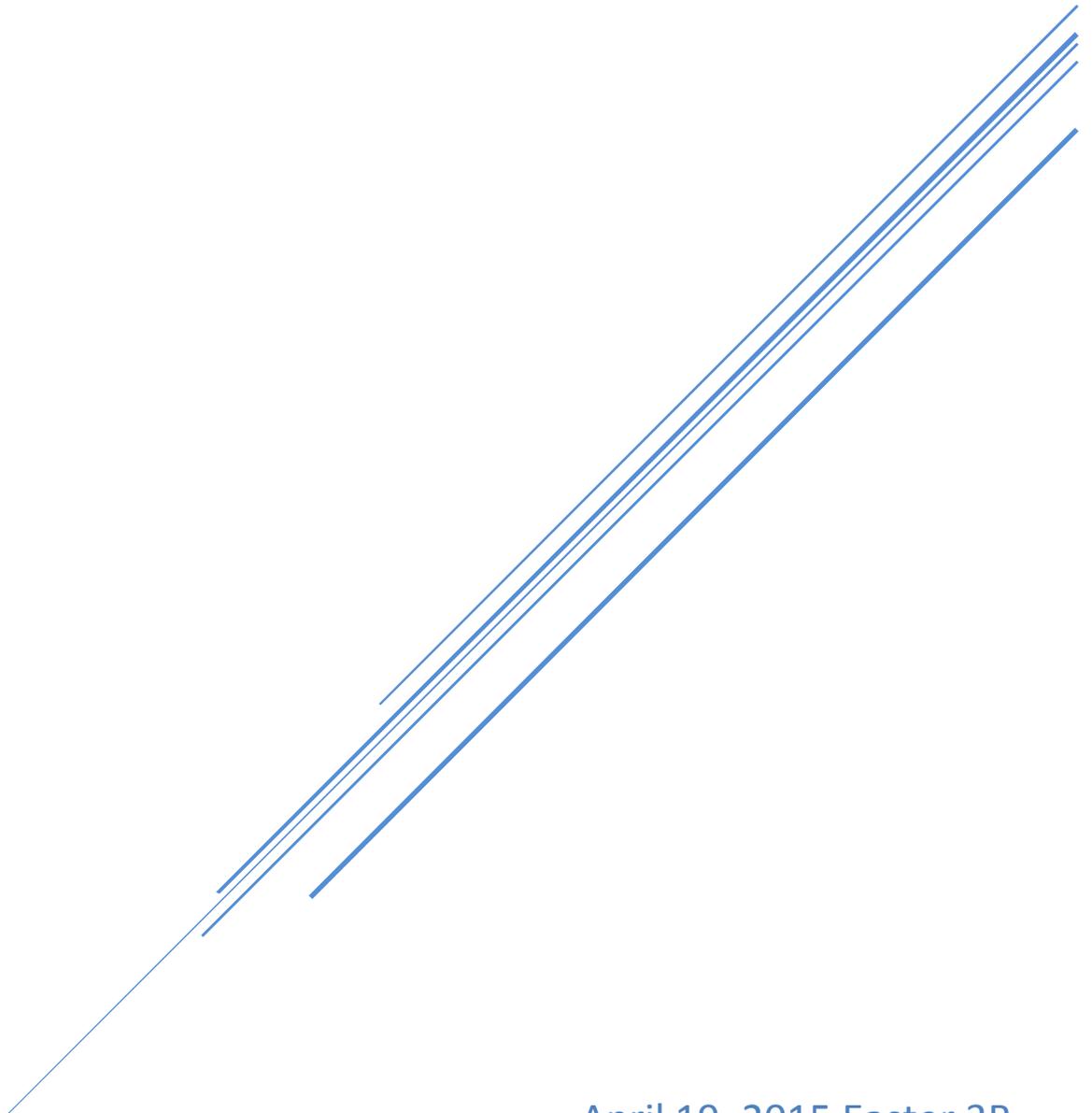


MORE INTIMATE THAN SEX?

Luke 24:36-48



April 19, 2015 Easter 3B
Pastor Brad

More intimate than sex? What could possibly be more intimate than sex? Simple: food.

