

St. Andrew's Sermons
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St. Andrew's Sunday 2022

We had a busy series of graduations in our house this week, with all our kids moving up to the next level. And one of the things that comes with that is they get to choose some of their classes next year. They have way more electives than I remember as a kid, which is great. But there's one that's missing. If I was in charge of school curriculum, I would make every kid take a course in economics. It's just so critical to understanding how the world works, and one of the most important concepts to grasp is scarcity.

When a product is scarce, or even just at risk of being scarce, it drives up the cost. There's too little supply to meet the demand, so prices rise. We see this all the time, and it's been especially visible these past few years. When supply chains were disrupted and everyone wanted a pandemic patio, the price of lumber skyrocketed. When the oil supply was cut off from Russia as a consequence of war, gas prices soared. When the stock of baby formula somehow dried up overnight, the cost of a single bottle went through the roof.

Some of that is just the nature of markets, but there's more to it than that. In times of crisis, scarcity can have a profound psychological impact. In those moments, it doesn't just drive prices; it fosters fear and greed. Companies sometimes take advantage of the situation, and people sometimes do crazy things, like buy toilet paper by the case. If things get really bad, it can even create social division and discord. Scarcity is a powerful force. Well, Jesus understood this, and he consistently preached an alternative way to look at the world. He focused not on scarcity but on abundance. The clearest example of that comes in today's gospel.

Five thousand people were gathered around Jesus. The sun started going down and the crowd got restless; it was suppertime and there was nothing to eat. The disciples can feel the tension rising; how in the world are they going to feed all these people? Into the scene comes Andrew, our patron saint. With him is a boy, who has five loaves of

bread and two fish. It's not much, but it's something. In that moment of scarcity, they see possibility.

I've preached before that there's two ways to look at what happens next. One is that Jesus miraculously multiplies the bread and fish. Human scarcity gives way to God's abundance. And that may be what happened. The other possibility is that this generous offering inspired the crowd, and they all reached into their hidden baskets and brought forth the food they had squirreled away for themselves – until lo and behold there was more than enough for everyone. That could have happened too, and it would be every bit as miraculous.

Either way, Jesus was trying to help them make this shift from scarcity to abundance. If you noticed in the story, it's almost a Eucharistic moment; Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks to God, and distributes it to everyone. This isn't an action based on naïve optimism. It is rooted in deep faith and trust, in gratitude for the knowledge that all we need is here already. The sustenance of life is everywhere. It grows up from the ground; it swims in the ocean; it rains down from heaven. And not only that. This story reminds us that we ourselves are built for abundance. We see it in Andrew and this boy, offering what they have. We see it in mothers sharing formula with their neighbors, in people organizing ride shares and car pools. Abundance is present every time we care for one another and trust in the providence of God. Call it the economics of the gospel, and it is a lesson that is always worth knowing. Amen.