



April 15, 2018 Resurrection Food Given by Rev. Mattei

"Have you anything here to eat?" (Luke 24: 41)

We can most comfortably affirm that wherever there are two or three Lutherans gathered in Jesus' name, there is food. When we share food, we are most relaxed and open and hospitable with others. We share about our joys and hurts, and are sensitive to those of others. In a consciously balanced exchange, we show trust by inviting others into our life experience and are curious about other people's sharings. Food lowers barriers of suspicion and increases the chance to celebrate otherness and cherishes diversity.

Jesus' offer of peace was not promptly received in today's gospel, for the disciples were too overtaken by fear. The life experience of the resurrected Jesus and the manifestation of fear expressed by the startled disciples were at opposite ends. Even Jesus' profound announcement of "Peace" doesn't do much to bring about a new vision for the future. In fact, more than just a greeting, "peace" promises not only the immediate relief of fear but also the larger program of the post-Easter life in Christ.¹ In Jesus' mind, life after Easter is marked by a commitment to reconciliation (Luke 24: 47).

But fear is too strong of an emotion to be engaged with reason. Try arguing with someone engulfed in emotions and you will come to the conclusion that logical arguments do not really help. Feelings need to be named and acknowledged in order to be soothed, neuroscience has proven, before the logical part of the brain can be engaged. Jesus may have learned that by working with his own emotions and mind. He offered his hands and feet to see and touch and then he asked for food.² Once their fear had been addressed, Jesus reasoned with them and explained God's ancient plan as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures that the Son would suffer tremendously on account of his commitment to witnessing to God's life-giving justice. Those who enjoy privilege don't care to give that up easily.

¹ See the hymns of Zechariah, the angels, and Simeon in 1:79; 2:14, 29.

² Among the ghost tests in antiquity, one could check extremities where bones were evident (namely, hands and feet), make sure that a person's feet were touching the ground, and show one's teeth and eat food. (See also Epistula Apostolorum 11-2 and Tertullian, Against Marcion 4.43.)

As important as the explanation of Scripture is, Jesus' life does not simply help us comprehend ancient Scripture's true meaning, it also moves us *forward* into the future. That's why Jesus concludes with the charge to his disciples to be witnesses, proclaiming repentance and forgiveness to all nations in his name. Repentance and forgiveness are the hallmark of resurrection life and are signified (sacramentalized) in the waters of Baptism. Becoming witnesses to this life declares our trust in the Resurrection of the Body.

Bodies are very important to God. We understand this by the fact that God created bodied humanity, embodied God's Word, and redeemed bodies. Whenever God's sacred creation is dismembered and disfigured, wherever we see signs of violation and death, we see God defeated and crucified (...for a moment). Wherever there is grief over loss of life we see God grieving. Life matters to God.

Police life matters to God. Today we remember those who died five years ago as a result of two homemade bombs detonated near the finish line of the annual Boston Marathon, killing three people and injuring several hundred others. Four days into a manhunt for the suspects, in the early morning hours of April 19, 2013, police confronted the bombers in nearby Watertown, MA. Among them was Boston Police officer D.J. Simmonds. The confrontation eventually led to a shootout between the bombers and police. A homemade bomb thrown by one of the suspects detonated near D.J., knocking him off his feet. D.J.'s death, one year later in April 2014, was linked to head injuries he sustained during that confrontation.³

Black and Brown life matters to God. When the number of murders of unarmed black folk rise due to police violence⁴, when the mass incarceration of minority populations increases⁵, when educational and economic disparities mark the daily experience of large segments of the African American community, God grieves.

God grieves as hundreds of thousands economy refugees are forced to leave their land as a result of a greed based global economy. God grieves as hundreds of thousands flee their war torn land. God grieves as hundreds of thousands are forced out of their homes as a result of political or religious persecution.

God grieves in the face of injustice, inequality and death. But we trust the Author of Life and proclaim the resurrection of the Body through the Easter message of peace, life reconciled to God and to one another. When we live Resurrection, we work hard to dismantle systems of oppression and liberate oppressed communities to reflect the Image of God, the true mirror of Holiness otherwise known as the Body of Christ.

Like the first disciples, we have also experienced Jesus' real presence in our own experiences of forgiveness and of grace. And so the statements we affirm in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds are not just doctrines, but the basis for our calling to be witnesses of the marvelous and

³ <https://www.npr.org/2018/04/13/601822573/he-wasn-t-really-afraid-of-anything-boston-bombing-victim-remembered>

⁴ <https://www.theroot.com/heres-how-many-people-police-killed-in-2017-1821706614>

⁵ *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* or the documentary *13th*.

life changing way of Jesus. It is in Jesus' name and in his Spirit that we offer peace, forgiveness and reconciliation to all the nations. As the powers and principalities have come to realize, it is impossible to suppress the power of Jesus' name. This is what the message of resurrection proclaims: peace, healing and wholeness. And with the communal consummation of ordinary food the church celebrates otherness and cherishes diversity. In your own life, where will you share food of reconciliation and justice this week? Where will you bring forgiveness and peace?

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, [Jesus] said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" (Luke 24:41) Yes, Lord Jesus, we have you and one another other.
Amen