

Christ Church, Georgetown

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Easter 3B April 18, 2021

In the name of God, the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is the third Sunday of Easter. We have just heard our third resurrection story. Jesus appears to the 11 disciples. They are startled as He says, "Peace be with you." They think they are seeing a ghost. He reassures them that that is not the case and tells them they can touch His hands and feet, that it is Him, and that ghosts do not have flesh and bones. This is a bodily resurrection. Jesus has been resurrected from the dead just as He said He would be.

As exciting as this story is, what I love most about it is what Jesus says after showing them His hands and feet. Jesus asks them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" I absolutely love this. It reminds me of all the times my children have come home from college- sometimes to surprise me for my birthday or Easter or Mother's Day- and after our initial hugs and greetings and yelps of great joy- they inevitably go to the fridge, open the door, and start rummaging for food. As they ferret through the shelves, they turn their heads to me and say, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

Feeding people is how we care for people. Jesus modeled this over and over in his ministry. Whether He was at table with Mary and Martha in their home or dining with Zacchaeus and the other disciples or the at the edge of the Sea of Galilee feeding 5000 (where the disciples told Jesus to dismiss the crowds, they were done working for the day, and Jesus said, "No, let's feed them." And the exasperated disciples were like, "with what, we don't have enough food." :)

) or at a wedding banquet with His mother where the celebration lasts so long that Jesus has to turn the water into wine to make sure the host isn't embarrassed because they ran out or at the Last Supper, Jesus understood the significance of breaking bread with people. He modeled it over and over- so much so that even in His resurrected life, what does Jesus do first? On the road to Emmaus, Jesus stops and dines with the strangers he meets and it is in the breaking of the bread that He is fully known to them. And again, in this week's gospel, He asks for something to eat. And I imagine Jesus, enjoying his broiled fish with His dear friends, and then reminding them of all that He said and the work they will be doing to proclaim the Good News.

Some of the best memories in my life revolve around wonderful meals at tables with friends and family. Sometimes it was a special occasion like a birthday brunch at Commander's Palace- where the milk punches are poured through most of the afternoon and soft jazz floats through the room and as turtle soup is consumed – love and laughter permeate the meal. And recalling conversations and lunches in the refectory at the school where I worked, with colleagues and students I have loved and walked with for two decades, makes me smile. We shared our lives during those meals- our hopes, our fears, our concerns about a boy, our faith, our love for one another. It wasn't that the fare was so outstanding, it is that those meals with my colleagues nourished me far more than simply feeding my body. We have had Thanksgiving with another family for well over a decade. It is one of the highlights of the year for us. But because of Covid, we had to miss it this year. The void was palpable. We tried our best to make it festive at our house and prepared our favorite dishes, but the feeling of holding hands and giving thanks and then laughing and telling stories just wasn't the same. We missed the fellowship, the love, the breaking of bread. It nourished us. Our bodies were always full when we

left, but so were our hearts- full with that agape love that Jesus modeled for us with His own life and ministry. We have always known that when we walk in their door, we are loved.

Do you know of what I speak? Is it like this in your own home, in your own lives? I think it is no accident that the one mandate Jesus gave us besides the Great Love Commandment- was to remember Him in the bread and the wine. He literally feeds us, nourishes us, and is present with us.

So, what does that mean for us today? Here we are in the third week of the Easter season, and the high of that first Sunday has begun to wear off. The Resurrection glow has begun to pale; the Easter lilies have faded; church attendance has decreased. And yet, we proclaim that because of that event, because of Easter, our lives have been altered forever. In our gospel this morning the disciples encountered the risen Lord and their lives were changed forever. With Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were transformed into Easter people, people full of hope, and the wonder of this event motivated and energized them to go and spread the Good News.

Are we at all like the disciples? Have our lives been changed forever because of Easter? Do we live each day any differently because the tomb was empty? Are we people of hope who spread the Good News?

For me, learning to live as an Easter person, as a person who embraced the resurrection and the hope it offers to everyone, meant relinquishing the control I thought I had. My epiphany was the realization that I was not in control- someone else was and that someone loved me dearly. Giving up control for me doesn't come easily. I love order. I love lists. And what I love even more than lists is crossing things off my list. I even love cleaning out closets. Randy used to tell my parents when we were first married that he was afraid to get up in the middle of the night

for a glass of water for fear I would make the bed up before he came back! My need for tidiness and order gives me the illusion of somehow being in control. And yet, I am not in control.

Shortly after our daughter Eliza was born, I had a very serious illness. I must say that during this experience I felt a great sense of irony. On the one hand, God had given us this beautiful newborn to care for, and yet on the other hand, I was unable to care for her. I kept wondering where was God in the midst? I kept wondering what good could possibly come from this experience? And yet, as is always the case with God, some good came out of my suffering. I learned a great deal about myself.

The experience served to remind me yet again of my total dependence on God for everything. With God I have everything I need, and without Him, on my own, I have nothing. And I needed the reminder. I needed the reminder that He is to be the center of my life- that nothing else should ever cloud or overshadow His presence. I also learned that I needed to pray more and do less. "Doing" for me is so much easier. But lying in that bed was a very humbling experience. I was forced to let others care for me and mine- and it was not easy to let someone else take care of my responsibilities. And, of course the number one way folks cared for my family? They fed them. They nourished them. Meals arrived daily, and the food gave them the sustenance to carry on, so much so, that to this day I have the most amazing collection of Tupperware and casserole dishes. One day lying in that bed it was as if a light went on and I realized what a joy it was to have the time to pray instead of worrying about what needed to be tended to next and checked off my list.

But most importantly, and what I want you to hear this morning if you hear nothing else, is this: I came to realize that if the Easter event altered my life forever, then my life better reflect

that change. It made me think: How was I showing others the gift of Easter that Jesus offers all of us? Am I nourishing anyone? How am I doing it? So often I forget that I should talk about God with others- sometimes it is just easier to talk about the weather or children or anything- but God - but what's more important? If I am an Easter person , am I telling anyone the story with my words and deeds? What better way to have those conversations than at Table, just as He did, just as He modeled, by breaking bread with others?

After that experience 23 years ago, I got a lot better at being an Easter person. I realized I am the only plan Jesus has for getting His message out. It's just us, you and me, friend. We are to be His hands and feet in the world. And there are a lot of folks who need the nourishment we can provide. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people were whispering all over town about us, that all we ever do is feed people? Care for people? And talk about our faith? We are Easter people, a resurrected people, living in an often, Good Friday world. Let's nourish others in such a way that they will know we are Christians. Amen.