



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

***April 25, 2010***  
***Fourth Sunday of Easter***  
***Mary Newbern-Williams***

RCL: Acts 9:36-43; Psalm 23; Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30  
LM: Acts 13:14, 43-52; Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5; Revelation 7:9, 14b-17;  
John 10:27-30

People who are known for abundant good works are honored and respected. When someone like that dies, the community spends considerable time and effort remembering the works and the person. The story of Tabitha (Dorcas) in the passage from Acts is one example. Tabitha is a selfless disciple who loves her fellow human beings. After she falls ill and dies, Peter arrives at her home in Joppa, and people show him the beautiful tunics Tabitha had made for them. Peter senses their mutual love and respect and takes the opportunity to perform a miracle, praying for her and telling her to get up. This miracle story parallels Jesus' miracles and brings us full circle as we see the beauty of good works and how people remember them. The miracle enables Tabitha to continue to help those whom she loves.

For many who live in poverty in our world, justice is a miracle. It may seem far off in the distance, too far removed from the truth of their lives. Bread for the World helps bring that distant reality to the forefront, seeking a life of plenty for those who have little. Bread for the World is much more than an organization committed to eliminating hunger and poverty. It is a justice movement that shows its commitment to love God's people by working to ensure a decent standard of living for all.

Assurance and deliverance are themes in Psalm 23, beginning with verse 1: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." In our world today, many people are wanting. They want enough food for their families to eat, they want a decent standard of living, and they want an opportunity for their children to live productive lives. God has not abandoned the impoverished of our nation and our world. God lifts up people and organizations to advocate for them, to work with them, to petition the appropriate political sources on their behalf, and to provide services that help them escape from the poverty cycle.

Another theme in Psalm 23 involves deliverance from our enemies. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (v. 5). The psalmist understands what pain, injustice, and dealing with enemies entail. Through it all God is present and working to create a better situation. Today poverty dwells in the presence of plenty. To want in the midst of plenty is to be poor in a nation that is rich with resources and opportunity. To



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want in the midst of plenty is to be homeless in a nation that continually builds large, new homes while millions sleep on the street or in shelters. To want in the midst of plenty is to have little or no access to health care in a nation that is at the forefront of modern means of treating and curing illnesses. Still, God will not leave us without resources. For those living in nations and communities at war, in poverty, and in the presence of their enemies, God's ample table is spread with the resources they need to bring them a new standard of living—peace and plenty.

When I was a new pastor of a small congregation in southern California, we hosted a special service one afternoon. One of the pastors in attendance, David, remained in the kitchen to receive the food that people brought. I was sitting in the congregation when David motioned for me to join him in the kitchen. A young man had asked for me. I knew him because he came by the church from time to time when he needed bus fare to go to the county hospital for his medical needs, and our church provided a small amount of money as part of its ministry to help in those situations. On this particular afternoon he needed his prescription filled as well as bus fare. While we sat in my office and talked, he shared that some time before he had contracted HIV/AIDS, and was living with that pain. We prayed together and talked some more, while David prepared a place for our friend at the table in the fellowship hall so we could share a meal. We sat and ate with him until he finished his meal and then gave him nonperishable food items and a covered plate to take with him. We said our goodbyes and he went to the hospital. My friend and I never saw each other again. I have often prayed for him, knowing that he is in God's hands.

Christians look to a time when suffering, pain, and poverty will end. John's vision in Revelation describes "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation" standing before the throne (v. 9) and a time when people will "hunger no more, and thirst no more . . . and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (vv. 16, 17).

As people of God in Christ we work for that time, because we work for the kingdom. We believe that we are Christ's presence on earth, working for justice and peace for all to enjoy. We believe that the Good Shepherd has called us into faithful service, and because we know his voice, we respond in love and commitment.

#### *Children's Time* [Larry Hollar]

Bring some object that reminds you powerfully of a very close friend or family member, preferably something that person made for you. The Tabitha story is engaging not just because Peter miraculously brings her back to life but because people love her so much. They have something tangible that expresses that love—tunics. Talk about the object



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you've brought and how love is reflected in it. Remind the children that the object itself doesn't fully capture the love, but that the feelings and memories we have are important reflections of God's love.

*Musical Suggestions* [Larry Hollar]

You Are My Hiding Place—*Renew! Songs and Hymns for Blended Worship* 107, *The Faith We Sing* 2055

Thuma Mina/Send Me, Jesus—*Gather Comprehensive* 677

Healer of Our Every Ill—*Gather Comprehensive* 882

Reflection from *Hunger for the Word*, Year C  
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