Our Gospel lesson for this morning is a continuation of the previous passage where two guys – disciples, but not part of the twelve -- meet Jesus on the Road to Emmaus. They don't recognize him, but they talk about the empty tomb and they talk about Jesus, and the stranger – who was Jesus – "... beginning with Moses and all the Prophets... [He] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

When it gets dark they invite the stranger in for the night, he blesses the meal, they finally recognize him for who he is, and immediately they head back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

Cut to the room in Jerusalem where the eleven and those with them were gathered. As they were discussing their experience on the road and at dinner with the risen Christ, he appears, as they say, 'in the midst of them.' "Peace be with you" he says – a pretty standard greeting – in Hebrew, *Shalom Aleichem*.

Now, even though the two guys and the eleven disciples were just talking about him, they're still frightened. Jesus patiently shows them his hands and feet, encouraging them to actually touch him – to feel his wounds. Then comes the part I think is really cool. Some folks think it's silly but I think it's one of the finer moments of Jesus' ministry. In the middle of the disciples' grief and terror – like they'd seen a ghost or a zombie or something -- Jesus asks them "Do you have anything here to eat?"

Seriously!

Jesus has been murdered. When we say 'crucified' it's easy to forget the reality of just how brutal and unjust Jesus' death really was. Jesus was murdered, executed – lynched, if you think about it – beaten, tortured, and strung up. He was laid to rest in a cave-like tomb, he came back to life, and was hanging out with his friends and disciples. The world had been forever changed and Jesus' first priority after they examine the holes in his hands and feet – I love it – is "Got anything to eat?"

These are the events that millions would ultimately build their faith around – and their church – and THIS is the central figure's most pressing question?

"Congratulations, Mr. & Mrs. Smith, it's a boy! Got any pretzels?"

“Excuse me, Mr. President? Mr. Putin is here to apologize for the Ukraine. He wants to give Crimea back.”

“Thanks, John, have you seen the Dominos coupons?”

Jesus has been raised -- from the dead! – the Spirit of God is loose in the world, and that’s the question at hand. “Do you have anything here to eat?” – Although to be fair, Jesus hasn’t had a bite to eat since the Last Supper. Feels a lot longer than 3 days doesn’t it?

Reminds me of the times I’ve had teenagers around. You know – they head right for the fridge after church or a ballgame or a concert, open the door, stare at everything in there for a while and ask, “Got anything to eat?”

Anything to eat? Are you serious? There’s plenty to eat. But maybe that’s the problem. We have plenty of food, but we don’t have anyone to share it with. Families have become so busy that they rarely sit at the table at the same time anymore. One stays late at work. Another has a game. Another has a scout meeting, throw in a church committee meeting -- or two -- and you begin to get a sense of how and why the family unit seems to be falling apart.

Then there are those who would gladly seize any opportunity to share a meal with someone. Single people, widows & widowers, those who’ve become caregivers to the ones with whom they used to share meals – people who know how to sit down to eat, but feel awkward; isolated and alone at their own kitchen tables, or on the couch in front of the TV with a frozen dinner on their laps. You see them all the time in restaurants and coffee shops.

Restaurants are full. Lives are empty. We see people holding signs all the time that read “Will work for food.” But do they ever get to visit over that meal?

You see, something remarkable happens when we sit around a table, face to face, sharing our food and our stories and our lives with one another. Friendships begin and develop over a meal. When talking to the kids I’ve mentored over the years, I’ve found that sitting over a burger and stealing their fries is the best way to get them to talk about what’s going on their lives.

When I first got sober in Florida, I never turned down an invitation to eat at someone’s home. Not because I was all that hungry, or that I didn’t know how to cook, or

that I couldn't afford to eat. It's just that, living alone, I enjoyed sharing a meal with someone – anyone.

So when Rick and Julie invited me to share Thanksgiving dinner with their family I accepted. Rick sat next to me at choir rehearsal – one of those back row troublemakers, and that dinner was the beginning of a long friendship. Thanksgiving 'anything-but-turkey' dinners with board games became a tradition. I watched all three of their kids graduate from high school. It's a friendship I value dearly and those early years of sobriety wouldn't've been the same without meals shared around Julie's table.

In Scripture, the table is an image symbolizing communication between people. If we are going to save the family – biological or otherwise – we need to save the table. We have to be willing to eat together.

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. If we are going to transform the world, we had better learn to sit down and eat with each other. "Got anything to eat" may just be the most important question we could ask.

There are several stories in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus eats with people – all kinds of people. He eats with prominent leaders. He eats with sinners. He eats with tax collectors and prostitutes. Rich and poor, Healthy and sick, male and female. He eats in private homes, and out in the open country. In one chapter he feeds 5,000 people and in the next he shares an intimate meal with Mary and Martha.

