

Proper 15b 2021
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC
August 15, 2021

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 Psalm 111 Ephesians 5:15-20 John 6:51-58

We are still in the gospel of John and hearing about bread. Bread must be pretty important, and it is. In the ancient world, bread comprised about half of one's daily intake.

Living bread is reference to Jesus' incarnation. Earlier in John's gospel we heard: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Flesh. We hear it over and over again. This Jesus person, who says the bread comes from God, and is now living bread ... well, maybe flesh is symbolic, so that Jesus person could be a really good prophet speaking the word of God. That word, Larry Broding writes, "fed the hungry soul." Our souls are fed by the word, of Jesus, by the Word.

Jesus' words are scandalous.

When Jesus says: "eat my flesh," he crosses the line of propriety. This is scandalous beyond measure! And that is the end for some of Jesus' followers, who walk away at the thought of cannibalism. No God fearing person would eat the flesh of another human being – Judaism honors and strives to save life. Eating flesh is completely contrary to Torah.

The scandal is made worse when Jesus says: "drink my blood." More people run away from the scandal. We remember the words in Genesis:

In Genesis 9:3-4, Every living thing shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Kidneys, representing the seat of life in the body, are burnt and dedicated in sacrificial offerings exclusively for God. Life is from God and belongs to God.

So the crowd listening to Jesus hears the words, "eat my flesh and drink my blood," as blasphemy, an abomination, as a violation of a core belief about Holy God, and our proper relationship with Holy God.

Jesus' words are metaphorical, not literal, and are all about relationship. The metaphor is a particular kind of eating – abide in me, Jesus says. Abide, which means stay, live, hang around for a while. Chew on this relationship, let it stay with you not only at the meal, at the altar, but in a way that Jesus stays in us, with us – abides in us all the time, and in every place. Jesus says, join into my life, begin eternal life now.

Just as the term living bread is about Jesus' incarnation, living bread is reference to Jesus' divinity. Abide, touch, smell, take, and take into ourselves the divinity of Jesus and thereby join in Jesus' relationship with God. Then, being made in God's image begins to make sense. We who are made in God's image are meant to drink God in, infuse us with Christ's body and blood, the only food that gives us life.

Take, eat. Abide.

This is a promise and an invitation for everyone to have this relationship. Jews. Gentiles. You. Even me.

Take. Eat.

In response to living bread and life-giving blood?

We bring an offering to the table, an offering of ourselves – all of ourselves – so that the risen Christ can make himself known to us in body and blood.

That Jesus is present in what scholars and commentators (and others) call a post-Christian world, that Jesus lives is scandalous. Do we not all die? That we proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Savior flies in the face of a violent world. Through God, the Son and Holy Spirit are known to us. The Holy Spirit is about peace, not chaos. Jesus' promise of "new and unending life" is a promise so solid that we can touch and feel it, taste and eat it."

The promise is so strong that all the scattered bread will be gathered up; nothing/no one, will be lost. There is more than enough – Jesus for everyone. God's people, as in the diaspora the Jewish people, are scattered, but God-with-us, Jesus, gathers up the fragments and offers pure love to everyone. Everyone.

An ancient Eucharistic document called the Didache has it this way:

As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever."

We are gathered up whenever we scatter by presenting ourselves, our whole selves, at this altar. If bread is spiritual food, and it is, *living* bread is that power of the Holy Spirit set free to come back from whatever death we face in this life: loss of hope, illness, fatigue – remember from last week – we heal from whatever is dead inside of us. Live, bread – breathe, Holy Spirit! Created in the image of God, we seek Christ in others. Abiding with Jesus, we walk calmly through the storm, pouring God's love upon everyone. Everyone.

The church is incomplete until we are gathered into one body, the living body of Christ, the church. We must be here to do the work of Christ here, now.

Take, eat. Love, and go into the world. Come back and be filled. Take, eat. Go into the world. Come back .

"Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come, come."

~ Bob Holmes [#DailyContemplations](#) [#LoveNeverFails](#) [#EmbodiedSpirituality](#)

Quote: Rumi

Take, eat. Amen.