

Tracy Daub
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Acts 2:41-47; Psalm 23

BREAD ON THE WAY

I bring my sermon to you today from my living room because that is where you are as you join in worship today. We are all in our homes. And it is here, from our homes, that we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper today. Obviously this is very different from how we usually celebrate the Lord's Supper when we are together in church. What an odd thing this is for sure: to celebrate communion from our homes. But as we learn from the passage we read from Acts, that is where the Lord's Supper was originally celebrated. It was celebrated in people's homes.

The disciple Peter has just been filled with the Holy Spirit which has given him the courage to come out from hiding and to preach a sermon about Jesus before a large crowd. And according to the scripture passage, some 3,000 people were converted by Peter's sermon. And then we are told how this new awareness of God's love made known in Jesus changed the lives of these new converts: how they devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to praying, to sharing their resources and possessions with one another, and, we are told, to breaking bread together. The passage says, "They broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people."

Now this breaking bread together did not look like communion as we often celebrate it in our churches--with our little pieces of bread and our tiny cups of juice. This was a real meal, with people sitting down together. I've read that in that era people ate meals by reclining on couches. So, if you're taking communion today while lying on your couch, you can point to the Bible for justification!

But it is also clear that this meal those early followers of Jesus shared together was more than just a dinner party. It's clear that this meal had a *sacramental* element to it. That means that there was the awareness among those eating together that this meal recalled the generous, merciful, love of God revealed in Jesus. The bread was more than just food to sustain their bodies. It was food that nourished their souls in God's grace made known to them in Jesus. There was a sacred element to this eating and breaking of bread. And this sacred moment happened right there in their own homes. Just like it is happening right now in your home.

This format that we are using for communion today, it's not ideal. I would much prefer to have communion when we are physically present with one another. We learn what it means to be united in Christ's love when we have to come to the table with those we love and with those we find it hard to love, when we come to the table with people we've known for years, even decades, and with the person who just walked into the church that day for the first time. If the Christian Church is known as the Body of Christ, then there is something essentially important to having our bodies be together.

But the Session and I decided that while a virtual communion service is not ideal, it was also spiritually necessary. It is necessary for us to share this sacrament at this time. In these difficult, frightening, and uncertain times, we need the bread Christ offers.

I have a communion story I'd like to share. As you may know, there are volunteers who set up the communion service at church. One Sunday, Jude Hammer was setting up the communion table for the Lord's Supper when she realized that there was no loaf of bread for the service. So after she had set the whole table with everything else but the bread, she ran to the store to buy a loaf of bread for the service. But before she left, she did something very thoughtful. Realizing that I would probably come along and see the communion table all set for

the service but not see any bread, she left a thoughtful note right on the plate that would hold the bread. Here it is. It reads: "Don't panic. Bread on way."

I've saved this note all these years because I just love it. It makes such a theologically important statement. Don't panic. Bread is on the way.

We need the bread. In our grief, we need the bread. In our fear, we need the bread. In our conflict with others, we need the bread. In our anxiety, we need the bread. And in the midst of a pandemic, we need the bread. We need the bread so that we will know that we are loved and so we will know *to* love one another. We need the bread to know that we are forgiven, and then so we will know *to* forgive. We need the bread so that we know that we are not alone in hard and scary times, and then so we will know *to be with* one another in hard and scary times.

We celebrate communion today so that we will never forget to give thanks to God who provides us with the bread, the bread of life. Jesus and the way of Jesus--the way of love, mercy, compassion, justice, generosity, and the way that offers light to overcome all darkness--Jesus and the way of Jesus are the bread that sustain us in and through all things.

So today, we take communion to remember and to give thanks that God sustains us with the bread. With whatever food items you have managed to find in your cupboards for today's communion, God has provided the bread. And even the mysterious way God is capable of reaching through a computer screen to unite us and reassure us and sustain us, God has provided the bread. Don't panic. Bread is on the way.