

Bread for the Journey

Isaiah 25:6-9 and Luke 24:13-35

Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Madison WI

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Happy Easter! With music and flowers and prayers we are here to celebrate the Good News of Jesus' resurrection.

In essence, what Easter means is that our sins are forgiven, and we have new life, because of this new reality—the Kingdom of God.

You heard the narrative of the first Easter early in the service, that the tomb was empty. But those first followers of Jesus weren't sure what to make of it. There was confusion and disbelief. And it took a while for them to figure it out, for it to really sink in. So it's quite reasonable that this Easter Good News might cause some confusion or disbelief in us. It might take a while for it to sink in.

This leads us to our second reading, continuing in Luke 24, with two disciples who are show confusion and disbelief. It's a long reading, which only appears in Luke. It moves through several scenes: the meeting, the conversation, the meal, and the return.

There are several things I hope you'll be aware of in this narrative:

This crucial story of Jesus and his followers does not involve familiar disciples like Peter, James, and John. Instead we meet Cleopas and an unnamed disciple. We know nothing else about them.

- In Luke 10, Jesus sends the disciples out in pairs, to continue his work, and in this story, we have a pair of disciples.
- Jesus began his ministry, as we read in Luke 4, saying that the spirit of the Lord anointed him to proclaim good news to the poor, and recovery of sight to the blind. Our Easter reading involves recovery of sight.
- The focus of the reading is a simple meal, involving bread. Jesus is the guest who becomes the host, serving a meal to the two disciples. And the verbs in that part of the story are the same verbs from the feeding of the 5,000 and the last Supper: takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them.
- And finally it's worth noting the reading as a whole has the flow of a worship service: people coming together, reflecting on God's word, breaking bread, and then going back into the world to serve.

Listen for God's word.

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad.

¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹ He asked them, “What things?”

They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then the two disciples told what had happened on the road, and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus liked food, and Jesus liked to eat. And Jesus liked to talk about food, and Jesus got in trouble for his table manners.

In Luke's in particular, Jesus spends a lot of time having meals, teaching about food, and encouraging his followers to feed hungry people.

Over the past six weeks, in the season of Lent, we've been focusing on food and faith, with our Feasting and Fasting theme. We have reflected on several scripture verses:



- Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are hungry now for you will be filled." (Luke 6:21)
- They asked Jesus: "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (Luke 5:30)
- Jesus said to them, "You give them something to eat." (Luke 9:13)

So Lent has been a time of reflection on food, on fasting and feasting, and on our deepest hungers. Some themes have emerged in our reflections.

- Eat HEALTHILY—Several weeks ago we looked at some of Michael Pollan's writing on food, and he encourages good eating--for the sake of our bodies, and the planet. The Bible says that the body is a temple of the holy spirit, and that we are called to be stewards of the earth.
- Eat PRAYERFULLY—prayerfully asking that our food nourish us to serve God, and praying for people who are hungry
- Eat THANKFULLY—eat slowly, enjoying each bite. Be thankful for the farmers, and field workers, and truck drivers and store clerks, and chefs.
- Eat TOGETHER—when you can enjoy a meal with others. I heard a consultant a while ago talk about the importance of meals for building relationships, and he said that a meal alone is wasted calories. Jesus sets the example for us.

Jesus enjoyed eating together, and he enjoyed having all sorts of people at the same table.

In Luke 14, Jesus said to the Pharisee, who was hosting a dinner with all the local big wigs: “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.”

It’s as if Jesus went to the cool kids’ table and told them to make room for everyone

The Bible invites us to a big table. You heard the reading from Isaiah 25, about a feast for all people. Not a select few, but everyone.

And in the gospel reading for today, Jesus is the guest who becomes the host. He takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and shares it-- serving bread to Cleopas and this unnamed disciple.

Having a disciple with no name sort of invites us into the story. It seems to give us a place at the table.

We are kind of like those disciples.

Like them, we’ve heard the words, we know the accounts, we’ve heard the scripture.

Like them we’re not sure what they mean, we’re not sure if it’s really true.

Like them we have hopes that things will get better.

And like them, hopefully, we keep pondering, wrestling, and journeying forward.

And as we journey, get glimpses of resurrection, glimpses of hope, glimpses of new life.

1. After devastating church fires in France and Louisiana, lots of money has been pledged to rebuild, so those churches can continue being places where lives are changed.
2. Closer to home, it was a blessing last week to see all the children bringing their coins together, after our 5 cents a meal offering during Lent. All that money will help feed hungry people through the Presbyterian Hunger Program and One Great Hour of Sharing.
3. Not only is spring on the way, with flowers blooming and buds growing, but our solar panels are doing great, and our Green Team is helping us be more.

And I got one more glimpse of hope and new life this week.

A member of our church had very serious surgery this week, for about 10 hours. On the day of the surgery, I went over to the hospital to be with his wife in the waiting area for a little bit.

When I arrived, I saw two Covenant members sitting with her. They had been there for hours, and they stayed long after I left. We talked, laughed, prayed together. We actually talked about food as well.

As we journey together, we find glimpses of hope, resurrection, and new life. That's what happened with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

They invited Jesus to join them in a meal, and he offered bread, which opened their eyes and gave them new hope.

Good things happen when we journey together and eat together.

A few months ago, I came across a video about eating together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDuA90Pyp6I>

It's actually a commercial for a supermarket in Canada. And there is so much to like in this video:

- The resolve of the woman, despite feeling isolated and frustrated, to try something new—a dinner with her neighbors



- The enthusiasm of the child, to drag her parents to the dinner and to knock on the door of the older man

- The diverse collection of delicious looking food

And something I didn't notice the first time I saw this:

the older man comes to the dinner bringing a bottle of wine and loaf of bread.



So Happy Easter!

If you're lucky enough to have a meal with friends and family today, enjoy it and keep your eyes open.

Whether or not you have a big Easter dinner today, I have a hunch that sometime this week, you'll get the chance to invite

someone to join you for a meal, or maybe someone will invite you to join them.

As we eat together, as we ponder together, as we support each other, as we journey together, we discover new hope, new life.

Happy Easter. Let us pray....

Thank you God for giving new life to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Thank you for feeding us with bread for the journey, so that we can feed others with food and with love. Amen.