

## **Third Sunday after Easter May 5 2019- Communion Sunday**

### **John 21:1-19**

Saturday morning breakfast was dad's realm growing up. My mother was the one who got us kids fed during the week as we got ready for school, but Saturday was her day to sleep in and dad took up the duties. What that usually meant was eggs of some kind. Scrambled or fried. Maybe egg in toast. Perhaps some bacon or sausage. Not the heat in the microwave kind either, that technology didn't come until later in my life. But the cook in a pan on the stove kind. And breakfast was something pop was good at. I normally was up before he was and went downstairs to watch Saturday morning cartoons, but I would hear him in the kitchen getting breakfast going. I would smell the bacon cooking, hear the crackle of the eggs and my mouth would begin to water. I knew a good breakfast was coming. I couldn't wait to eat this wonderful meal dad was fixing for me. One that would fuel my day filled with cartoons, and play, maybe (when I was older) cutting the grass or helping dad with an outdoor project.

Come! And have breakfast! Jesus says this over a charcoal fire, with fish crackling and the warm smell of bread wafting. This is not just an invitation from Jesus, but an imperative. A command to the disciples. Come! and have breakfast! Maybe it's something he picked up from his mother in the stereotypical Jewish mother way of saying, "Come, eat, you look thin." Maybe it is his care for these disciples who had been out fishing all night with no success (until Jesus came along). Either way, he's made them breakfast and tells them what's next... Come! Eat!

Then, Jesus takes the bread and the fish and feeds the disciples. Do you hear it? The echo of John 6 where Jesus feeds the 5,000 by the sea with the loaves and

the fishes. And we remember that this episode of feeding the multitudes is where the author of John talks about Communion. A meal where Jesus takes what is offered by his followers and transforms it.

We also listen to this reading today with the previous texts in John in our minds, especially the story about Jesus' trip down the road to Emmaus with the two disciples. Where they did not recognize him until he broke the bread at the table. We have in mind the text from last week, where Jesus shows up in the midst of the assembly of believers on the first day of the week. Twice!

All of these point to this moment on the beach as one that certainly has overtones of being about communion. This shared meal within the assembly of believers. Not bread and fish, but the bread and wine of that Passover meal not so long ago.

How do we approach this meal of communion? Do we get the same kind of anticipation I used to for breakfast as a kid. Mouth watering, anticipating what that meal will mean for what I will do that day, knowing that it has been prepared with great love for me? Do we come to the table like those disciples, tired after a long night of work, but knowing that this meal will revive them, give them the energy to finish their task for the day? A meal made by someone who we know cares about us and loves us so.

How do we approach this meal that we believe is the body and blood of Jesus? The real presence of the risen Lord in the midst of the assembly on the first day of the week. A presence that we can't explain any more than the disciples could figure out how Jesus got to them through locked doors, but also one that we

know is true. The disciples saw the wounds in Jesus' hands and side. For us, it's a little different.

It is the reality of bread; sweet, maybe doughy, crumbling, maybe moist.

Something we have to interact with, think about as we come forward to receive it. This is why I like having bread made by members of our assembly. Because what better way to illustrate what we believe than to have something that lets us know that we have had a real encounter. One that engages all our senses.

Hopefully, at least this morning, our sense of smell, too. Do you smell that freshly baked bread smell? Doesn't it just make your mouth drool? When I lived in Chicago I would take the Eisenhower (I-55) to work in Naperville each morning. Going out of town you would pass a big bakery on one side and you could smell the fresh baked bread. It was the best part of my day!

This is part of the gift of God to us, that we are given this means of grace with tangible elements. Ones in which we KNOW that something has happened. Not just some esoteric spiritual encounter, not just some head exercise, but one that in some way shape or form changes us. Whether the desire to have some more because the body of Christ was so good, or the sharp tang of the wine, trying not to lose too much of the bread in the wine, or even watching pastor try and break off a good piece for you, this is real. As real as the presence of Christ who is where he promised to be. Here, in this meal, among us. "This is my body. This is my blood."

Then, we get our own imperative. "Do this!" Take, eat, you look thin. Martin Luther understood this meal to be "food for the soul", to be used against sin, death, and the devil, those things that try and overtake us. To be used as fuel for

a daily living out of one's baptism. To neglect this meal, the most important of our week, arguably, does indeed lead to spiritual starvation.

For the real presence of God in our lives begins to fade. Our faith journey becomes, not about communion with the living God, but one more obligation to be fulfilled. Another check box to be ticked off along with buying milk, getting some exercise and picking up the kids from practice.

Come! Eat!

Do we come to the meal with the same anticipation folks have had for *Avengers: Endgame* or the new season of *Game of Thrones*? Do we come with the same desire as the Psalmist who writes in Psalm 42:1 "As a deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God."? That same desire we have for a drink of water on a hot summer's day.

If we don't, why not?

Perhaps, like happens so often these days, we do not take the time to ponder what this meal means. It becomes like so many of our meals, especially breakfast, something that is, at best, consumed mindlessly, maybe on the run, while focused on something else. Something that we take in but don't really think about.

There are some problems inherent in that kind of consuming anyway, but particularly in this case. Do you take a moment to ponder the wonder of this meal? To stop and think about the God who loves you so much, that God comes to you in a tangible way each week. The creator of the universe loves you enough to be fully present for you! To come to you in this intimate act of eating and drinking.

If you took the time to stop and think about this, what this really means. It would, perhaps, change the entire way you think about yourself.

The one who claims us in baptism with a washing of water like what Daxton Witte will experience today. This same one carefully feeds us throughout our lives. Through Word and Meal. Through a community of faith and in our individual prayers and devotions. This God comes to us each week. Into our mundane lives; Our gotta go to school, get to baseball practices, I've got a cold, grass needing to be cut, boss is overbearing, just won a scratch off, can't wait to get the grill fired up kinds of lives... and feeds us, because we are God's own children. Created in God's image and sustained by God's own hand.

When we consider that. Take time to really let it sink in. I wonder if we will begin to feel those pangs of longing. When the week begins to drag, we feel broken down by all that happens, we yearn for that moment again when God says- Come! Eat! Gather together and I will feed you. Come! Eat! Rest for a time, fill your spiritual tank.

Even as we ponder the way in which we approach this meal, we understand that what this meal is and what it does is not dependent upon us. Whether we are worthy or not, whether we approach it in the right way or not. Just as the holiness of this meal does not come from us, so what makes the meal the meal does not come from us, but from God. All it says is do this...Come! Eat! And in so doing receive what is promised.