

Easter 3 B
Luke 24:36b-48
April 14, 2024

“Daily Bread”
Rev. Dr. Brandon S. Perrine

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’”

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I love food. I really do. I love cooking it, and serving it, and eating it, and sharing it with friends. Anyone else? Looks like I’m not alone here.

My partner Charles and I have made it somewhat of a mission to ensure that our nieces and nephew also love food and are not picky eaters. Since they were small, I’ve been planning meals to cook with them when they’re

visiting or when we're visiting them. When we go to see Antoinette and Alexandria in Pasadena, CA, I take a collection of recipes with me and every evening we cook a meal together and share it with grandparents, aunties, cousins, and friends, before games of Mahjong.

A couple of weeks ago, when my sister's kids, Levi and Kadence, were visiting, we took them out for Mexican food, Sushi, and Southern cuisine, but we also cooked together, making shrimp and grits, broiled salmon and asparagus, and bacon mac. It's amazing how easy-to-please kids are when they're invested in preparing the food they're going to eat! Our nieces and nephew happily chow down on veggies, salads, and mains that they'd never eat at home.

Our Confirmation youth have also been doing some cooking. When they gather on Sunday evenings for a couple of hours, our time begins with them making a meal together. It's generally simple stuff—spaghetti, tacos, homemade mac n' cheese, nachos, a baked potato bar, personal pizzas, pancakes—but there's something about preparing and eating a meal together that breaks the ice that tends to build up between meetings.

Food brings people together. That's why we share meals before sharing in-depth spiritual and biblical discussion during our Advent and Lenten studies. That's why we invite newcomers to a Welcome Brunch, like the one we're hosting after this service. That's why we share food before making big decisions at Annual Meeting. Food brings people together. There's something truly sacramental about sharing a meal with others.

A sacrament, loosely defined, is a ritual action that connects us to the divine. Sharing food is sacramental because it really, truly, breaks down the barriers between ourselves and others and the earth, and opens us to the possibility of genuine communion with one another. And that is holy. That is divine. Jesus got this.

Jesus is often found in the pages of scripture eating with people. In fact, there are ten such stories in Luke's gospel alone! He uses these occasions

as opportunities for connecting, sharing, serving, and teaching. He ate with a tax collector named Levi; was having dinner with Simon the Pharisee when an unnamed woman anointed his feet with costly perfume; fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five small loaves and two fish; ate with Mary and her sister Martha, who busied herself over preparations instead of participating in the conversation; failed to wash his hands before dinner with another Pharisee; cured a sick man on his way to dinner at the home of yet another Pharisee; invited himself to Zacchaeus' home for a meal; shared Passover with friends; broke bread with two strangers from the road to Emmaus; and finally, he ate fish with the disciples in this morning's reading.

In each instance, Jesus used the occasion as an opportunity for connecting, sharing, serving, and teaching. Sharing food is sacramental because it really, truly, breaks down the barriers between ourselves and others and the earth, and opens us to the possibility of genuine communion with one another. And that is holy. That is divine. Just look at Jesus.

"Have you anything to eat?" he asked his bewildered disciples in this morning's text. They gave him food, watched him eat, examined the wounds in his hands, and studied the love in his eyes. This was no ghost, no revived corpse. It was really Jesus. The food settled the matter. As food so often does. The disciples would now bear witness.

How often do we sit down to a meal with neighbors, friends, family members, strangers, or, God forbid, enemies, and leave the table with something to tell others about? I can't tell you how many times folks have shared with me about their experiences with Winter Dinners and the wonderful conversations and food shared with former strangers!

How often do we sit down to a meal and stare at screens, or the paper, or a book and miss out on the genuine communion that was possible?

How often do we sit down to a meal and think about the many hands that touched the food we're about to eat on its way from field or farm to table?

The way that earth, and water, and sunshine combine to nourish seeds, which grow into plants, which flower and bear fruit? Is mealtime sacred? Shouldn't it be?

Perhaps it's because we misunderstand Jesus when he teaches the disciples to pray, "give us this day our daily bread." Perhaps we think that it means something akin to "may our bellies be always full." We too often treat food like fuel instead of sacred and mealtimes as another mandatory stop on the way to whatever is next instead of coming to the table for an experience of authentic communion with others, with the earth, and with the divine. In light of the importance Jesus placed on mealtime, it seems more likely that his words mean something like, "may we have all that we need to sustain us for abundant life, full-bodied life, kingdom of heaven life."

This week, whether we're eating alone or sharing food with others, let's do it mindfully that it might be an experience of authentic communion with others, with the earth, with the divine. And, as with the disciples, may the holy be revealed to us as we do. Amen.