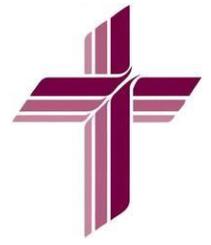




# ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

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Pastor Daniel Kempin

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Dear Co-workers in the Kingdom,

There is a short story by Jesse Stuart titled "This Farm For Sale." It is the tale of a family that has become sick of old fashioned farm life and dreams of the modern conveniences that can be found in town. When the realtor lists the farm for sale, he describes the unique beauty of the farm in such a vivid way that the family sees, as if for the first time, the abundance in which they were living. As you might expect, they decided to stay.

Abundance can be tricky that way. It is easy to focus on one thing you don't have in such a way that it blinds you to everything else. I recently read of a survey in which 1 in 5 people said the best way to get rich is to win the lottery. As if money alone were the sole measure of wealth!

So what do you think is the secret to wealth and abundance?

As a believer in Jesus, I hope you realize that wealth and abundance are gifts from the Lord. That's what the scripture teaches. But do you realize how often the scriptures teach us *how* to be wealthy? Did you know the Bible teaches us how to live in abundance?

It's true. God wants us to have abundance and is willing to show us how. Jesus even said, "*I have come that they might have life and abundance.*" (John 10: 10)

Be careful, though. This is not some manipulation of God that we could categorize as "prosperity theology." God's desire for our wealth has some important qualifiers:

-The wealth God gives may look a little different than what you had in mind. That does not make it any less true abundance, but if we are not prepared to see what He gives rather than what we want, we can miss out.

-God won't give wealth to those who are not prepared to handle it. This is not a merit based program but common sense. Just as a responsible father would not let his child operate a power tool unless he is convinced they know how to do so safely, so our Father in heaven will not give things into your life that will only cause harm. It is as Jesus says, '*If you cannot be trusted with little, who will entrust you with much?*' (Luke 16:10)

-The place of earthly abundance is never more important than the call to follow Jesus. Jesus said clearly that whoever wants to follow Him must "*deny himself, take up his cross, and follow.*" (Mt. 16:24). Thus the Lord can only give abundance to those who are willing to give it up, or else He would be giving them a stumbling block.

-One of the key purposes of wealth, which is true in every case, is giving.

So let's begin with the premise that God wants you to be blessed and joyful. Would you be interested in hearing what He has to say on the subject? Good! This will be the subject of our stewardship campaign for this year--studying from God's Word the "Art of Abundance."

We think it is important to understand that our stewardship campaign is not a fundraiser, but an opportunity to intentionally learn what God's Word teaches on this subject, and while it will culminate with the opportunity to turn in a pledge for congregational ministry support on Loyalty Sunday, the focus is not on what is given, but on how we give it.

To begin, please consider the scripture in **Matthew 6:31-34**, especially where Jesus says, "*but seek first [your heavenly Father's] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you as well.*"

And consider: The Lord will never put earthly blessings ahead of His kingdom, but if your priorities are where they should be, He desires to add these things to your life.

Your servant in Christ,

-Pastor Kempin