

*Communion Meditation*

Our scripture today picks up somewhere close to where our scripture last week on Easter Sunday left off. If you'll recall last week with me for a moment, we heard here the account of Easter as it's presented in Mark's Gospel, and in that telling, Easter ends on a rather abrupt and stunning note, as it ends with three women standing silent and speechless in awe just outside of the empty tomb. It ends on this note of sheer wonder, in large part I think because, among the many wonders of Easter morning, these first witnesses are wonderstruck because they haven't yet seen Jesus, having only just gazed into the empty tomb.

Today then, as we consider one of the episodes in Luke's telling of those early Easter days, we pick up very close to but a bit after that first moment of sheer wonder, as today we're considering one of the accounts where in fact Jesus does re-enter the picture. As I think we can well imagine this morning, if we were to experience someone that we thought was three-days dead just standing right here in our midst...well we'd certainly wonder about that to say the least, but I think the emotions would be a whole lot more complex and complicated than that...in addition to wonder, we might have joy, surprise, disbelief, doubt, awe, amazement, fear...

This bundle of complex and complicated emotions is an interesting place for us to begin I think today, just noting about how, after sheer wonder, the type of faith that Easter invites us into is the experience of faith as a mixture of these complex and even contradictory feelings of joy and doubt and wonder—Luke describes this type of Easter faith so well with that line that we heard: *"While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering..."*

Parker Palmer, a Quaker author and educator, has written something which I think strikes this same Easter chord, when he wrote: *"The moments when we meet and reckon with contradictions are turning points where we either enter or evade the mystery of God."*

This I think might be a good task or theme for us to meditate on a bit today...trying to meet and reckon with contradictions so as to enter rather than evade the mystery of God...

Of course that's what our scripture this morning is all about as well, as Jesus' earliest friends and disciples tried to reckon with that greatest of contradictions—that not only were they experiencing someone that they thought was dead and gone, but this experience wasn't just of a disembodied spirit or ghost, but the experience was somehow of a body just as real and robust as any other body.

As if to prove the point of this contradiction, as if to prove how really real his body was, Jesus asks them for something to eat. I find it amazing that, after the resurrection, this is the question, out of all the questions, that he asks. Not, what are you staring at? Or why did you doubt me? Not, what in the world just happened, and how did I get here? Not, how is this even possible to begin with? But instead, what he's so intent on asking is something much more casual, much more simple and straightforward. *"Have you anything here to eat?"*

In this way, and maybe only this way, the risen Jesus returning to the disciples reminds me I have to say a little bit like a teenager returning home after a long day at school...and I'm afraid that I speak from experience here as my parents had to deal with my brother and sister and I all being in high school together at the same time, and so I can remember how just about every day we'd come home after school, and after practice, and we'd bring a group of friends with us, and we'd burst into the house without even saying hello, but instead just blurting something out, *"Hey, is there any food around here? Is there anything to eat?"*

And so the risen Jesus asks for food, and he eats a piece of broiled fish in front of them, and pretty soon their minds are opened, and they understand. It's really the simplest of acts, and yet also, in so many ways, the most profound, maybe even more profound than anything else Jesus in that moment could have said or done.

Here's one theory I have about it—maybe just from that simple act of Jesus eating a piece of broiled fish, and maybe even just from the simple act of any of us eating anything, we can find ourselves wrapped up in all the great contradictions, all the great mysteries of life and death...how the death of some things leads to the life and nourishment of others...about how at the very least in the physical world we know that nothing ever completely disappears or ends, but is always in a process of constant change and transformation...I think about this

world of rocks and rivers and trees and bodies...I think about the mountain ranges which give a beautiful definition to our little valley here...I think about how to the west the very-young Adirondacks are in a period of great growth, growing even faster than the Himalayas; and then I think about how to the east the very-old Green Mountains are in the process of slowly eroding away, slowly dying if you will...I think about a single rock on either of these mountain ranges, and about how over time the elements will wear that rock down to dust, I think about how that dust will add certain minerals to the soil, I think about how the melting snow will carry that soil down through the rivers and into the lake, I think about how in the rivers and lakes those minerals and nutrients will be taken up by algae and plant life, I think of how that it turn will be taken up by insect and invertebrate life, I think about how the fish will then take that life up, and then about how an osprey or an eagle might take that fish up, I think about that bird then with the strength to fly back over those very mountains which gave the calcium for its hollow bones...I think, is it really an eagle flying over a mountain, or somehow, somehow is it also a mountain flying over a mountain...

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When we celebrate communion in a few moments together, maybe we can just ponder this morning all the wonderful contradictions that we're here to celebrate today. Jesus, who was dead, is now raised. The piece of broiled fish, the bread of the field, and the cup of the vine, which once were very ordinary things, today in our midst will become instead extraordinary.

As we end, I want to offer one more possible take on this simple image of Jesus eating a piece of fish as it reminds me in an interesting way of one of the most famous events in the life of the Buddha, who lived in India and Nepal a few hundred years before Jesus. This event is often referred to in English as the “Flower Sermon,” or in Japanese the *nengemishō*, which means literally, “*pick up flower, subtle smile.*”

The legend has it that towards the end of his life, the Buddha took his disciples to a quiet pond in the woods to give them some of his last words of wisdom. As they had done so many times before, the Buddha's students sat in a small circle around him, and waited eagerly for the teaching. This time though, the Buddha didn't have any words to say. Instead he reached into the muck of the pond and pulled up from amid the lily pads a single lotus flower. And then he just held it there silently before them, its roots dripping mud and water. The disciples, greatly confused at first, one by one slowly began just to smile.

“The wordless teaching,” is what it’s called in Buddhism, and I think something similar could be said today for what the risen Jesus does here, just by that simple act of eating the broiled fish—a wordless teaching about the mystery of resurrection and the promise of new life—a wordless teaching, that might not need much more comment, than for us to think about it this morning, and to smile.