

## So that everyone has enough

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“The one who had much didn’t have **too** much,  
and the one who had little... **didn’t** have too little.”

Paul is about to send a **team** to Corinth... lead by young **Titus**...  
the trip is part of a massive Empire-wide **fundraising** campaign  
to help Christians in **Jerusalem**...struggling to keep the faith **alive**...

Now, we **already** know the church in **Corinth**... Paul’s writing to...  
tend toward **complacency** in many things...They’re comfortable, self-  
**absorbed** and **inwardly** focussed. Paul...is not **impressed**...

He’s concerned about their lack of **engagement** with issues facing the wider  
Christian community. In his **frustration** Paul resorts to  
irony and sarcasm in his letters to the Corinthians...

Remember in his **first** letter...so they’ll take a long hard **look**...  
at their arrogance and hypocrisy...Paul appeals to the Corinthian’s **pride**  
and **vanity**...saying what terrific **examples**...of Christian discipleship they  
are...

Paul wants them to **feel** the barb in his praise...

By the time he writes this **second** letter...he’s got them **worried**...  
And Paul takes **advantage** of this...in his **second** letter

you Corinthians are already **well** to the fore in **every** good Christian quality  
- you have faith, you can even express it in **words**;  
you have knowledge, and enthusiasm  
and I know your love for Titus and me...

Um...

so maybe you could just add **generosity**... to your long list of **virtues**?

Now I don’t want you to read as an **order**...Paul writes them...  
it’s only a **suggestion**...because of the generosity he’s seen in other parts of  
the church.

You say you **love**...well here’s a concrete way to **prove** it.

And Paul isn’t afraid to set them up for a guilt trip...  
why...do you think **Jesus** held anything back? It’s simply a question of  
**fairness** – a fair **balance**...between...  
your present **abundance**...and Jerusalem’s **need**.

Oh, and don’t get the wrong idea...Paul says...I’m not asking you to give  
more than you can **afford**...I don’t want to leave you in distress...  
What **God’s** looking for...is our **willingness** to give as much as we **can** –  
**Nobodies** asking you.... to give what you haven’t **got**.

And Paul **knows** the Corinthian’s... will be asking...  
what’s in it for **them**... **Don’t** worry... he says...  
it’s all a matter of share... and share **alike**. At present **your** plenty  
should supply **their** need...and then maybe at some **future** time...  
**their** plenty might supply yours.

Swings and **roundabouts**...

And for **extra** measure...Paul quotes a **proof** text...  
Just like God instructed the **Israelites**... back in the days of the **Exodus**  
**you** know...when they were gathering up the manna in the **dessert** –  
as a rule of **thumb**...

‘Those who gather much should have nothing left **over**,  
and those who gather little...should have no **lack**’

Paul doesn’t mention money...at **all**. He’s trying to teach them an attitude  
of mind appropriate for bearers of the good news...a way of being...a way  
of seeing the world...consistent with Jesus’ teaching...  
And the early church in Jerusalem actually **did**! ...

They shared everything they had in common...  
so everyone had enough...

'Those who gather much should have nothing left **over**,  
and those who gather little...should have no **lack**'

To do this they chose an attitude of **abundance**...rather than **scarcity**.  
loaves and fishes...if we all share what we have...there **will** be enough!

From the very **beginning**...the **Jesus** movement formed **communities**  
who **shared** what they had with one **another**...  
so no one would have too **much**...or too **little**.

there's **enough** to go around...**we** don't need to hoard our riches...

Notice this attitude is a **decision**...a **choice**...  
based on the providence and **creativity**... of God...

You and I can **choose** to live with the notion of **abundance**  
or we can choose to live with the fear of **scarcity**.  
Give **freely** of what we have... or hold on to it **tightly**.  
**Relax**... in the freedom of **enough**...or **stew** in the clamour for **more**.  
To gather **in**... or give **away**.

Paul reminds them...reminds **us**...it's a **Jesus** sort of perspective...  
a **display** of grace and **faith**...to give what we **can**  
so others can have enough...

**knowing** that in the giving **and** the receiving  
we are truly **blessed**... by the generosity of **God**. [pause]

It's **fundamental** to the Christian faith isn't it...that **all** we have...  
our **life** in all its fullness...the earth and all that **sustains** us...  
are a gift from God. A gift **freely** given in love...not earned ...  
not our **right**...not even what we **deserve**...but a gift of God's grace.  
We **know** there's enough food in the world for everyone...  
it just isn't **distributed** fairly...

