

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, August 18, 2024

“Ruminating on Jesus”

In our lessons for today, we have a whole lot of eating and drinking imagery going again. We also hear wisdom language about what we should be eating and drinking to sustain our spiritual life.

Speaking of eating and drinking. Did you know that this week Starbucks drops their Fall menu on August 22? People will soon be talking all things pumpkin spice. To me, Pumpkin Spice menu items signal a flood of memories connected to my family, and food, and the holidays. Food is often tied to good memories for me and things I want to re-create for my family. Good food brings a warmth to my soul... like my grandma's sour cream cut out cookies that have a dash of nutmeg in them.

Food and drink often have powerful memories tied to them. Recall at the last supper, Jesus commanded his disciples as he blessed and broke the bread, do this in remembrance of me. As often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup we are to remember the Lord's death until he comes. This is reason we still celebrate communion today... because Jesus commanded it. I also think of the road to Emmaus story in Luke 24. The two disciples were heading back home after Jesus was crucified. They were grieving. The one they placed their hope in was gone. Then on Easter Sunday, a stranger, Jesus incognito, came up alongside them and first listened to them about their grief and then taught them about the Messiah who was to suffer and die and rise again. But they still couldn't recognize Jesus. But then when Jesus broke bread with them their eyes were opened, they remembered the other times Jesus broke bread with them. Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. They turned around and ran back to tell the others.

In our first lesson from Proverbs 9, Lady wisdom invites the simple or unwise to a banquet. That is all of us, isn't it? It reminds me of a road sign you might see on route 66. “You that are simple turn in here! Or if you have gotten sidetracked in your life, turn in here. To those without sense (lady wisdom) says, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” Eating and drinking the bread and wine of

wisdom in the Bible can bring maturity and an invitation to a life marked by insight, honesty, integrity, and the fear of the Lord.

In our Psalm the wisdom teacher, attributed to David, assures the hearer that those who seek the Lord will lack for nothing. The alternative is to be like a young lion, who hunts alone, often coming home hungry. But those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good. When we seek the Lord, we don't go it alone, but we throw up our hands and ask God for help, we pray, and we enter community that is supposed to look out for each other. The church is called to surround those who are bowed down and lift them up.

Our Ephesians text reminds us that being a Christian should affect our daily conduct. Last week we heard about letting no unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is useful for building up. There is some practical wisdom here about drinking wine, for example. It says, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but instead be filled with the Spirit. I had to look up debauchery. It means "in excess" or out of control behavior. But in contrast, being filled with the Spirit leads to a life where we can give thanks to God at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We received the promised Holy Spirit in our baptism. But even before that the Holy Spirit is sustaining the world. Every breath we take is a gift of the Holy Spirit. As Lutherans we believe our faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit through hearing the Gospel, the good news of Jesus. It calls, gathers, enlightens and sets us apart to be church and to share our gifts.

Speaking of the Gospel, Jesus says in John 6:51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Jesus did give his flesh for us on the cross. He did come down and give his life for the world.

And we do eat this bread, don't we Jesus' flesh. In John's prologue it says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of all

people. And in 1:14 it says, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

When we consume the Word of God, we partake in Jesus’ flesh. We ruminate on Jesus’ Word over and over again.

We also eat the bread Jesus is talking about in holy communion. Jesus promised to be with us when we break the bread and drink the cup. We do this for the forgiveness of sins. So, all those times when we lack wisdom or get sidetracked, which is daily, there is grace upon grace found in this simple meal. It is mysterious and hard to wrap your head around how Christ can be present in, with, and under the simple bread and wine, or grape juice. But like everything, we take Jesus at his word. If he promises to be present, he will be there. When he says this is my body given for you, this is my blood shed for you, we believe it through the eyes of faith.

And receiving this grace should assure us that our sins are forgiven and you have the promise of eternal life. Luther said in the small catechism, “These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. This is most certainly true.

Let us believe in this grace and live it out in our daily lives.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.