

Sermon Proper 12B

Bon Appétit

The Rev. Wendy D. Cliff
Trinity Episcopal Church, Bend, OR
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[2 Samuel 11:1-15](#)

[Psalm 14](#)

[Ephesians 3:14-21](#)

[John 6:1-21](#)

I'm a big foodie. I love to cook. I subscribe to several cooking magazines and receive emails with recipes twice a day from NYT Cooking. I'm one of those people who live to eat. I know that's not everybody. My husband is one of those people who eat to live. He definitely enjoys good food, but he can skip meals without noticing and doesn't care what restaurant we pick or what we're having for dinner. But I love food. I'm always dreaming about my next meal the minute I finish the current one.

When people travel, I'm always more interested in hearing about the best meal they ate on their trip versus the sights they saw. In fact, right now, I want you to think about the best meal you've had in the last few weeks or months, either at home or away. And if you're one of those "eat to live" people, I absolutely respect and love you, too. You can either take a nap for the rest of this sermon, or maybe dig back into your memory and recall a favorite childhood dish, some comfort food you adored or still crave. I'm going to give you all a minute to think back.

Hopefully you've all come up with some amazing food or meal memory. Yes? Ok. Now I'm going to take a little bit of a risk here because I don't know this congregation well enough yet, so this may feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar, but please turn to someone and tell them all about your food memory. And when you do that, please really describe the food, as well as the setting, who was there, and how it made you feel. Let's take a few minutes to share.

Now that you've shared those stories, I hope you're feeling a certain warmth in your heart. Maybe some happiness or gratitude, a little smile on your face? Hmm, let's

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marinate in that for a few more seconds! Do you feel a certain fullness of spirit? I do. Maybe now we can relate a bit more to today's line from Ephesians that says, "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and heights and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with the fullness of God." This capacity to feel love and gratitude is the heart of God.

I want to share one of my food memories. When I was in the discernment process for the priesthood, I was given an exercise to recall various people who were role models in my life. A chef named Heidi Krahling was the first person who came to mind. Many years before I was in the ordination process, I took several cooking classes from Heidi in San Francisco. For some reason, something she did during one of those classes made an indelible impression on me. She was talking about the different ingredients for a recipe we were going to make, in this case, something made with the Spanish cheese called Manchego. Heidi took a small cube of Manchego, popped it in her mouth and chewed for a few moments. As she did that, a huge smile started to spread across her face, almost a look of rapture. She swallowed and then exclaimed, "Oh, wow, it tastes just like a little bundle of love in my mouth!" In that moment, that cube of cheese was a sacrament! With that action and those words, Heidi taught me that that if one cooks with love in their heart; it infiltrates the food and people taste that love as they eat it.

One more story: I once attended a day-long meditation retreat, taught by Jack Kornfield at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. At that retreat we learned about seated meditation, walking meditation, but also eating meditation. The way we were taught eating meditation was, right before lunch, Jack gave each of us just one raisin. He then proceeded to guide us through the process of first admiring and just looking at the raisin, noticing all its contours, colors and scents for several minutes, then putting it in our mouths and gently moving it all around to get a sense of its texture and weight, and only after all that, to slowly, slowly, sloooooowly chew it for as long as we could before swallowing it with focused attention to what our mouth and throat were doing. And finally Jack said to notice and remember, even after swallowing, all the sensations produced by that raisin, both in our mouths, as well as in and with our whole bodies. I'm telling you, most of us didn't need lunch after being that intentional with that one little raisin!

When Jesus feeds the 5,000 in today's gospel, I wonder if that was why there's so much bread left over? Could Jesus have instructed them, just like Jack Kornfield, to really savor and pay attention to the little they were given? I'm sure Jesus was absolutely willing to give them more food, but remember his constant message was that the kingdom is here and now, we're called to be intentional, awake, and give reverence

to what's right in front of us, all we've been given. Could the 5,000 have realized they had all they needed and were full? If we paid more attention to all the gifts we've been given, would we be more satisfied with things?

And did you notice the gospel passage says Jesus gave thanks for the bread and fish before distributing it? The word "eucharist" means giving thanks. What is giving thanks if not offering love to something or someone? I think Jesus infused so much love into those five loaves and two fish that people were fully delighted and completely satisfied just like I was with that little raisin Jack Kornfield gave me or the bite Heidi Krahling took of that little cube of Manchego cheese.

Another thing I was thinking about with this story today is the whole setting of a giant picnic on a grassy hill. The Christian church's eucharistic ritual is modeled after the Last Supper with the bread and the wine. But I'm just going to say it, heresy or not, while the Last Supper is most definitely an exceedingly special event and ritual, I think it's just one example of the many eucharistic rituals Jesus enacted in his life that include this huge picnic as well as meals with tax collectors and Pharisees and the post-resurrection grilled fish beach breakfast he shared with the disciples and the myriad other healing encounters Jesus had with those who were sick or sad or scared. I believe any meal and any interaction with another person can be sacred, holy, and sacramental if its enacted with love and gratitude.

I think one of the many, many reasons the church celebrates the Eucharist is to give people an example, a role model for all sorts of sacred rituals we can create ourselves. People create and enact rituals all the time without even realizing it and many of them are 100% sacred and eucharistic. Think of the memories you just shared about a favorite food or meal. Those were sacramental, eucharistic, moments. You remember them with gratitude just like our Eucharist is a ritual of remembrance filled with love and gratitude. In your stories, I believe you remembered feeling a certain sense of love on your tongues, in your stomachs, and in your hearts. And let's not limit this idea just to food. What about the ways in which you've honored and ritualized the birthdays and deaths of a beloved people and animal companions outside this church building? Or think about that indoor or outdoor space you return to again and again, maybe a beach or a cabin or a mountaintop, that speaks to something deep down inside you so that when you're in that place, you feel God's peace that's beyond all understanding? Returning to those places is a eucharistic ritual. It feeds your soul.

You my friends, are about to receive the gift of the church's Eucharist in today's service, and because I want you to really feel the "fullness of God," I've made sure we have lots of communion bread today. I'm going to give you two pieces of bread when you come up today (and we have gluten free, too). You can take the first piece and consume it as usual with or without the wine. But then please take the second piece of

bread back to your pew and prayerfully enjoy it. As you chew, think about and give thanks to the sun, earth and all the hands that made it possible for this bread to come to you this morning. Think about Jesus and all those other memorable meals, all the people you have loved and continue to love (all those saints that Paul references). Think about all those places on our God-given planet you cherish and want to steward. As you do that, know that this is what/who/how God is. You are fed here, and everywhere by God's love and abundance!

Because of your baptism and because of the Eucharist you receive each Sunday, remember you are special, you are important, and you are necessary for God's grand picnic party vision for the world. You are important to everyone in this congregation. Important to the greater Bend community. Important to this big beautiful, wounded Earth we call home. And most of all, you are important to God because God can't do it all without you. So when you leave this building, whether it's to go to coffee hour or lunch or whatever activity is going to fill your afternoon and week ahead, remember, you can create and celebrate eucharistic rituals if you do them with intention, give thanks, and infuse them with love. When you do that, you will feel and spread the abundance of God's love in and through you and everyone you encounter.

Amen and Bon Appétit!