

“Nourished Together” – Matthew 26:20-30 (Communion)
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church

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I think it is my duty to tell you that I follow an anonymous Twitter account online, the “Church Curmudgeon.” Now as we know, this is a purely fictional account because there are not really any bad-tempered folks in a church, right? RIGHT?

Well, anyway, because today, February 2, 2020 is a Sunday...the Lord’s Day...it also happens to be Groundhog Day *and* the day of the Super Bowl. So there’s a lot going on, which means the “Church Curmudgeon” has much to say about today.

He commented, “If the music leader in the church wakes up and sees his shadow Sunday, there will be six additional choruses on every song. #GroundhogDay”

My favorite, though, is his comment on the Super Bowl. “The pastor wants you to be as excited about church as you are about football. So go ahead and dump Gatorade over his head when they make the last point of their sermon.”

Now while I agree on the first point of that tweet, I have to say I do love the Super Bowl a good bit. The game itself is normally OK, and the commercials are even better than the game most years. But hands down the best part of the games for me is the food that is prepared and devoured during the game.

Let’s just say I have never left a Super Bowl watch party with an empty stomach. There’s nothing better than food.

Did you know that food has power, though? Well, I’m sure you know that food can tempt us. As you can see from my magnificent figure, I’ve failed that temptation too often.

Food can give us energy, and food can slow us down.

It can stop a grumbling stomach, and it can make our stomachs hurt.

Food can make us gain weight, and food can make us lose it.

Food has power...but food can also have a life of its own. This reminds me of a story from when I was 4 or 5 years old. Y’all are more than welcome to verify the truthfulness of this story with my family. It goes like this:

I was sitting at our kitchen table eating my favorite meal, the infamous peanut butter and jelly sandwich. On a side note, it may or may not still be my go-to meal to this day. But anyway, as I was enjoying my sandwich, Mom had to go to another room for a few minutes while I finished my dinner.

When she returned, she found a huge glob of grape jelly on my shirt. Another side note, this may or may not still happen to me to this day. But anyway when she saw the jelly on my shirt, as you can imagine, she was not too thrilled and said, “Tripp, I told you to be careful, and now you’ve messed up your shirt!”

As the story goes, I looked up at her, presumably with the cutest face and the best “puppy dog eyes” you can imagine, and I said, “Mom, the craziest thing happened while you were gone. That jelly just came right out of that sandwich and jumped straight off the plate onto my shirt! Can you believe it?”

Even today, I stand by my account of what happened. I’m telling you: food has power!

I’m sure that you have guessed by now why in the world I am talking about the power of food. And yes, you would be right. It is all because of the feast of the Lord’s Supper that is laid out before us this morning.

Now rest easy because I’m not saying the juice will jump straight from the cup and on to your shirt, but what I am saying is that if you’re open to it, the bread and cup will change you.

There are many reasons that we celebrate the Lord’s Supper together.

- We come to this table because Jesus instituted that this meal be done by his followers.
- We come to this table to taste and see that the Lord is good.
- We come to this table to remember what Christ has done, is doing, and will do in the future.
- We come to this table to give thanks to God.
- We come to this table not as individuals, but together as a community to be nourished.

One of my former pastors, Rev. Dr. Ed McLeod, tells a communion story about a seminary classmate of his. His classmate came from another denomination where they had communion every Sunday morning. As a teenager, he finally summoned the courage to approach his pastor and ask him, “Why in the world do we celebrate communion every...single...Sunday? Why do we do it so often when our Presbyterian friends get by just fine with only doing it 8 to 10 times a year?”

Before the pastor could answer, Dr. McLeod’s roommate believed he had that pastor in a checkmate when he proclaimed, “We have communion so often I can’t even look at a loaf of Wonderbread without thinking of the Lord’s Supper.”

The pastor took a breath, and a smile began to form on his face. “Exactly,” he said, “That’s why you come to the table so often: so that you won’t come to *any* table or see *any* bread without thinking of the faithfulness and the generosity and the sacrifice that God has made for you.”¹

When I arrived here just a few weeks ago, I was so pleased to hear that St. Andrew celebrated Communion every month.

¹ “Back to Basics” by Rev. Dr. Ed McLeod, sermon at First Presbyterian Church of Raleigh, NC. 01-12-2020.

As a community of faith:

We need to be reminded of God's steadfast love *often*.

We need to be thankful for God's steadfast love *often*.

We need to receive God's steadfast love *often*.

We need to be nourished by God's steadfast love *often*.

And we need to do it together.

This, friends, is the gift that we receive today. God's steadfast love is sufficient nourishment for you and for me.

In fact, God does not require us to be self-sufficient. This may be counter-cultural to everything that is ingrained in us and in our American culture, but it is true. While the world may tell you that maturity is measured by how self-sufficient we are, Jesus would say maturity is measured by our willingness to accept that there is no such thing as being self-sufficient.²

We ultimately depend on God...not on ourselves.

Think of the words from Psalm 107 that we heard earlier:

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
those he redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands,
from east and from the west,
from the north and from the south...

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.

For [God] satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.”³

Think of the profound nature of what is being said here: God is good and share's God's goodness with us! The psalmist reminds us that we are redeemed by God, we are gathered in by God, our thirst is quenched, and our hunger is satisfied! Thank God!

Over the past few weeks, we have thought about the ways in which God has called us together and loved us together, and as a spoiler for next week, we'll discuss how being called, loved, and nourished together equips and prepares us to be *sent* together.

Today, though, I don't want you to worry about that. I just want you to be present here in this moment...in this place...at this table. Be present here because Jesus is present here. Jesus has fully given himself to us and that is sufficient for our needs.

² The New Interpreters Bible, Volume IV. p. 1119

³ Psalm 107:1-3,8-9

If you are here today and you feel broken, come and be nourished.

If you are tired, come and be nourished.

If you are doubting, come and be nourished.

If you do not feel worthy, come and be nourished.

Just come. Come to the table not because you are good enough or because you are worthy, but because you can be nourished by the One who offers this bread and cup to us.

Just come. Come to the table and know that you are not alone in doing so. Come to the table with each other. Come to the table to be nourished, together.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.