"Treasure: The Power of the Shared Purse"
Acts 2:42-47

In the film *Tenzing*, we follow the grueling journey of the first two people to reach the summit of Mt. Everest—a feat previously thought impossible for human beings. What stands out most vividly in their story is not merely the technical triumph over snow and stone, but the bond forged between the two men. Despite coming from vastly different cultural backgrounds, they were united by a shared vision for which they were willing to dedicate everything. By pooling their resources, strength, and expertise, the impossible became possible.

The same was true of the early church.

They began as a small, persecuted group of nobodies. Their parent faith, Judaism, viewed them as a dangerous threat, while the Roman Empire saw them as subversives. Their numbers were so miniscule that no contemporary observer would have ever predicted the breathtaking expansion of Jesus' teachings far beyond the dusty provinces of Judea. Jesus' public ministry had lasted only three years and ended with a brutal, humiliating execution on a Roman cross. From a purely human perspective, the movement was dead on arrival.

Yet, the seed of a revolutionary global movement sprouted the moment people's hearts were transformed from fear into radical generosity. In today's passage, the author gives us a glimpse of that miraculous transformation. Listen to Acts 2:42–47:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 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, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

Even though gathering in the name of Jesus was unpopular and fraught with danger, the author of Acts provides a compelling summary of the early community's life to help readers recognize the profound beauty of belonging to Christ's body. The author of Acts includes several of these summary snapshots throughout Acts. They don't offer exhaustive historical details; rather, they give us a vivid picture of what human community looks like when it is fully animated by the Spirit of God.

These early believers were so captivated by God's love that they realized relationships are central to true life. They valued covenant community more than individual possessions or personal opinions. The Holy Spirit moved them to share open-handedly because they saw shared life as the path to abundance. Jesus could have performed

miracles in isolation and accomplished his mission alone, but he chose to build community to demonstrate to the world that self-giving love is the true key to human healing.

What is remarkable is how these pooled resources multiplied into vibrant ministries that carried the Good News across geographical, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. The early followers of Jesus didn't begin with fundraising committees, line-item budgets, or long-term strategic plans. Instead, they offered the world a compelling vision of authentic belonging. They believed in the mission so deeply that they invested all that they had and all that they were.

The odds were overwhelmingly stacked against them and their community life was far from perfect, yet they trusted in the power of shared life because they were experiencing its transforming power firsthand.

A couple of weeks ago, we explored how giving serves as an antidote to a mindset of scarcity. Today, I invite you to consider how pooling our resources is one of the most effective ways to heal our deep sense of modern isolation and division.

Because our treasure inevitably guides our hearts, practicing the communal sharing of our resources is essential. Giving through the church and community organizations moves us out of the illusion of self-sufficiency and into genuine connection. The core of community is active participation; it is virtually impossible to feel connected to others when we keep our lives, our talents, and our financial resources isolated in private silos.

Last year, when our congregation received a generous trust from Winston Pottle, our elders gathered in prayerful discernment. We collectively recognized that God was calling us to use those financial resources to strengthen human relationships and deepen community. We made an intentional commitment to put resources *behind* our relationships. In doing so, money is converted from a mere financial asset into a conduit for ministry—preventing us from simply writing checks without investing our hearts.

As author and researcher Dr. Brené Brown reminds us in *The Gifts of Imperfection*:

"We weren't created by God to be alone or to do everything by ourselves – we were created for relationship. In fact, people who take the approach of not needing or accepting help from anyone often have the same attitude toward God. But we can't live

our best lives without the presence, the encouragement, and sometimes even the challenge or correction that comes from other people who are a part of our lives."

All of us are born with an innate, God-given desire to make a difference and to know that our lives matter. Giving together and sharing our resources does not merely amplify our practical impact—it weaves our individual stories into God's ongoing story through the enduring bonds of Christian community.

To appreciate what happened in Acts 2, we have to realize that the early believers weren't just practicing a new social experiment or a clever financial model. They were doing something far deeper: **they were participating in the very life of God.**

From all eternity, God has never been a solitary, isolated ruler sitting alone in the universe. God is Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is an eternal movement of giving and receiving, a divine dance of unselfish love where every Person of the Trinity honors, pours into, and delights in the others. God's very nature *is* self-giving community.

When the Holy Spirit rested upon the early disciples at Pentecost, it didn't just give them a warm feeling; it invited them directly into that divine rhythm. The early church realized that if God's inner essence is shared life and total self-giving, then to follow Jesus meant stepping into that exact same flow.

When they opened their purses, sold their fields, and brought their bread to shared tables, they were taking the eternal, overflowing generosity of the Trinity and making it visible on earth.

This is the true secret of Christian community: **it is where we participate in God's own life.**

When we keep our resources, our gifts, and our hearts locked away in isolation, we stand on the shoreline of faith, watching the water from a distance. But when we pool

what we have—when we give, serve, and share open-handedly—we dive headfirst into the current of divine love. We move from being passive spectators of God's grace to active participants in God's ongoing work of redemption.

Giving together is not merely a practical response to human need; it is an act of holy communion. In the shared purse, in the broken bread, and in our joint investment in ministry, the boundary between heaven and earth dissolves. We stop living by the world's law of self-preservation and begin living by the kingdom's law of divine participation.

As we consider our giving and our commitment to this church and community, let us step out of the shadows of isolation. Let us open our hands and offer our lives into the shared circle of grace. For when we participate together, we don't just build a stronger church—we draw near to the heart of God, discovering that God's very life is flowing through us, in us, and among us. Amen.