

Covenant Word

Blessed, Broken, Shared

Psalm 23; Acts 2:42-47; John 10:1-10

them something to cling to when their memories fail and their faith waivers. It is there that he takes the simple elements available at any table and gives them special significance. He takes the bread. He blesses the bread. He breaks the bread. He shares the bread with his friends. (22:14ff) It is this same simple act that awakens Cleopas and his companion as to who sits with them at their table in Emmaus after the crucifixion. (24:13ff)

I think it is remarkable that Christ comes to these two disciples even while they are not aware that they are in the company of the Lord. It is assuring that Jesus does not limit his post-resurrection appearances to those who are fully confident. Instead, he comes to the frightened, bewildered, disappointed, doubtful and sorrowing. He comes to those who cannot quote scripture verses and who have never read the Bible all the way through, even once. No, Jesus comes to those who have given up and are heading home with their tails tucked between their legs. (Barbara Brown Taylor, "Blessed Brokenness," Gospel Medicine)

*A Message by
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Sunday
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Throughout the gospel of Luke, significant things happen when the bread is broken around any table where Christ happens to be sitting. In the homes of Pharisees: (7:36, 11:37, 14) a woman of the city breaks an alabaster flask of ointment on his feet; he tells parables about wedding feasts and who should sit in places of honor; and he launches into a long list of "woe to you" statements after being chastised for not washing his hands before coming to the table. After each dinner party, the scripture plainly states the Pharisees' amazement over this unconventional Jesus and that they are planning to do away with him.

His dinner conversation is often about vineyards and mustard seeds, wheat and figs, and there are stories about fathers who roast fatted calves when their prodigal sons return home. He talks of giving friends bread and not stones; fish and not serpents. (11:5ff) In teaching us to pray, he encourages us to just ask for "daily bread," not a whole week's worth, just bread enough for each day. (11:3) And on a hillside by the Sea of Galilee, he makes sure that the crowds have enough to eat by multiplying one lunch of two fish and five loaves of bread to cover everyone's hunger. (9:10ff)

We frequently find Jesus at the table in his disciples' homes. Simon's mother-in-law serves him after Jesus heals her. (4:38) Jesus talks of old and new wineskins around Matthew's table of assembled tax collectors. The company of that meal gains Jesus a reputation for eating with sinners. (5:29) He gathers with Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany (10:38), and in Jericho, he astonishes everyone when he calls Zacchaeus down from the tree to go to his home. He shares one last meal with his disciples in Jerusalem, giving

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When they arrive in Emmaus, Jesus shakes their hands and prepares to continue on. They insist that he stay, but he is an odd guest. It is *their* house. It is *their* table. It is *their* food, but when the three of them sit down together, it is the guest, Jesus, who acts as if he is the host. He reaches for the bread. He takes the bread. He blesses the bread. He breaks the bread. He offers it to his friends. Maybe it is the oddness of the act that helps their eyes be opened. Maybe it is how familiar it is, for, after all, they saw him do it on the hillside with the crowds as well as in the upper room for Passover, and who knows how many other times that are not recorded by the gospel writers. It is Jesus' custom to take, to bless, to break, to share. And through the torn, fragrant edges of the loaf he holds out to them, they see him just before he vanishes from their sight. (Taylor)

By the time the early church begins to form, we find that they share food and eat together so often that it is their central identifying characteristic and practice. Acts 2:46-47 reads:

**Dear Friends,
Thank you for
wanting to read and
study these thoughts
more carefully.
Please know that I do
not take full credit for
anything that may be
contained within,
because I may have
read or heard
something at some
point during my
pilgrimage and do not
remember its source
and thus, cannot give
the rightful author
his/her credit. I pray
that you will find
inspiration and
encouragement.**



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Worship with us each Sunday
morning at 9 a.m. and for Bible
study at 10:30 a.m.

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

If we follow the example of Jesus, we will find that Jesus is reaching out to those with broken dreams living in a broken world. We know this because every time he is handed a whole loaf of bread, the first thing Jesus will do is break it for the purpose of sharing...

Oh Lord, we gather at this table with the expectation that you are here with us. Take the broken pieces of our lives and re-member us with unity of heart and soul as we strive to make this table a comfort to the hurting, a place of belonging to the alienated and an expression of

Much like the shepherd who keeps his sheep gathered together, the early church gathers for their love feasts, sharing food from house to house. Whatever they had to do, they knew they also had to eat, and so they feed one another. "As often as you do this" might mean more than simply observing the Lord's Supper. It may mean that we meet one another for breakfast, lunch and dinner as often as we can, not just to remember the assurance of God's great love for us but to re-member...to re-constitute...to re-connect...to recharge...to start anew in our relationships with one another, so that the table becomes an altar of forgiveness and belonging. If we are honest, we will confess that we do not digest very well all the stuff that we carry around. So what if instead we come to the table, and lay our burdens down? What if we offer forgiveness and ask for it too? What if we keep an extra chair available so that no one ever feels uninvited, unwelcomed, unworthy? In doing these things, we might just find that re-membering is as easy as asking, "Pass the potatoes please!" (Milton Brasher-Cunningham, "On Beyond Easter," Easter: Christian Reflection, A Series in Faith and Ethics, Baylor University) We might discover the same glad and generous hearts that the early church possessed.

forgiveness that binds us together. We are not just mimicking your actions. We are believers of the resurrection who gather in this place, at this time, aware that our brothers and sisters in Cuba and in Uganda, yea, around this world in all places, are precious in your sight. For our place at the table, we do thank you. For your sacrifice that makes this table possible, we thank you. And for love that is enduring and unending, we thank you. Amen.

At the table with the disciples, and at the table of the early church, Jesus took the bread. Jesus blessed the bread. Jesus broke the bread. And Jesus shared it with his friends. Receive this the bread of life and the cup of salvation with glad and generous hearts.

If we can ever believe that Jesus prefers to work with broken people, re-membering might get easier. If we follow the example of Jesus, we will find that Jesus is reaching

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broken world. We know this because every time he is handed a whole loaf of bread, the first thing Jesus will do is break it for the purpose of sharing...just like he did with his own flesh and blood. It is this way of life that God has shown through Christ that we are all to do: take what we have been given. Give it a blessing, whether we like it or not. Break it and share it. We do not have to eat it all by ourselves. We share it and in the sharing, the broken pieces bring us, all the broken ones, together into one body. And once we are re-membered, we will easily recognize the risen the Lord in our midst. (Taylor)