And in looking at these various settings, it becomes apparent that most, if not all of the meals Jesus ate were intimate situations. Even when the 5,000 get food, Jesus has them sit in small groups so that each person is part of an intimate circle.

One writer has suggested that eating together is the most intimate thing we can do. That's why it's such an important part of our lives. That's why I wish we could find a way to share meals together at church more often.

A few thoughts on God and intimacy.

One of the main themes that Bernard of Clairvaux wrote about as a 12th century monk was the theme of intimacy -- Jesus as the tender lover. If you've ever read Song of Songs, you probably wonder how it ever got into the Bible in the first place. Whew – racy stuff. You should read it.

Anyhow, using Song of Songs, Bernard wrote multiple sermons exploring the intimacy portrayed within its pages. He revealed his passionate love for Jesus, and instead of portraying our relationship with Jesus in the cold contemporary language of a “personal relationship” with Christ, Bernard compares the relationship to the love between a bride and groom. So get this – in Genesis 2 the bride and groom kiss and become one flesh. Bernard writes that the kiss depicted in Song of Songs is the ‘kiss of Christ’ and so we become one flesh with Christ.

Another intimacy that comes to mind when reflecting on the kiss of Christ, is the intimacy between mother and her child when she kisses the child’s boo-boo. While there is no medicine in the touching of one’s lips to a skinned knee or elbow, the child invariably feels better. He’s healed, but not cured. It’s a miracle! Can you think of anything more intimate?

So we have the intimacy of a parent and child, and we have intimacy between spouses; but one other form of intimacy that is similar, but no less intimate is the intimacy of best friends. In fact, for those who have only experienced abusive or absent parents or spouses, the relationship between friends is a much better metaphor.

Friends can sit for hours in silence and not say a word. On the other hand, friends can’t wait to tell each other everything that happened that day or that week, or that year. It’s like they’ve never been apart. Either way they are still communicating.

That kind of intimacy should be our goal when it comes to our relationship with God and with each other. “Pray without ceasing...” as it says in Thessalonians, is a mighty tall order don’t you think? But when you consider how much is said in the silence between friends, it doesn’t seem quite so impossible.

Think about those times when you sat around a table and ate with other people. It’s not the food you remember, but the people who ate with you. The Greek word *koinonia*, translates best as fellowship, community, joint participation, intimacy -- and interestingly enough, intercourse. *Koinonia* is the word that best describes what we’re shooting for in the church: the community and the intimacy and the fellowship with others in the blessed community of the beloved children of God.

Another thing that came to mind this week is that the meals Jesus ate were also very simple. There were only two fish and five loaves of bread. Mary and Martha didn’t put out

some extravagant spread that we know of. And even if they did the focus wasn't on the food. The focus is on the people around the table.

Those of us who have a difficult time with food and eating – whether we eat too much or we're prone to eat too little – we may find comfort knowing that family meals are not about the food. Potluck dinners and harvest festivals are not about the food. The bread and cup at the Lord's Supper, or communion, are not about the food. What it IS about is the *koinonia*, the fellowship, the intimacy, the communion – the sharing of our lives as we gather around a common table. When we do that, every table is the Lord's Table.

If the only thing we get when we eat is food, we will soon get hungry again. A true meal happens in a family – a community – when hearts and souls are fed healthy portions of the most intimate kind of love.

BTW, I found five places in the Bible where it says God is our portion.¹

When Jesus asks “Do you have anything to eat?” I don't think he's really concerned about a physical need or hunger, unless he's worried about the disciples not eating. You know how grief is.

I think he's more concerned about their – and our -- spiritual hunger for fellowship and communion with each other.

Most United Methodists celebrate the Lord's Supper – we call it communion -- on the first Sunday of every month. It's an open table, meaning all are welcome; and the focus isn't on the food, but on the acceptance we find, and the intimacy we share with God, and with each other.

“Do you have anything to eat?” Why, yes. Yes we do.

Amen.

¹ [Psalm 16:5](#) - Lord, you alone are **my portion** and **my cup**; you make **my** lot secure.

[Psalm 73:26](#) - My flesh and **my** heart may fail, but God is the strength of **my** heart and **my portion** forever.

[Psalm 119:57](#) - You are **my portion**, Lord; I have promised to obey your words.

[Psalm 142:5](#) - I cry to you, Lord; I say, “You are **my** refuge, **my portion** in the land of the living.”

[Lamentations 3:24](#) - I say to **myself**, “The Lord is **my portion**; therefore I will wait for him.”