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“You will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God” (Acts 5:40).

Acts 5:34-42; John 6:1-15

Scarcity can serve as both a reminder of our dependence on one another and an opportunity for generosity that creates community. The familiar scenes of long lines of cars waiting for food assistance this past year have been tragic in a land of plenty but also reassuring that there were people able and willing to provide for others. What is most troubling is how fragile the social compact has become and that social inequality is widening between those with resources and so many others desperate for basic necessities of food, housing and security reminiscent of Depression era America a century ago.

The Lectionary returns to the multiplication of bread in the wilderness as a vision of the Beloved Community promised by the Resurrection of Jesus. His abundant life will be the measure of love in this world and the next. Scarcity becomes a feast with leftovers as Jesus invites the crowd to imitate a child who offered his meagre provisions to others. What greater miracle could match this moment when everyone did the same? Hearts opened first, then a banquet appeared from guarded bags and clutched cloaks. Individual survival gave way to communal need. Everyone had their fill and community was affirmed as the foundation of civilization and the possibility that strangers are really neighbors waiting to be welcomed.

The Gospel is not a pious ideal but a revolution and a counter cultural challenge to economic systems that balance scarcity and production to create profit from resources that already belong to everyone and labor that must sacrifice integrity and fairness to survive market forces and investor expectations. By feeding the hungry Jesus threatened Roman control of land and food held at sustenance levels to keep a conquered empire dependent and compliant.

Celebrating Passover in the wilderness with 5,000 hungry people challenged the official observance in Jerusalem by reenacting the original escape from slavery to freedom led by Moses and the manna in the desert. Rome and the temple establishment took note of Jesus of Nazareth. The high priest Caiaphas knew that it was better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to perish (John 11:50) and Pilate was ready to execute an innocent man rather than have reports go to Rome that he had been soft on a local subversive.

The universal story of power, money and control was exposed when Jesus cleansed the temple. His execution brought love and death together in the decisive conflict that would decide the fate of the world and the direction of history. Divine mercy met sin and death on the cross and God's verdict was an empty tomb and the breath of the Holy Spirit resuscitating human hope in the crucified and risen Christ as the path to a new creation with a divine destiny. We are witnesses to these things and have been sent to tell the world not to be afraid because there is enough of everything for everyone.

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