

Sunday after Easter: usually Jesus appears to Thomas; switched it up – Easter Evening's text: road to Emmaus..

The text we just heard, this encounter between Jesus and disciples as they head home on Easter evening, so sparks the imagination. It is easy to imagine the sadness of the disciples, the <sup>presence</sup> ~~patience~~ of Jesus, and the delight of the Aha! Moment when the disciples recognize him in the breaking of bread. But this is not just a post-resurrection story. As with all such stories, there is a specific message to be received by the way the story was told. Luke's story, the followers on the road to Emmaus and the recognition of Jesus in the breaking of bread, is also a Holy Communion story.

When we think of Holy Communion stories, we usually think first of Jesus having the Last Supper with his followers up in the Upper Room as they celebrated Passover. But a little biblical scholarship reveals that there are actually several other stories that are Holy Communion stories. They each have Jesus saying four very specific verbs, verbs that are repeated whenever we have Communion. Here's how they were in our text today, "He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them." Took, blessed, broke, and gave. These four verbs occur in the last supper stories, Paul's description of Communion practice to the Corinthians, all the feeding of the multitude stories, and this one – the encounter on the road to Emmaus.

Years ago, I was pretty proud of myself to have come up with the interpretation of this text as being about how worship is shaped. Jesus met them, they discussed Scripture, they had the meal, and then the followers went to tell others. I was all about how that's how worship goes. We explore the Word, have the Meal, and they go tell others about Jesus. I thought that was pretty nifty and that I was pretty clever. But I don't think I was getting even close. I think there is way more to it than that. Jesus' life and his encounters with his followers weren't to tell us how to worship. It is totally the other way around. Worship is supposed to be telling us how to live out Jesus.

1<sup>st</sup> thing - gather, meet & walk together sharing life. All have joys, sorrows, burdens to share. Individual and

2<sup>nd</sup> The Scriptures we read and explore together reveal to us the relationship God has been choosing to have with us since the very beginning; a relationship of love and wise providing. It there is the books of Moses and the prophets. It's the relationship God asks us to have with each other: Mutual love, care, and respect. And then we come to the Table where we share bread in the manner Jesus showed

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Corporate  
Collective  
Communion  
Community

us. I think this thing we do when we come to the table together is not just a special together-time with God. (Although it certainly is that). Communion is also a practice session, a practice session for the new way of life to which we and all followers of Jesus are invited, it is part and parcel of the risen life we share in Christ. I've come to think of it as the Eucharistic way of life, living out Holy Communion, not just in church but in all aspects of our lives. It has four parts..

He took the bread... Take, *lambano* the verb means to receive, to accept. As opposed to grab or grasp. It means to take custody of or assume responsibility for. As is, "here, will you take this puppy?" So, what if we thought about our whole lives, all the wealth and resources that are entrusted to us as part of "taking the bread" God has entrusted to us?

What if it went even further....all that we have... as individuals, but also collectively as a church, or as a community, as a whole country. What if we thought of all of the wealth, resources, time, talent, treasure, all that we have and all that we are as people living in this time and this place - as being part of "taking the bread", and accepting responsibility for its use? That would be the first part of a Eucharistic life, living out Holy Communion.

He blessed it.... Or give thanks in some translations. *Eulogeo* is the word. He expressed gratitude. Giving thanks, counting one's blessings, those are acts of humility. Gratitude and humility help us avoid both the soul-sucking sense of entitlement and the equally soul-sucking sense of scarcity that the world seems so keen to promote.

In my line of work, I am often asked to pray, sometimes in some very trying moments. Over the years I have, for better or worse developed the habit of starting all my prayers with "Dear Lord, thank you...." That gives me about two-and-a-half seconds to think of what to say next. It also forces me to think of what we can possibly be thankful for in that moment. In all the years I've been doing this, there is always something we can be thankful for. Thankfulness, for everything is the foundation of the Eucharistic life. For all that we have and are - we are thankful.

I'll do the last two together. He broke it.. The word is *kalo*. It is a word used almost exclusively for breaking bread. Breaking bread into pieces for sharing. And he gave it. *Didomi* or *epididomi*, to give freely. There is some indication that the breaking of the bread by the head of the household was the signal for the meal to begin, for the sharing of food among the community gathered at the table. What

*presence, God walking with us  
through whatever*

if living a Eucharistic life meant that we understood that once we have received and given thanks we break what we have been given into pieces for giving away, for sharing with others?

We, in the United States, have been living almost 40 years now with the fairy tale of “trickle down economics.” The theory was that as wealth increased for the job-creators and others with means to create wealth for themselves and others that eventually wealth would overflow their cups and run down onto others. There is a pretty condemning quote by Pope Francis about how that has all been a lie. It seems that the cup magically grows and never seems to overflow on much of anyone. As a society we have ended up feeling we have to look out for ourselves.

A Eucharistic way of life would include breaking the bread, dividing the resources for the purpose of sharing. I think many of you already do this. You give careful consideration to how and where to give portions of the resources God has given you. You are thoughtful about how you can do the most good with what God has entrusted to you.

Most folks, and I include myself in this camp, are also thinking about things like savings, and retirement and long-term care should it become necessary. We want to be responsible for ourselves and maybe leave something for our children. We worry about what a future we can not know might bring. Jesus was inviting people to be part of a society so full of mutual care and love and respect that nobody would have to worry about those things. The bread would be broken, and shared, so everyone would have enough.

What if we could begin to live into that kind of society, individually and collectively? What if we could seek to share all the forms of bread God has bestowed on us? What if we sought to be mindful about sharing not just wealth and resources but also things like access to opportunity or equal treatment under the law or having a voice at the table. Living out a truly holy Communion that would create community across all the barriers that divide us from each other.

Before we leave we need to come back to Cleopas and friend. It is very clear, because Luke repeats it, that the main point of this story is that after Jesus shared bread with them, their eyes were opened. They reported to their fellow followers that Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. My friends, those words are still true. Jesus is here, Jesus is present wherever and whenever we receive with gratitude the resources God gives to us, and then divide and share

them. Jesus is just as present at the breaking of bread at the finest, most well-appointed altar table as he is at the sharing of food in the humblest of food pantries or soup kitchens. Jesus is also present in the legislative chamber where people work for and pass humane public policy. He is present in the corporate board room where deciders acknowledge there are greater goods than profit margins and seek to achieve them.

And Jesus is present at your kitchen tables, as you decide day in and day out how to utilize wisely the bread of time and treasure God has entrusted to you.

Jesus is in all those places. And here! Alive in our midst. Showing us how to live out Holy Communion every day. Like Cleopas, may our hearts burn within us. May our hearts burn within us with the love which we have come to know through Jesus. May our whole lives be aglow with the joy of being loved and loving the world God loves. Amen.