

Sermon Transcript

Enough Cake for Everyone

Luke 24:48-49 and Acts 2:37-47 | Trinity Sunday | May 26, 2024 | John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

The month of May is the official kickoff to birthday season in the Klawiter house starting with Oliver on May 1st (**Oli**). With 8 kids, everyone has special requests for their birthday meal and especially for dessert. Oli prefers Tootsie pops, in case you were wondering. **(slide of blow pop)**

You might be wondering, how does it go to divide up a cake in my house? Does everyone get along? Do people insist on bigger pieces than others? Does the person with the birthday get the biggest piece and, potentially, first dibs at leftovers?

Yes. It can get a bit heated and there is always portion comparing that will happen. Rarely does this process not include the statement that “[insert brother or sisters name] got a bigger piece than me!”

Yet, the dessert is a privilege and usually, after a few bites, the arguing stops and everyone is quite content with whatever is on their plate. Usually.

The parenting skill of teaching fairness and equality is great—but it gets thrown out the window the second one kid gets a bigger piece of cake.

For the summer, we’ll be reading the book of Acts. As a companion, I’ll be reading Acts: Catching up with the Spirit, by Luther Seminary professor Matthew Skinner.

In his reflection on this passage at the end of Acts 2, he said:

“When I teach in churches about this passage, someone invariably asks, ‘Was that real? Did all of that sharing really happen?’

He goes on to say, “Those questions don’t always arise when we read stories about a sick person being healed or someone hearing directly from God in a vision. Maybe it’s easier for some of us to accept stories about miracles than one about Christians taking care of one another in such self-giving and harmonious ways.”

Our current cultural climate is so shocked by the sharing in this story that we think it’s a greater miracle than turning water into wine or healing a man born blind. It’s like everyone gets cake and nobody is comparing their pieces to one another!

Why does Professor Skinner get this reaction?

Because sharing our stuff is hard. We’re not good at it.

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Even organizations with great intentions that are known as places of caring come up short.

For example, the seminary that I attended, and ironically, the place that Professor Skinner teaches, made the news for all the wrong reasons this week:

VIDEO, then slide of woman in dorm

It's hard to hear this. But it's not hard to believe why Luther Seminary decided to separate from the partnership when facing criticism.

How do we love our neighbor when it feels like we have to pick and choose between our neighbors?

I debated whether to show this clip because it doesn't put the Lutheran church in the best light.

Yet, much like the book of Acts, the story of God's people as written in the Bible rarely features just the "good stuff." We can learn from stories where things don't always go the right way.

As hopeful and exciting as today's story is, as Luke writes the book of Acts, he also shares when things don't go well. We learn about what happens when people don't share or fully invest in the community. We hear about rivalries, disagreements, and persecution.

Being the church isn't easy. It never was and I venture to guess, it never will be.

This was certainly a learning experience.

Yet this story about Luther Seminary makes me wonder.

What could have gone differently?

In a neighborhood with many "All are Welcome" signs (**SLIDE of sign**), why was the pushback strong enough to make the seminary change? Didn't the seminary anticipate that they'd get more angry responses from the county and alumni for NOT doing it? Why were they silent when asked for comment?

How might this decision affect fundraising and recruitment—if a place to learn how to be the church in the world misses an opportunity like this, what are we supposed to do?

It's been on my heart. As an alum, what can I do?

Like the Apostle Paul—who we won't hear from until Father's Day, I plan to write a letter to the seminary.

I'm sure they're hearing plenty of angry comments, but my letter will suggest a different way to look at the response to this.

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What if the seminary remembered their mission and values? What if they were reminded that what they're doing is bigger than who is at the seminary right now?

Consider all the alumni, many of whom are clergy here in the area. What if the seminary asked all of its alums to ask our churches to help? Help talk to the neighbor. Help serve at the dorm. Help as advocates to intervene or to be part of the solution to minimize the negative impacts that might be seen in the community. It might be too late, but what if the Seminary could remember that there's enough cake to go around and they don't have to be afraid?

You see, the church isn't just a few hundred people in the sanctuary today. Or the faculty, staff, and students currently at the school.

The church is a giant network. Spread across the planet—like the story of Pentecost. We care for each other and the world. That's not lip service—we live this.

I want Luther Seminary to know that they can lean into us. We can help. We can help you as you share of your abundance—in this case, quality and available dormitory space that could truly make a difference in the lives of those who stayed there.

I love the book of Acts because it's a reminder of the ways that we, the church, are dependent on each other to grow in faith and to care for one another.

This story of sharing sounds great to me. It inspires me. It gives me hope.

It's at the core of who we are as a church, right here at Faith.

We can relate to what Luther is experiencing because we were on a path to create a Sacred Settlement with Tiny Houses

When Covid happened, our momentum shifted. Things didn't go as planned, but the Spirit showed us different way to move forward as the church. We support Prince of Peace and Mosaic—where Sacred Settlements grew and flourish. If asked for help by Luther Seminary, I know that Faith would have responded.

When a neighbor is in need, this church is generous.

Earlier this month, we had a request from Washington County. Jenny Mason told us about a man who lost his job recently and his unemployment benefits aren't stretching enough to cover rent.

He has a new job, but his car broke down and, as Jenny said, "he's one of those individuals just a paycheck away from homelessness."

Is there ANY chance that Faith could help keep him in his apartment while Washington County walks alongside him to cover his other expenses?

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We asked if \$1,000 would be enough.

Wow! Just wow! That is a tremendous gift! (SLIDE of Jenny)

Our HOST team works so hard to help people stay housed, and sometimes we just don't have funding sources that work for folks like this gentleman.

I'm speechless, which doesn't happen very often. Thank you for cultivating the goodness and joy of generosity at Faith

When I dropped off the check at his apartment building, the woman working in the office let out an audible “yes!”—she was so excited to hear that he wouldn't be getting evicted and he found resources to stay in that community.

When we get asked to help, we respond. What opportunities are we being asked to help right now? Where might we be pushed?

I invite you to listen for opportunities that God is stirring up in our church. What does the Spirit have in store for Faith Lutheran? Where else can we respond with grace, love, and generosity?

When we turn to God, there's no hoarding of assets, or greed, or selfishness. When God is in charge, there's enough cake for everyone—in abundance. God's love grows when we give it to others. Amen.