I ask your help in conducting an informal poll this morning. By a show of hands: How many think this glass is half empty? How many think the glass is half full? How many think it doesn’t matter, because there is enough to fill the glass again and again?

The perspective we bring to daily life matters. Our perspective affects how we think about and connect with God, ourselves, and others. A scarcity view can lead us to worry and be anxious, fretful and guarded, preoccupied and focused inwardly on ourselves. Scarcity thinking convinces us that we don’t and won’t have enough; that we aren’t and can’t ever be enough. Scarcity thinking is based on a theology of LACK.

Author Bebe Campbell puts it like this: “Some of us have that empty-barrel faith. Walking around expecting things to run out. Expecting that there isn’t enough air, enough water. Expecting that someone is going to do you wrong. The God I serve told me to expect the best, that there is enough for everybody.” (Bebe Moore Campbell, Singing in the Comeback Choir. NY: Putnam, 1998, 131).

“Enough for everybody” – that is about a theology of abundance. The abundance outlook leads to our thinking, feeling, and acting grateful and generous. Abundance thinking deepens our ability to trust God that we have enough and are enough, because God has already declared in love that this is true.

Today’s gospel reading is often called the parable of the Sower. “Listen! A sower went out to sow”. Right away, the main action is “sowing seed”; our attention is drawn to the sower. But quickly the story moves on to talk about the four different kinds of ground where the seed is sown. So sometimes we call it the parable of the Soils. Focusing on the richness or aridity of the dirt, we evaluate and judge the quality of each type of soil, and the likelihood that it will yield anything from the seed. Or, for those readers who just want to know what the bottom line is - what kind of return we can expect from our planting efforts - we could imagine this story focused on the size of the bumper crop. We might believe this is really the parable of the Hundredfold Harvest. This would have been an incredible harvest. Even if the harvest were only thirtyfold, this story would end with a miracle. Sevenfold meant a good year for a farmer, and tenfold meant true abundance. Thirtyfold would feed a village for a year and a hundredfold would let the farmer retire to a villa by the Sea of Galilee (Feasting, p.236, Talitha Arnold).

Jesus’ parables were teaching tools, meant to give his listeners a glimpse into the nature of God and God’s kingdom. There was always some element of surprise in a parable, something to catch the hearer off-guard. That is how the listener’s heart is broken open to imagine the world as God sees it.

So what about the sower in this parable? Notice, there is no mention of the sower preparing the ground – no tilling, no weed killer or fertilizer, no rows carefully laid out.
Yet the sower holds nothing back. Can you imagine sowing seed with such abandon—tossing it in every direction, with hope, confidence and indiscriminate generosity? The sower just walks and sows, strides and throws, moves forward and scatters the seed. This sower is unconcerned about whether there will be enough seed to produce a harvest. With his extravagant, wild flinging of seed, the rocks, the birds, the thin soil, the thorns and whatever else might get in the way just don’t matter.

What are we to make of this haphazard, carefree and casual approach to sowing? First off: with God there is always enough – more than enough. God is an extravagant giver; some would even say wasteful. Remember Jesus uses parables to help his listeners (us) understand what the kingdom of God is like. These stories are not meant to dispense conventional agricultural wisdom, or even encourage the good works of faithful church folks. This is not about making sure that our efforts and timelines will “pay off” according to our strategic plans and well-calculated expectations. In this parable there is no 100% guaranteed return on your investment “or your money back”.

This parable invites us to dream of a world different from the one in which we currently live, by using and stretching our spiritual imaginations. This parable invites us to open ourselves to be astonished. Astonished at the ways God showers us with grace. God is remarkably freewheeling in throwing the seed in every direction, into any old nook and cranny, because apparently there is plenty of seed to spare. Maybe God even likes to see what can grow where it’s not expected, or where it’s thought nothing can grow.

The first rule to remember about kingdom living is that God loves us lavishly right where we are, and deeply wants us to discover the abundant life of trust in God, and the joy of loving and serving our neighbor. And lest we forget, God’s loving us right where we are is not the same as God’s being content to leave us at that point unchanged. God dreams of far more for us and for this world! God’s aim is restoration and transformation.

In God’s kingdom – that is - where God’s ways of mercy, peace and justice are lived out – love is so abundant and strong that God empowers us to stand against the fear and scarcity that drive prejudice, greed, and violence. Because God loves us so extravagantly, God wants us to strive for the equality and dignity of all people. Because God loves us, God wants us to share generously what we have, so that everyone will have enough to meet their needs. Because God loves us unconditionally, there is enough. We are enough.

God’s love is living and active enough to help shape us into the people God has created us to be. Steeped in God’s love, we can learn to “waste ourselves” in loving. We can learn to throw grace around like there is no tomorrow. Why? Because there is a tomorrow, and it belongs to the God of abundance.
Each of us has fields to walk in and seeds to sow. We are called to follow our extravagant God in doing that – sowing seeds of love, grace, and mercy. This parable gives us the wonderful gift of perspective. We don’t need to worry about tomorrow’s outcome. Because of God’s unmatched love for us, we are free to love lavishly, give generously, and care courageously. The kingdom of the Divine Sower is known by the abundant living where goodness never fails, love never runs out, and hope springs eternal.

Friends, our Lord invites us to IMAGINE a world like that. God already has. Let anyone with ears, listen!