**Proportionality** was **always** God's will! Remember the **manna in the desert**? No guilt trips...no **percentages**...just keep things **fair**!  
The **earliest** Christian communities...were offering the world  
an alternative way...to re-imagine the distribution of wealth...  
a new way to imagine their **economy**...  
a **new** way to ensure the wellbeing of **everyone**!

God's **desire** for the shalom of world.

'Those who gather much should have nothing left **over**,  
and those who gather little...should have no **lack**'

It's the **accounting** practise of **Shalom**...so everyone has enough.  
A **sliding** scale... depending on how much you **have**...and how much you  
need...not a **fixed** percentage like the old 10% **Temple** tax.

And if the Corinthians are selfish enough to ask...  
what have they ever done for **us**...?!!!  
why should we care about those guys in **Jerusalem**?

Well, Paul says...it's not **about** what **they've** done for **you**...

it's about what **God** has **already**... done for you! [pause]

And this **earth** shattering concept of **proportionality**...  
this revolutionary idea of **fairness** and **justice**...  
in the distribution of wealth...would be practised by Christians down  
through time...**wouldn't** it?

*Discussion/feedback*

When did we lose **sight** of fairness and justice?

The prophet is the one who speaks the truth to power...  
And seventeen hundred years ago...  
when the Roman Emperor **Constantine** declared...  
that **everyone** in his Empire...must become a Christian...  
precisely at that **time**...the Church was **seduced** into  
taking on the trappings of Empire **itself** ...and we lost our prophetic  
ability... we could no longer speak the truth to **power**...

because we **were** the power! [pause]

You probably know that today in Aotearoa New Zealand... the **gap** between rich and **poor** is nearly **twice** what it was... thirty years ago.

**Twice as many children** today are living in **poverty**... A Bank CEO in New Zealand can earn more than **four million a year**? That's two **thousand** dollars an **hour**.

That's a hundred and forty **times** what the person who cleans their **office** would earn on the minimum **wage**.

New Zealand used to be such a fair and just nation...didn't it? How did the gap get so **big**?

Well... in the 80's the top **tax** rate was cut in half...from 66 to 33 percent. At the same **time**... welfare benefits were cut by 20%. What happened to the Christian concept of fairness? What happened to the Christian vision of Shalom?

**Inequity** in the distribution of resources... actually **leads** to the **dismantling**...of Shalom...of **wellbeing** **especially** for the most **vulnerable**...

Other countries with **greater** equity than New Zealand have fewer people with mental **health** issues, fewer with obesity, diabetes, rheumatic fever...fewer people in **prison**.

Most comfortably off people see the problem at arms' length... but when kiwi kids are allowed to **continue** to live in poverty... it's actually **more** costly... for all of us!

Did you see the *Who am I?* documentary... two **weeks** ago. Did you **hear** the statistically proven **connection** between growing up in poverty and health problems in later life?

In the **coming** of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost**...

a **radically** egalitarian **movement**...was **born**...one that would pick **up** the prophetic ball Israel had dropped...and **run** with it. A prophetic movement that would **advocate** for the most vulnerable... for women and children and slaves... why do you think the church **grew** so quickly?

Just in case you haven't noticed...the church can no longer claim to be in power – Christendom is long gone...we are once more on the margins... But **that** is really good **news**...because the Christians can now exercise their prophetic calling once again...we **can** speak the truth to power... we're **perfectly** positioned...for prophetic **advocacy** on behalf of the most **vulnerable** in Aotearoa. And there's more good news...we are **doing** it... Two weeks ago the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services released its sixth *Vulnerability Report* – **demanding** government **action** to reduce the **poverty** gap in Godzone!

Presbyterian and Baptist, Catholic, Anglican, and Salvation Army are working hard for more **compassionate** government policies...to offer re-imagine a radically egalitarian **society**...a **Jesus'** movement **economy**.

The difference is that these people are doing it on the ground...at the coalface...

I'm suspicious of anyone who decries world hunger but has never offered to buy someone lunch who can't afford it, who endorses love for the world but doesn't sit down to eat dinner with their family, I'm wary of anyone who espouses our treaty commitments without working to ensure justice for tangetawhenua.

It's a dark echo of our colonial past that those in New Zealand who are most vulnerable are Maori children and single mothers...generations lacking fairness and justice...and showing in the statistics today...

But if you and I begin to **raise** our prophetic voice...in Eastbourne and in Alicetown...and Randwick and Petone...maybe those who now sow in tears might reap with songs of joy.