

Spread the Love Around

[Text -Acts 2:37-47]

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Having grown-up with five sisters and two brothers, I learned early in life about the importance of sharing. Fortunately, both my parents were pretty good role models. My dad was an entertaining extravert, who spontaneously invited people to “stay for supper” if they happened to be at our house around dinner time. My mom was the more reserved, yet very resourceful parent, who could make a meal intended for ten people magically multiply, to feed as many people as were present. [Though as I think about it, she did serve a lot of loaves of bread and fish....]

Anyway, being part of a large family with an open-door policy, certainly helped my siblings and me learn some valuable Life lessons about hospitality, generosity, and sharing. And being part of a *Church* Family certainly reinforces those honorable values. They're the kind of values that most of us would want our children to cultivate. They're also the values practiced throughout the early Christian community, as described in this morning's New Testament reading from *Acts* Chapter 2: “The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and companionship, to the breaking of bread and the praying of prayers....All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They would sell their possessions and goods, and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread in their homes, and shared their food with glad and generous hearts...”

That's a truly inspiring depiction; yet it makes me wonder, "What would happen if we tried this approach in our society today? It sounds a little naive, and a lot like *socialism*! And since our lawmakers are already working diligently to repeal and replace that diabolical socialistic plan known as "Obama Care" it seems highly unlikely that an even *broader* approach to sharing our wealth and resources would be taken seriously. So many so-called "Christian Values" legislators are pushing so hard to cut spending to programs like Medicaid and Meals-on-Wheels, and to increase it for military programs. This clearly contradicts Christ's teaching that we reject the gods of war and materialism, and that we recognize that the genuine welfare of any community is gauged by the welfare of its most vulnerable members.

Now before anyone reports me for preaching Socialism and Welfare, let me say that I'm simply reporting on how things were in the early Christian Church. In those days, everyone gave everything they had to the community, to be distributed according to each one's needs. I'll admit that this is an extremely difficult Biblical concept - not in a complex theological sense, but in regards to the social and political positions of many American Christians. It's particularly problematic in regard to our *faith*: again, not our theological faith-system, but our actual faith and *trust* in the Holy One - and in one another. For example, if I gave everything I own to the Church, could I trust that *you* would take care of me? [Well, *maybe*....] Yet if I were to divest myself of all my worldly possessions, could I truly trust that *God* would take care of me? [Well... that might be a bit more difficult!]

Regardless of how you or I might feel about it, the call to share *all* our stuff is right there in the Scriptures; and it's also the way in which the early Church operated. Furthermore, there are Christian communities in the world today that actually strive for this ideal. So, what keeps us from doing the same? Personally, I think there are two primary factors: our over-whelming *appetites*, and our

under-whelming *faith*. In the United States, we consume an absurdly huge proportion of this world's resources. We spend billions on diet pills, while millions die from malnutrition and starvation. The majority of us are wealthy beyond imagination, compared to the majority of the world's population. Our corporations span the globe to find people who will work for pennies to make our clothes, cosmetics and computers. Then there's our mind-blowing military budget, which is *more* than the other top 18 countries in the world combined!

There is a definite correlation between our over-whelming appetite for weapons and power, money and more stuff - and our underwhelming faith. Again, I don't mean "faith" as a complex theological understanding, but as a basic and genuine *trusting* in the Holy One - and in the Holy One's care and provision for our lives. Our currency may say "In God We Trust", yet we keep-on printing and piling-up more and more of that money, just in case God lets us down. Our President may proclaim that "We will be protected by God"; nevertheless, we better make sure that we have enough fire-power to blow-away anyone who threatens or frightens us.

This practice of stockpiling weapons and wealth belies a basic trust: that our Gracious Heavenly Parent fills the earth with sufficient resources to feed and clothe, house and secure us *all*! For as Jesus shows us, if we really understand our relationship with the Holy One - and truly trust it - then we will spread the love around, and make sure that everyone gets what he or she needs to live!" The beautiful thing that happens when people are willing to share, is that tension and strife within our homes, our communities and our world begins to diminish; and we discover that there really is plenty for all.

But back to reality.... You and I can't expect rich and power-hungry politicians to put the needs of the poor and the powerless

above their own wants and desires. Fortunately, however, we *can* expect people like Andrea and organizations like Edna House to use the resources that we share today, to help and potentially save the lives of women who struggle with addiction. We can partner with other area faith communities to keep our food banks well supplied, and to provide hot meals to those who need them. Through our words and our actions, we can faithfully proclaim the Good News of Divine compassion and provision for all people. And like those first Christians, we can continue to pray and break bread together; sharing our food - and our *lives* - with glad and generous hearts!