

Sermon Oct 6 2019 World Communion Sunday

Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon—  
there we sat down and there we wept  
when we remembered Zion.  
On the willows there  
we hung up our harps.  
For there our captors  
asked us for songs,  
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,  
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'

How could we sing the Lord's song  
in a foreign land?  
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
let my right hand wither!  
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not set Jerusalem  
above my highest joy.

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites  
the day of Jerusalem's fall,  
how they said, 'Tear it down! Tear it down!  
Down to its foundations!'  
O daughter Babylon, you devastator!  
Happy shall they be who pay you back  
what you have done to us!  
Happy shall they be who take your little ones  
and dash them against the rock!

## **Luke 17: 5-10**

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' The Lord replied, 'If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea", and it would obey you.

'Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"? Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!" '

### **And the Table Will Be Wide**

#### ***A Blessing for World Communion Sunday***

Side 1: And the table will be wide.

Side 2: And the welcome will be wide.

Side 1: And the arms will open wide to gather us in.

Side 2: And our hearts will open wide to receive.

Side 1: And we will come as children who trust there is enough.

Side 2: And we will come unhindered and free.

Side 1: And our aching will be met with bread.

Side 2: And our sorrow will be met with wine.

Side 1: And we will open our hands to the feast without shame.

Side 2: And we will turn toward each other without fear.

Side 1: And we will give up our appetite for despair.

Side 2: And we will taste and know of delight.

Side 1: And we will become bread for a hungry world.

Side 2: And we will become drink for those who thirst.

ALL: And the blessed will become the blessing. And everywhere will be the feast.

## SERMON

Start with a full breath, welcoming in the gift of God's Spirit.

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

About a decade ago I asked my 4 sisters to join me for what has come to be known as 'sister's weekend' - a time for the 5 of us to reconnect, gathering yearly for a weekend together. **Our conversation usually centers around 3 themes, our kids, stories of our youth and how life is for us, really is** - not just what shows up in Christmas letters or Facebook posts. Sometimes we dive deep into the pain of our lives and sometimes one of us speaks into dreams that are just taking shape. It's a holy time. After we'd been doing it for several years, my one brother expressed a longing to be included, feeling a little left out, so we occasionally have a 'siblings weekend' - inviting my 2 brothers to join us. This past weekend I spent at the Jersey shore with 5 of my 6 siblings. **I said it's a holy time, and it has those moments, for sure, but it's also a time fraught with some anxiety and fear** - so much so that it can be difficult even to show up for some. Holy moments and fear go together somehow, don't they? My siblings, they're a diverse bunch - ones a lawyer, another the founder of a non-profit working in Africa, my one sister is a yoga studio owner, a brother recently retired from a career in the Navy - and it goes on. Our practice of Christianity also spans the spectrum, a wide spectrum, so some conversations are entered as if walking on eggshells.

**Oh, it was a weekend of feasting! Plenty of food, yes, but the feast was everywhere.**

*And the blessed will become the blessing. And everywhere will be the feast.*

As we sat watching dolphins cavorting in the waves, those tears shared over a daughters brokenness were wine, as we gathered around the breakfast table, intimate conversation over the meaning of Jesus' life and ministry the bread.

The feast is everywhere.

Our gospel story today picks up with the apostles saying 'increase our faith!' Jesus had just been teaching them, his closest followers, and the teachings were not easy, down right impossible for most of us - where we're told to forgive over and over and over, and that it would be better to have a millstone around our neck and to be flung into the sea than to cause a little one to stumble. Wow! No wonder the disciples cry out 'increase our faith!'

Jesus' call to discipleship requires a total re-orienting of life. It calls us to truth telling, forgiveness and as we see in our passage today, servanthood.

The disciples say 'increase *our* faith' - it's a community asking, not individuals. There are plenty of gospel stories that show Jesus' closest friends jockeying for position, trying to figure out how to be The One to sit at his right hand, but here they speak in one voice: 'increase *our* faith'.

This life of radical discipleship is impossible if left up to us, no matter how much we might pray for God to increase our faith.

Jesus responds that even a mustard seed-sized faith is sufficient. It's not how much faith, but the quality and character of our faith that matters. And how we choose to act out that faith. How we live out the faith we have.

As the disciples hear this call to turn the world upside down, to be willing to put on the apron and serve those who are nameless, those so lowly they are called slaves - with

no rights or privileges of their own, Jesus seems to be saying, you, my beloved, ones I have called by name, you need to serve. To open the table up wide. Turn the world upside down. It's only through grace that you are here.

It's only through grace that we are here.

Only through grace that we can, at times, see ourselves as the blessed, and maybe, just maybe, becoming the blessing for someone else.

We are invited to become the blessing, no matter how miniscule our faith. We are called to open the tables of our lives wide; wide open - to serve all who come through the door hungry. We are called to put on the apron and serve; not to look for others to serve us. We create feasts by leaning into our belovedness as children of God and inviting others to do the same.

The Good News is that the feast of Christ is everywhere.

Read litany again, switching sides

Our task is to serve it -

To serve the feast by welcoming in those who are hungry, creating room at the table and saying, sit, eat, you are welcomed here.

The feast of Christ is everywhere. **This past weekend ended with an image of the feast that is lodged in my mind.** My sister who owns the yoga studio, who has a very non-traditional understanding of Jesus and faith, was driving my brother who attends a fundamentalist church, to the airport. They're about as far apart on the spectrum of belief and politics as we find in our country today. There they were, getting into the car,

and I heard them laughing, really laughing, about something. John's head was tilted back and I heard a belly laugh. Oh what a feast to behold!

The feast of Christ is everywhere. You, beloved, are called to partake.

## MOVING INTO COMMUNION

We come to the communion table, not because we're worthy, but because we're sick and need to remember. Need to remember that no matter what Jesus knows about us, we can bring our sins, our shortcomings before God and ask to be healed. And so I invite you to join me in this time of confession, joining me in a time of personal reflection and the prayer printed in your bulletin.

### Confessional Prayer:

Leader: Healing God, you invite us to open our hearts and lives to your cleansing presence.  
You promise that whatever is fragile or weak or broken can be restored in your gracious love.  
Touch us tenderly as we in silence name the ways we have turned from you.

*(time of silence)*

All: Refresh our souls with your abundant mercy, and feed us with your grace.  
Make us ministers of peace to one another, in your church, and in all the world.  
We pray in the name of Christ, bringer of Love, who heals and redeems us all. Amen

### Logistics of communion:

In a few moments you'll be invited to choose a table and stand around it with others.

We have 5 communion tables here today.

Back tables are gluten free, with corn tortillas and rice crackers. All tables have grapes for the children and anyone else who chooses them.

Each table has a designated server, who will offer you the bread. When it's time, take a piece of the bread and once everyone is served, we will eat together.

The same will happen with the juice.

We will all take the bread together, then we will all take the cup together.

'You are welcome, whoever you are and wherever you find yourselves on the journey of faith. Come and receive the gift of God's grace; come and renew your commitment to follow the Way of Jesus; come and be strengthened by the Spirit.'

And so come, beloved, come from east and west, north and south. Come to the table. Come to the feast.

I invite you now to come around a table - each table has bread, juice and grapes.

Take the bread... on the night he was betrayed...

Invite all tables to share the bread

Take, receive, the body of Christ, broken for you.

Then after they ate, Jesus took the cup, blessed it and passed it around to his friends

This is the cup of blessing, shed for you. Take and drink....