and which we re-commit to every time we eat this bread and drink from this cup.

The body of Christ is represented by the bread of communion, but the body of Christ is also the people who come to the table: we are Christ's hands and feet who do Christ's work in the world. None of us have earned an invitation to this table. It is a gift which is offered to each one of us, to all the believers who came before us, and the believers who will come after us. It is a gift which was offered while we were still sinners, and given with the knowledge that we still sin and fall short of God's will for us. However imperfectly we individually or corporately represent the body of Christ, we are still

**invited to come. Not because we are worthy, but because we are God's children. There is enough. There is enough for us; there is enough for our neighbors; there is enough to share with everyone.**