

## **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And 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. As it is written,

‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;

his righteousness endures for ever.’

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

### **Sermon**

I used to work with a farmers market, which was a really amazing blessing in my life. These small farmers and gardeners that would come to sell their crops at the market had an incredible outlook on life, and I learned an awful lot from them.

One of the things I learned about was about saving seed: They taught me that it was crucial to always choose your seeds from the crops that showed the traits that you wanted to continue in next years’ crop.

I got started in saving garlic from year to year. And I learned that a head of garlic can vary an awful lot. They can have tiny little cloves that are barely worth peeling, or they can be prone to sprout too early and be hard to store for later. Some are too pungent and others don’t have flavor enough. But, there were also a few that grew nice big heads with delicious cloves that would last all the way until next year.

These farmers taught me that most people’s tendency was to eat the best looking bulbs first, or to sell them off at the market as fast as they could. But, the really wise farmers knew that these were the bulbs you wanted to save for next year’s seed.

They knew that if you chose to invest the best you had in next year's crop that your investment could pay off for generations to come. They found that each year, their best kept getting better as their crops grew more and more adapted to the ground in which they grew. And when they committed the best that they had to serve as seed, they saw their gardens flourish for generations.

And the wisest of those farmers knew that saving the best seeds was a small price to pay as well. That, even though it felt like a big sacrifice to not be able to sell the best that they had, that the sacrifice of one good fruit for seed could go an awful long way.

- Those garlic bulbs I grew could give up to 20 cloves in just one head
- If you've ever carved a pumpkin, you've seen how many seeds can come out of the goop inside those jack-o-lanterns (an average pumpkin has over 500 seeds, more than any of us would ever plant in a garden)
- Those big sunflowers that you see dried up in your neighbors yard, each one can have between 1,000 and 2,000 seeds on just one flower
- And every good kernel of corn that you don't eat, is another seed that you have saved to grow a whole other corn stalk in the year to come.

And I have found that the same is true outside of the garden too.

- Each time that we choose not to take the path of immediate gratification, we are making an investment that will grow abundantly into the future that God will choose.
- Each time that we refuse the selfish choice, we create the possibility of generosity and find that God gives us more than we need.
- When we set aside one good pumpkin from our patch, we can grow a whole new patch. We nurture the conditions for God to grant us enough for us to share with those in need.

We have a choice for how to use so many different seeds.

- The seeds of our bank accounts
- And the work of our hands
- The seeds of property, or the homes we live in.
- The seeds of our talents or the relationships we have nurtured
  - All of this can grow.
- And in the midst of election season, we should recognize that the ballots we cast every November can be a seed as well. The choices we make with how we use our vote will influence the crops we grow for years to come. They will affect the seeds that we pass down to our children. And they will determine the harvest that we have to bring back to God in our offerings.

So remember, the seeds that have been shared with us are all a gift from God. And they have been passed down to us by those who went before, and thought about our welfare in the choices they made. Now, we hold them in our hands and we have the choice of what to do with them. We can choose that they are just for us and eat them, we can sell them off for profit. Or we can choose those with the traits we want to see thrive and flourish in our world, and save them for planting, letting God continue to work through their growth, until everyone has something to eat and everyone has something to plant for the year to come, and everyone has something that they too can share with their neighbor and thus live out the call of Christ.

For when God held the seed in his hand, he did not take it for himself, but he scattered it both here and abroad, not refusing it to anyone. He gave it to the poor, because he wanted to provide for those in need. And he planted it, to grow again, so that His righteousness might endure for ever. Thanks be to God. And Amen.

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