

CHAPTER VI — Fill the Pot

(The Seeds of Faith)

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A Different Kind of Church

After months of frustration inside a system that measured need instead of humanity, I found grace again in an unexpected place—a folding table on a Sunday morning.

Every week, a line formed outside a small building near downtown Salt Lake. Steam from crock-pots and roasting pans drifted through the cold air, mingling with the scent of coffee and cinnamon rolls. The mission was called **Fill the Pot**. It started with a leap of faith—**Reverend Jay Ragsdale**, inspired by his brother **Lee’s** experience with homelessness, walked into Pioneer Park one day with nothing but some Tic-Tacs, his Bible, and a calling from God. That act of faith became the foundation for what the ministry is today: serving our brothers and sisters in need, not just with home-cooked meals, but with encouragement and love.

Reverend Jay and his wife, **Toni**, have been at it for over 18 years, never missing a Sunday. They serve hundreds of hot meals every week, along with clothing, hygiene items, and support for employment, education, addiction, and mental health. Their goal is simple: bring hope, let people know they matter, and help them get back on their feet.

Fill the Pot’s motto could just as well be: **“Grace Served Here.”**

There isn’t space to sit inside, so people stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the lot, balancing paper plates heavy with food that always tastes like home. Someone might play old gospel tunes through a tinny speaker. Volunteers work the line, pouring coffee, handing out napkins, and making sure no one is left behind. There are no long sermons—just a few words, simple and heartfelt.

“This might not be your season,” Reverend Jay would say,
“but when it is, God will be on time. He’s never late.”

The crowd would murmur an *amen*. Some bowed their heads. Others just closed their eyes and breathed deep, letting the warmth and hope settle in their chests. For a few moments, we weren’t clients or cases—we were a congregation of the hungry and the hopeful.

In that space, labels fell away. There was no “us” and “them.” Only people, all in need of something, all receiving more than they expected.

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❖ **Did You Know?**

Across the United States, more than 60 percent of unhoused individuals identify with a faith tradition, yet fewer than 15 percent regularly attend services.

Barriers include stigma, dress expectations, and fear of rejection.

Grassroots ministries like Fill the Pot and street-church gatherings bridge that divide — reminding the world that worship was never meant to require walls.

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❖ **Theological Reflection**

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” — *Matthew 18:20*

Faith doesn't depend on stained glass or pews. Sometimes it lives in parking lots, in Styrofoam cups, in a hug from a stranger.

Where love gathers, God already is.

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❖ **Poetic Interlude**

Steam rises like incense.

Hands pass plates,

bread breaks,

hope multiplies.

No choir—just laughter.

No walls—just grace.

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❖ **Community Cost**

When churches close their doors to those who look different, faith loses its power to transform.

But when faith steps outside—into parks, alleys, and parking lots—it becomes unstoppable.

Fill the Pot proves that community starts not in comfort but in compassion.

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❖ **Key Takeaways**

- Faith that feeds is faith that endures.
- The truest worship happens wherever love serves first.
- Grace multiplies when shared across the table.
- Community begins where judgment ends.

