

“Let’s Gather Around the Table”

Psalm 63: 1-18

At the beginning of this week, I thought this would be an easy sermon to write. It’s World Communion Sunday. We have a text which understands the satisfaction which comes upon us when we have experienced a good meal. And believe me, I know how much we like to eat around here as a community of faith. This sermon should write itself.

Just to let you know-whenver I say things like this, it always turns out the other way around. I think it is the universe telling me to pay attention to the moving of God’s Spirit and not jump to conclusions too quickly. Because in reality, when it comes to communion, when it comes us gathering at the Lord’s Table, partaking the bread, partaking the cup, when it comes to remembering and celebrating that moment when Jesus gathered in the upper room with his disciples, it never does us any good to jump to conclusions or ignore the Spirit of God.

Because, the fact of the matter is, and what we as people of faith seem to ignore or forget most of the time is just that. We forget, we ignore that when we gather at the Table as the people of God, it is in this moment, we make our loudest proclamation of God’s love and God’s grace for all the world to hear. It is in this moment we proclaim the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, a

Savior who came so that all may know that they are claimed and named as God's own. It is in this moment, when we gather around the Table, all drinking from the cup of blessing, all eating from the bread of life, it is in this moment when our faith becomes tangible. It becomes life-changing. It is the moment when we proclaim our unity in Christ, showing the world there is another way. We become part of something that is larger than ourselves. It is in this moment when all are invited to experience the beauty, the wonder, the grace, the love of God, becoming part of the real, breathing, living Body of Christ here on Earth.

This moment of all drinking from the cup of blessing, this moment when all are eating the bread of life does not stand all by itself. It is part of the larger picture, the larger picture of how God is constantly at work in our world, working to bring healing and wholeness to God's creation. This moment is fundamental to our words and our actions as disciples of Christ. It is the moment which reminds us who we are and whose we are.

Or let me say it this way... The line which catches my attention in this text is: "My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips. Maybe it is because we just had our monthly community dinner on Monday night and there was a wonderful assortment of food. Or maybe it is because I was able to sneak away a few days this past week with my family on Fall Break to Great Wolf Lodge, where my children feasted on pancakes with whipped cream

and ice cream galore. Or maybe it is because I was finally able to sit down and have a meal at our dinner table on Wednesday night with my family after running what feels like non stop for the last few weeks. But this past week, it become very clear to me just how important gathering around the Table is for us as families, as friends, as communities.

Somehow the simple act of gathering around the table with family and friends makes the food taste better, turns a simple fare into a feast. Somehow the simple act of gathering around the Table together as one transforms our feelings of frustration and busyness into feelings of peace and Sabbath. As people of faith, we know that there is just something about gathering around the table which centers us, which slows us down and fully puts us in the moment. There is just something about gathering around the Table with our family and friends, gathering around the Table as a community which reminds us from where all our blessings flow, something that the author of Psalm 63 understood completely.

You see, psalm 63 is one of those tricky psalms which falls into a lot of categories. It is considered a lament psalm because in the very first line, the psalmist is crying out to God. It is also considered a praise psalm because of the obvious sentiment of verses 3 and 4. However, for the most part, all commentators agree that one category definitely fits this psalm without argument and that

category is one of thanksgiving. Because Psalm 63 acknowledges without God, we are nothing.

The writer of Psalm 63 recognizes and celebrates this understanding, that as people of faith, our life is grounded in the goodness of our God, that in fact, it is this goodness which gives us life. Psalm 63 recognizes that God can and does satisfy the longing of our hearts like nothing else, that God sustains us, that God nourishes us, that it is God who fills us with good things and in doing so, gives us life.

The psalmist understands that it is through our thanksgiving, through our praise, as the people of God, that we experience a life filled with grace and love. It is through our relationship, through our connection with God, that we experience a vitality and vibrancy which is so much more than we could ever imagine. The psalmist understands that God is the center of our being and reminds us that everything we do as the people of God, our praise, our thanksgiving, our missions and ministries, even our interactions with others, flows out from this understanding of who we are and whose we are.

So it should not be a surprise that Psalm 63 is a favorite when it comes to World Communion Sunday celebrations because the psalmist lifts up the exact same sentiments which we share every time we gather at the Table, the very same

sentiments we share when we say the Words of Institution . What I mean by this is that when we break the bread of life, we recognize that it is God's grace which nourishes us and feeds us. When we drink from the cup of the new covenant, we recognize what an amazing gift we have been given to be named and claimed as one of God's own Beloved children. Just like what the psalmist proclaims when he says that only God can satisfy our hungry hearts, we know that every time we gather around the Table, every time we welcome all to come and partake, we recognize that God is God and we are not, something the psalmist and we as people of faith give thanks for each and every day.

The very words of Psalm 63 resonate with us because they echo our thoughts as people of faith every single time we gather at the Table. The words of Psalm 63, and the Words of Institution, remind us that people of faith, when we gather around the Table, we experience the ripple effects of God's grace and love filling our world. They remind us that this simple act of breaking bread is adding to the healing and reconciliation work which our God is actively engaged in each and every day. When we gather at the Table, the very words that we say remind us how simple acts are turned into great feats, acts which can and do transform our world.

As people of faith, just like the psalmist, we know that every single time we gather at the Table, every time we break the bread of life and drink from the cup of the new covenant, every time we come together with all our brothers and sisters in

faith from around the world, we celebrate the fact that only God can satisfy our hungry hearts, no matter what this world might say.

This is something we hold as TRUTH as people of faith but it always seems to become more real for me on this Sunday in particular. I don't know what is different about this particular Sunday but it always strikes me that by the time we start our worship service, communities of faith in other parts of the world will have already had communion. They will have already begun the process of filling this world with the Light of Christ. They will have already sent ripples of God's grace and love into this world, sending them to our shores as we prepare to gather at the Table.

Then by the time we finish our worship service, other communities of faith will be just beginning their time around the Lord's Table. They will be greeted by our hopes, our prayers, our light of Christ as they are welcomed to the Table.

It amazes me to ponder that for at least one Sunday, we as the broken and often divided Body of Christ here on Earth intentionally can come together and say that this is God's Table, not our table and yes there is still room at the Table for all of God's children.

There is power in that statement. Because in this world where so many are feeling like they don't have a voice, where so many are feeling like they are not

welcomed, like they are ignored or forgotten, in this world, where it seems like power and might always win, this act of faith, this coming together with people from around the world, this coming together as people of faith, as the Body of Christ here on Earth, proclaims that anything is possible through the grace and love of God.

It proclaims that it is the ordinary things of our lives, the moments around our kitchen table, our fellowship hall tables, moments around the food pantry's table and the homeless shelters' tables, it is the ordinary things like wheat from the field and grapes from the vine have the power to transform this world, has the power to show this world that there is another way. It is through the simple act of gathering at the Table which we can show the world how to slow down, to center ourselves in God's presence and give thanks from whom all our blessings flow. Just think of the power of that act. Just think of what can happen when we all gather around the Table as brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.