

Resurrection life (Acts 4:32-35)

Maybe Easter is about not theory but practice.

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I'll never forget the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. I'm sure none of us will. Covid touched just about every area of our lives and left an indelible mark on us.

The first and most specific image burned into my brain isn't of people wearing masks or of faces in Brady Bunch squares on my laptop suddenly replacing all of my meetings at coffee shops and cafes. It's going into the grocery store and seeing the shelves bare in the toilet paper aisle. People were so scared by the possibility of supply-chain interruptions that they panic-bought toilet paper.

It's just what happens when we allow fear and scarcity to dictate our decision making, isn't it? We end up gathering and holding more than we need while others struggle to even find enough.

The book of Acts paints a drastically different picture of the early community of Jesus followers. The resurrection of Jesus had such a dramatic and profound impact on them that it caused them to think differently about everything—even their possessions. Their newfound faith in the risen Jesus cultivated a spirit of generosity and compassion so great that it became unacceptable for anyone in the community to go without their needs being met.

I find it fascinating that, when describing the earliest Jesus followers and what bound them together in community, Luke doesn't list the doctrinal positions they held in common. He doesn't describe them as gathering in a room to argue the finer points of theology so that, once they all agreed, they could really belong together. Instead, he says the testimony of the apostles to Jesus' resurrection led to real, practical, life-changing action in the world, as evidenced by the fact that "there was not a needy person among them."

Perhaps this is what Easter is actually all about, not theory but practice. It's the bursting into this world of a new creation that plays by different rules, where love calls us to work for the flourishing of every single person and of the whole creation.

I don't think our response to Acts ought to be to idealize the early church. It had its own set of issues and challenges. Instead, I think we are invited, even called, to join in and continue the work the early church began. To be an Easter people is not just to hold some specific theological convictions and defend them at all costs. To be an Easter people is to join in the work of stewarding a new creation that is already emerging, right here and now.