



Pastor Gwen's Message
3rd Sunday in Easter
Holy Food
Sunday April 18, 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Last week we talked about our human doubts and fears that were not unlike the ones that Thomas had regarding Jesus being alive, being raised from the dead. Jesus gave the disciples His offer of peace as he said more than once, "Peace be with you". And then Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on them. Our Gospel lesson for today is from Luke and begins with Jesus standing among those same disciples giving them the same greeting, "Peace be with you." This telling of Jesus' meeting up with the men who had been following Him for the last three years, tells us that Jesus asked for something to eat. The disciples gave him a piece of broiled fish and Jesus ate it. Rather interesting. But then Jesus goes on to open their minds to the Scriptures.

When Jesus does this He begins by telling these men that "everything written about him in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled". This encourages them to look back in time, not just to His suffering, death and resurrection, but to also look forward to proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name. So they look back and think of how the

Israelites were promised a Savior, but also who He would be and what would happen to Him when he came to earth.

For a long time I have dreamed about Jesus opening my mind to the Scriptures. I always wanted to be better at memorizing Scripture. I still desire to understand more of what the Bible is telling us. Remember when we as a Bible study group had Timothy Wengert lead us on a CD study of the Book of Concord? What a scholar, he was. He seemed to be able to verbalize not only where things were in the Bible but also comprehend how the whole story fit so perfectly together. I really admired him for his knowledge of Scripture. But even more than that I admire the faith Mr. Wengert has to believe all those Old Testament and New Testament stories. To me he is a great example of what I imagine that Jesus meant by opening the disciples minds to understand the Scriptures.

Going back to our text we hear Jesus say that his suffering, death, burial and resurrection were all written down. Verse 47 says, "that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." This paragraph is quite interesting to me. It think what Jesus is saying here to the disciples and to us, is that we are to learn the past, live in the present and then prepare others for the future. And so Jesus opened their minds to Scripture. He then reminded them to repent so forgiveness will be theirs and then to proclaim His promises to all nations. And fortunate for the disciples, they were able to witness Jesus' death and resurrection. Thankfully, this appearance by Jesus gave them some reassurance and certainly enhanced their faith that He was the Messiah. After all, remember last weeks message where they were afraid and hunkered down in the upper room, wondering what would happen next.

Their inspiration arrives as Jesus comes to them and lays down some foundation once again that His story was predictable, as it was told by Moses, the prophets and the psalm writers in Scripture. They can now have hope that with repentance, God will forgive them all their sins. And then leads them to go tell the world what He had done for them. And the last line in our reading today, "You are witnesses of these things." Yes, those disciples were witnesses to Jesus. They were there and saw that had happened firsthand. We too have

seen through their eyes, by their witness to us that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

So even though we were not there, we have testimony of these witnesses who were. We read their stories, just as they heard stories from the prophets and psalmists. We are so blessed to have these great witnesses.

One way we witness is with the help of food. Here is what I mean: Jesus became known to the disciples in the “breaking of the bread”. Today in our reading Jesus asks for something to eat. And they give him a piece of fish to eat. They then know that He is real, not a ghost. They see that it is Jesus standing before them.

Obviously, you can tell just by looking at me that I love to eat. Yes, ladies, as long as it is not green kale. I do think that food is important. Today after worship we will go to our fellowship hall to enjoy some treats. But more importantly than that we will share stories of how God is working in our lives. You see, there is no better way to get to know people than across a table. Food brings us together. It is a common time to share our stories. Breaking bread together provides an opportunity for folks of the faith to bond together. Food, including the Lord’s Supper we celebrate each week, is the lifeblood of this congregation.

I cannot tell you how many times I have said that our coffee hours here is an extension of our worship time together. Food is a common denominator for all people. When Rodney, the kids and I joined St Olaf many years ago a wonderful lady named Corrine Christenson gladly trained me to be a funeral luncheon coordinator. I think she actually was so excited to have some young blood to help out but funeral food was her ministry at St Olaf. The first thing she showed me was a stack of notebooks. She took the top one and showed me what had happened, what was served and who worked at the last few funerals. It was a complete log of a funeral with food. As I came to discover, she had kept these records for over 40 years at St Olaf. I was stunned and wondered why she would do this and who would actually care what was served, or who brought what, or how many ate the menu of funerals past. But you see it was Corrine’s way of recording what was done before to make things better for the next funeral. It was not so much what she accomplished, but the lifting up of the importance of the funeral meal in the life of the family

being served. Her efforts, bless her heart, were important to the families she served as they were grieving their loss.

When I first came to Christ the Servant, one of my first coffee hours was around Halloween. I remember the hostess bringing some black netting complete with spiders, some pumpkins, a ghost or two to decorate the serving table. I thought that this coffee hour thing was really amazing, and the food was pretty good too. It almost seemed at times that the woman who was in charge of coffee hour tried to out do each other with treats and decorations. Little did I know at that time what an impact that coffee hour had on people. I don't know if any of you remember, but I used to have to encourage people to leave when it came to one o'clock. This time spent at coffee hour was the highlight of not just the day but also the week for many folks. It was and still is the way that we as a group stay connected. God is truly present in our conversations as we share what is happening in our lives.

So, food is an important way to not only stay connected but also to proclaim where God is in our world. I do hope that our reinvented coffee ½ hour will be successful and that you will stay and join in. But my true hope is that you will also then stay on and join in our Bible study, where we read scripture and together try to decipher that God's word is saying to us today.

As Jesus said to his disciples, "repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Park Fall, oh I mean Jerusalem." So as we remember the stories of the Old Testament we hear the promises of a Savior to come and we read the accounts of witnesses as to what God did through Jesus on the cross. Let us move to the future and be sent out from our worship experience and our coffee hour to share with the world, with all people the good news of what Jesus did for us on that cross and through his resurrection. Forgiveness of our sins, abundant life and the promise of eternal life are ours through the gracious love of God in Christ Jesus. So go and be "witnesses to these things!"

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

AMEN