

Known in the Breaking of Bread

By Rev. Sheryl Stewart

5-3-2020

Read Acts 3: 14(a), 36-41 and Luke 24: 13-35

My sermon today, on this Communion Sunday, is titled “Known in the Breaking of Bread.” The lectionary starts us with the passage in Acts where Peter witnesses that Christ, slain by us, is the Messiah. Although we ourselves were not part of the crowd screaming, “Crucify Him,” our willful independence from God and our pursuit of our own ways rather than divine directions was why Jesus died.

You might want to pause this sermon now and get some bread and wine or juice ready. I will bless these elements and we will have Communion together later.

Peter’s message of our responsibility for Jesus’ death cut many who heard it to the heart. Asking what to do, they are encouraged by Peter to believe and later, by Peter in his first letter, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.”

When Don spoke, two weeks ago, about Jesus breathing his own Spirit into his disciples and telling them that those they forgive shall be forgiven and those whose sins they retain will be retained, it struck me that Jesus’ spirit was one of forgiveness. Many Christians today seem to be more interested in retaining certain

people's sins and condemning whole groups like illegal immigrants, LGBT folk, or simply members of the other political party.

I would say that it is likely that those who retain sins as opposed to doing what Jesus died to do have not, in fact inhaled when the breath of Jesus came to them. Not forgiving, not loving, is not Jesus.

That brings us to the story of the road to Emmaus and the striking reality that the travelers, walking with the risen Lord, only became aware that this was Jesus in the breaking of the bread. That is one of the reasons why Communion is one of the two Protestant sacraments – or “sacred moments.” We are sure Jesus is always there when we do this.

Nonetheless, I have long suspected that the breaking of the bread at Emmaus did not mean that Jesus is intimately with us only in Communion; Jesus may well have meant that He is here any time we break bread together.

“Fervently love one another from the heart,” Peter says. Time and time again in the Gospels, Jesus is seen eating with sinners – including the very Pharisees who opposed him. The kingdom of Heaven itself is compared to a great, inclusive banquet. We can experience and practice divine love, inclusion, and forgiveness when we eat and drink together. If we do this in love, it is a sacred moment and I'm sure Jesus is right there with us!

So, before you, are bread and wine or juice. “Lord God, please bless these physical elements that they may reach beyond themselves and be the body and blood of Your Son, our Savior.”

Take the bread and break it. Jesus said, “This is my body broken for you.”
Take and eat.

Take the cup and drink. Jesus said, “This is the cup of a new covenant. This is my blood, poured out for your forgiveness.”

Thank you, Lord God and thank you, Jesus. We know you are both here as we eat with each other and we know your breath mingles with ours. Help us to inhale and, when we exhale, may divine spirit reach out from us as we sincerely love and include those at our table. Amen.