

The Last Breakfast

Sermon May 5, 2019 Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon

Can I ask you to share with a person close to you the best breakfast you ever had?

Breakfast is the setting for the Gospel lesson today. Just the best breakfast ever.

Many commentators make a strong point that the disciples had returned to their old way of life in fishing. Not all of them. They weren't all fishers, so Peter's invitation to go fishing might have made the group divide; there is nothing written about that. Nonetheless, seven of them go fishing with Peter. They had just experienced a discouraging night with nothing in their nets. Then the Resurrected Jesus directs them to try again and they catch 153 fish.

But, Peter's return to his previous life will be radically transformed. His fishing expedition becomes a new experience of abundance, meant to remind us of the miracle at the wedding in Cana. This morning it is fish; then it was 120-180 gallons of wine. Perhaps it also brought a memory of the feeding of the 5,000 men plus, uncounted women and children with leftovers enough to fill 12 baskets. The nets that had been empty when used under the disciples' own power are filled almost to bursting with the risen Christ. Who is the host and cook? YES!! Jesus then prepares them a meal.

The Passion experience is bookmarked by two meals: a supper and a breakfast. This "last breakfast" once again transforms a moment of deprivation and insufficiency into a feast, with unexpected blessing made available for all. The Last Supper was a deceptively simple play, an elegant drama with all of us given a part to play.

John writes that three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. And three times he responds to Peter's love by giving him something to do: feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.

There is confusion between the different gospels' Easter narratives about Peter's denial and switching them at this point is easy. In the Passion Narrative in John, Peter is asked, "Are you not a disciple?," and he replied, "I am not." The questioner was a young woman who was a doorkeeper. Peter said he was not one of that man's disciples. I think that is one of the keys that makes this an interesting passage: Jesus is not forgiving Peter here for something Peter said in another gospel. In fact, Jesus is saying, "Yes you are, Yes you are, Yes, you are!" three times. Yes, you are a disciple! Peter is capable of carrying on after the death of Jesus. In spite of it all, Peter has a wonderful mission.

If the Last Supper asks us to remember Jesus, the last breakfast asks us to act on that memory: not just share stories, but act in the ways of feeding the flock. Two meals, two directives: Remember me, then, “Feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my sheep.”

We have been studying churches - that’s where I was last Sunday, down in Seattle attending three very different services. I will share these with all the participants once we all share our photos with each other. Today’s gospel lesson could easily be a blueprint for a denomination, or a single congregation, couldn’t it?

Breakfast with conversation. The menu is decided: fish and bread.

Tuna fish sandwiches would do...I imagine over time, a vegetarian off-shoot would show up with fruit salad and croissants! Some would debate if coffee could be added, if a mimosa is over the top or OK.

But I can easily see it: St Swithin’s Church: We do brunch!

My imagination just keeps on rolling: Instead of little communion cups, coffee mugs!

Well, no matter what the menu, and we know there are some who would only ever go for barbecue fish and plain bread on a beach, early in the morning...

Then the rich, wonderful conversation: how will we feed the sheep today? Will it be literally feeding, through good farming practices? Becoming involved in the eco-justice movement to fight for food security? Filling the shelves at a food bank? Or helping out at the Shelbourne Community Kitchen?

“Tend my lambs” speaks to me of nurturing community. Two things are absolutely essential to feel happy: 1) a sense of belonging to a community and 2) the belief that what you do matters. Those are the two key predictors of fulfillment and productivity: belonging and purpose.

We can do that: we do that already, working to support this community of faith and to support others. We can invite our people to belong to a community of faith that values their participation. We can invite our people into relationship with a God who lavishes grace, meaning and purpose in equal measures.

The gift of the last breakfast is this: Jesus believes in us. The Sacred Spirit entrusts the mission to us

I wonder when, not if, we have felt the same as Peter. Discouraged by the empty nets in our lives. Nets that were once full. But here is this new beginning; this resurrection of community, meaning and purpose. We need time over a second roll, and more coffee, to let this sink in; the Holy One believes in us.

And so, Jesus shows up on that shore, hosts a meal one more time, and tells Peter, tells us, “I believe in you. I know who you are and I love you. And yes, you are exactly the disciple I need, the disciple the world needs, for God to the world.”