

Aldon Hynes 8/15/2021

Good morning. It is a beautiful summer day to be worshipping together on the lawn of Church of the Holy Trinity here in Middletown. Thank you for this opportunity. You know, for the past several weeks, we've been hearing lessons about bread, and I'm wondering how we all understand bread. Close your eyes for a moment and think about your view of bread.

For me, when I think about bread, I think about the bread table in the kitchen growing up. My mother would bake all the bread for the family. Every week or so, she'd clear off the bread table and make a week's worth of bread for our family of six, with a few loaves extra to give away to neighbors and friends. She would bake the bread in loaves that looked a lot like the loaves of white bread you could get from the store. When I think of bread, that is usually what I think of.

Of course, at times my mother would make other types of bread; sourdough bread or Irish soda bread. At times, she would buy rye bread.

After college, I travelled around Europe. I remember buying loaves of fresh French bread from the local bakeries. I'd get some farm fresh butter and some jam and that would be my breakfast. My understanding of different types of bread began to expand, and I appreciated it.

I moved to New York City and started eating bread from other countries; naan, paratha, and papadum from India, Injera from Ethiopia, and Tibetan Steamed bread. There are so many different types of bread in the world. I wonder how many different types you can get here on Main Street in Middletown.

As I approached today's lesson, I wondered how these different types of bread can help us better understand the bread that brings eternal life. I've been thinking about eternal life a bit this week as well. After church last Sunday, I drove up to Rochester, NY for the funeral of a friend's mother. One of the phrases you hear at funerals a lot is about how the deceased has entered into eternal life. It is a very comforting phrase and today's lesson has phrases to support this idea where Jesus talks about raising people up on the last day.

But I wonder if there is something a little bit off with this saying. In our reading today, Jesus says, "Those who eat my flesh and drink by blood **HAVE** eternal life". It is not that **WILL HAVE** eternal life that they will enter into when they die. We have eternal life now.

So, what does that eternal life feel like, right now, right here, this summer's day in Middletown? Another word from today's lesson gives us a clue: abide. I must admit, whenever I hear the word "abide", I think of The Big Lebowski. "The dude abides." Lebowski goes through some tough times, but in the end, he abides, and keeps on doing what he loves doing.

The word “abide” appears several times in the Gospel of John. John the Baptist talks about the Holy Spirit descending and remaining with Jesus. The word “remain” is the same Greek word as “abide”. The next day two of John’s disciples asked Jesus where he was staying and then they remained with him. In addition to the word remain, “stay” is the same word for abide.

In Matthew, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asks the disciples to “remain” with him. Abide, remain, stay. The word has a sense of companionship in sorrow and in joy, and companionship brings us back to bread. It comes from the Latin meaning, “with bread”. Companionship is breaking bread with people. This breaking of bread takes me back to our thoughts about bread at the beginning. We are called to be with all types of people eating all types of bread. We are called to a feast of diversity.

So, I invite you to keep your eyes open to the eternal life around you, to the companionship, to things that abide. Keep your eyes open to how you might be companions to those around you and remind them of the eternal life that surrounds all of us.

As we think about that eternal life that surrounds us all, the poem, “The Summer Day” comes to mind. At the end of the poem, Mary Oliver asks, and here, I’ll add a word from the reading today,

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild, precious and eternal life?”

Amen