

Breakfast with Jesus

(Exodus 12:1-8, 11-20 and John 21:9-14)

People say that if you can remember the name of your first grade teacher, he or she must have made a significant impact on your life. I suppose the nature of the impact depends on whether you remember that special teacher in a positive or negative way. Fortunately for me, I remember Mrs. Abrams in a very positive way.

One of the things I remember most about Mrs. Abrams and my first grade year at John B. Wright School in Tucson, Arizona is bread. Yes, the highlight of my first year of school was baking bread. It was an all day event that began with a field trip to the little corner grocery store where we bought all the ingredients. The day ended in a wonderful experience of sharing.

I can still remember mixing the dough and kneading it. The smell of yeast filled the little classroom. The hardest part of the process was waiting for the dough to rise. But anticipation grew as the bread baked in the ovens. It smelled so good! But the longest part of the day was waiting for the bread to cool so it could be sliced and eaten.

When that time finally arrived, Mrs. Abrams cut two slices from each of our individual loaves. I smeared butter and honey on my slices and reveled in the flavor as fresh baked bread, butter and honey became as one. This was the first time in my young life that I had ever eaten something that I had made with my own hands. This made the experience even more special!

After we had eaten our slices, Mrs. Abrams helped us wrap up the remainder of our loaves of bread. She told us to take what was left home to our families because “bread is meant to be shared.”

Sometimes when I receive the gift of Holy Communion, I remember the community of that first grade classroom. We worked together to make our individual loaves of bread. Then we shared that bread within our own little community. But then, that bread went out into the world – to our mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters – to be shared by a larger community. My experience in Mrs. Abrams’ first grade class symbolizes the biblical meaning of bread and its relationship to community. Please pray with me.

And now, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, O God, the one who gives us the bread of life in Christ Jesus. Open our hearts and minds to the scripture read and the word proclaimed in this place. Reveal the bread of life to us in new and wonderful ways. Amen.

In the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible there are 330 references to bread. No, I didn’t personally count them, but I trust my source. Bread is a powerful symbol for us and our Judao-Christian heritage. It symbolizes hospitality (Gen 18:1-8). It

is associated with the making and keeping of vows and covenants (Gen 28:20-22). It became a gesture of goodwill as Joseph provided for his estranged family (Gen 45:23). In Deuteronomy (8:7ff) it was a sign of God's care. And in the story of the Passover that Robin read to us from chapter 12 of Exodus, bread becomes an important beginning for our salvation history as God, working through Moses and Aaron, prepares to deliver the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.

Bread is also a way for us to show our care for others. "Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor." This is from Proverbs 22:9. Bread symbolizes compassion and forgiveness. "If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat." That's from Proverbs 25:21. Bread is a key element in the gospel stories telling of the miracle feeding of the crowds that gathered around Jesus. The miracle feeding stories in scripture illustrate that the bread we share in community is truly multiplied! Just like that bread I baked in Mrs. Abram's first grade class.

And we are all familiar with the way Jesus used bread to teach the disciples to pray – "give us this day our daily bread." But the most powerful image of bread comes during the Last Supper on the night when Jesus gave himself up for us. As he celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples on that night, he said "this is my body, broken for you." It's in the eating of bread that we remember God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ. Bread is a central staple in our salvation history.

Finally, at the end of the Gospel of John, bread points to the resurrection. In this third appearance after the resurrection, Jesus invites the disciples

to "Come and have breakfast." His invitation is the heart of our gospel lesson this morning because it intersects our lives as we prepare to celebrate World Communion Sunday. Breakfast with Jesus.

Jesus appears on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. It's just after day break and some of the disciples are returning from an unsuccessful night of fishing – their nets are empty. Jesus calls out to them and tells them to cast their nets off the right side of the boat. Doing as they are told, the disciples come up with a full net – 153 fish in all – the text tells us.

As they come ashore with their miraculous catch, they see a fire burning – a charcoal cooking fire. Fish are sizzling on the grill and there is bread baking – fresh bread. "Come and have breakfast," Jesus says to the weary fishermen. Like the bread I baked in Mrs. Abrams first grade class, Jesus has prepared this meal with his own hands. It is a special meal indeed.

It has been said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. But for the disciples, this breakfast will become the most important meal of their lives; breakfast with Jesus!

This story in John's gospel has important points of continuity with many of the miracles of Jesus' ministry, from turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, to the feeding of the five thousand. The abundant catch of fish and the breakfast on the beach reminds us that Jesus' gifts continue beyond the resurrection. This story bears witness to the truth that "... from God's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

The abundant catch of fish in the disciples' net and the breakfast of bread and fish also remind us that God's gift continues to be available today in the

risen Christ just as it was 2,000 years ago in the incarnate Jesus. Breakfast with Jesus is a story of celebration for us – the post-resurrection community – because it demonstrates that all life is grounded in God’s abundance – the unprecedented and unexpected gift of Jesus Christ.

As we are gathering here today to worship and praise God and to share in God’s gift of Holy Communion, Christians all over the world are also gathering for this same purpose. Today Christians come together to be united as one voice to the world. Especially on this day we gather to hear God speak through our communion in one voice. The message that God’s one voice speaks is a message of unity. While each of us is unique and special in God’s eyes, we are all one with each other – the body of Christ. God’s call to unity is a call to live peaceably with our neighbors. God’s call to unity is a call for peace – peace in our time.

Come and have breakfast. Taste the bread of life, bread for our journey together. Remember that we are an ancient people with a long tradition. Once slaves in Egypt, we were freed from bondage by the hand of God. Remember that the bread we ate in Egypt had no leavening because it had to be prepared and eaten quickly so that we could escape to the land promised by God.

Come and have breakfast. Eat the bread of life, the bread we all hunger for. Taste the cup of our salvation. Remember that we are communion people, united as one. We once were slaves to sin, but have been freed by the body and blood of Jesus Christ that was sacrificed for us – the ultimate gift from God. Remember that the bread we eat is the body of Christ which was given up

for us – for you and for me – the community of faithful believers.

Come and have breakfast with Jesus. Join together with Christians the world over this morning. Come and have breakfast. It just might be the most important meal of your life.