



SUNDAY SERMON

Breakfast with Jesus

Last week we left off with Christians dancing at music festivals, and this week we kick off with a story of heavenly breakfast. Easter season is shaping up to be glorious indeed!

How many of you, are like Jesus - breakfast people? I don't know about you but a good breakfast meal to start the day excites me to a level I should be embarrassed to admit but frankly - I'm not. I'm from New Jersey remember - the land of 24 hour diners where you can order omelets and home fries at midnight. I can't help it - Breakfast is in my DNA.

While my favorite thing about breakfast is no doubt the food - There are in fact other things I love about this wonderful meal. Consider your favorite breakfast memories and you like me will quickly realize that breakfast is a time of real intimacy with the greatest loves of your life. The people who aren't afraid to hug you before you've brushed your teeth or combed your hair.

This morning we read of Jesus sharing breakfast with some of his greatest loves. I'm struck by the nurturing, domestic qualities of Jesus here. He's Busily, Quietly, Lovingly working to ready breakfast to greet his friends as they make their way to the shore after a long night of fishing. Reminds me of breakfast on Christmas morning growing up. My sister and I would be playing with our new presents as my mom would steal away to make a favorite breakfast of pancakes, eggs and bacon. One final gift - thoughtful, loving nourishment.

In this passage from John there is no doubt that Nourishment is on the mind of Jesus when he prepares this last breakfast for his friends. Feeding their bellies with real food, Jesus also happens to offer them guidance for their mission as he unveils God's vision for the role of the faithful. That we, those of us who love Jesus, are to be a tending and feeding kind of people.

Jesus minces no words. Loving Jesus is to honor his request when he earnestly asks and encourages his beloveds to: "Feed my lambs... Tend the sheep... Feed my sheep." It's a threefold declaration of purpose that foreshadows the threefold essence that Christians will come to know as the heart of Christianity. This morning what we hear from Jesus is the Holy Trinity of Mission.

Scripture reminds us that the Christian faith is an invitation to participate in the world-shaping love of God that Jesus' life and death unleashed. We who recognize this radical love, are invited to consider how to care for those who are the ones in need of feeding or tending.

continued

DATE

Easter 3
Sunday, May 5, 2019

PREACHER

The Rev. Amy Molina-Moore

As those who feed and those who tend, we are in a position to create great blessings in the world. What a gift! No doubt we have much to offer, but in our offering we must take a moment to acknowledge a potential pitfall that threatens even the most well intentioned of us. As co-participants in the blessings of God we must be careful not to fall into the trap that would have us believe that in attending to the tending and feeding of others, we alone are the blessed givers, while the sheep, the other, are the inferior receivers.

As many of you have experienced in your own justice work and community outreach - once you jump into the blessing business you quickly realize that the strict line between blessing givers and blessing receivers is wildly porous making it impossible to even tell which side the blessing originated from. That's the thing about blessing - it multiplies, it can't be contained and no one group of people, regardless of how much privilege they may have, has exclusive rights to being the conduits of God's blessing. When we serve the other, they're not an empty vessel waiting for us to pour into them. They're a full life waiting to participate in the mutual exchange of blessing that God has in mind for all of us. The "other" may be poor and struggling, but they're still a life with much to teach and much to share. Any offer of tending and feeding must also be accompanied by this deep awareness that while some sheep may need more feeding and tending than others, the truth is that we are all sheep who at different points of our lives will need to be fed and tended to.

This notion that the "lowly others" are powerful in their own right, is not a new-fangled idea initiated by the rise of political correctness and post-colonial criticism; The powerful witness of the wisdom, gifts and strength of the marginalized other is a reality championed by the God of Israel, by the God of Jesus since the dawn of time.

This becomes abundantly clear in the inclusion and story of our dear sister Rahab. Now some of you may know this, others may not, but Rahab was a lowly outsider, not an Israelite, and yet she came to play a crucial role in the Israelites success in taking the promised land. The Israelites had to honor and thank a foreign, unmarried, prostitute for their success in becoming the settled community that they envisioned. When one thinks of a hero who is going to make Israel's dreams of a forever home come true, a woman like her does not jump to the top of the list. Luckily for us God's story is all about heroes cropping up from unlikely places. Rahab's contribution to the people of Israel is undoubted. Even for Christians she's a figure of significance as she is named as an ancestor of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. Rahab personifies the blessing that is possible when we see the other as gifted and wise, rather than just as lowly and other. Because of her courage, insight and sacrifice, Rahab eventually earns respect - but before she ever made it into the who's who of Biblical figures, Rahab lived a life of marginalized, denigrated otherness.

In her book, *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes*, Alice Ogden Bellis reminds us of the world that Rahab inhabited. She writes "Harlots were viewed as very low members of society, lacking in wisdom, morals and religious knowledge." These kinds of women, then as now, were viewed by society as pitiful, regrettable and lacking in worthiness - and yet while society at large tolerated her at best; Rahab transcended people's negative expectations and showed great faith, vision and courage. Bellis continues by explaining that Rahab is "heroic because she is a woman of

faith who takes risks based on that faith. In addition, she is clever like the midwives of Exodus. She outwits the king of Jericho, ignores his death-affirming command and acts in a way that affirms life for herself, her family and the Israelite people.”

Marginal, outcast, sinful, lowly, foreign others have always had much to teach the world of the faithful. We, the faithful have not always been great at listening to these kinds of voices, but thankfully this reminder has always been there. As we go forward from this place committed to tending and feeding God’s sheep - let us all vow to remember one thing. That we, all of us, regardless of our circumstances, are all sheep. And we all share one shepherd. Jesus the risen one. Amen.