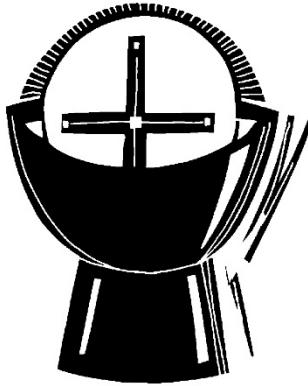


“True Food”



The Rev. Ryan Wiksell

August 18, 2024 | 13th Sunday after Pentecost

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God, Amen.

- The way I see it, this is a collection of readings about choices
 - Solomon’s prayer for wisdom, instead of riches or long life
 - Paul encourages us to choose wisely, to be influenced by the Spirit, instead of by the substances of the world
 - Jesus offering himself as “true food” in contrast to manna.
(Which was miraculous bread from God, but still just bread.)
 - Are these choices between good and evil? Not really
 - They are choices between instant gratification and sustainable good.
- Jesus talks about True Food. What does he mean by that?
- Mention “True Food” Restaurant
 - Organic, Farm-to-Table, Free Range
 - Portlandia: “Heritage breed, Woodland-raised, fed a diet of sheep’s milk, soy and hazelnuts. Is it local? USDA organic? Are the hazelnuts local? How big is the area for the chickens to roam? 4 acres. His name was Collin, here are his papers and a photo. Did he have friends? Who are these people

raising Collin? Do you have a good relationship with them? Are they just cashing in on the organic trend? Let's go visit this chicken farm."

- Is that what Jesus means by "True Food"?
 - Yes, sustainable good is a term that could apply to people producing organic food.
 - But Jesus has something much more substantial in mind. Something eternal.
- Kind of like Solomon, in his prayer for wisdom...
 - Solomon could have asked for anything
 - He could have received anything he desired
 - But each of those things would have only met that one desire.
 - Riches, and now you're rich.
 - Long life, and now you live a long time.
 - Victory over your enemies, and now you have no enemies.
- But this is like asking for a loaf of bread in a famine.
 - Yes, it meets a need...
 - But there is a way to meet *every* need.

- For Solomon, that was wisdom.
- Wisdom that can find true riches. Wisdom that can make life longer, but also better. Wisdom that can rid us of our enemies, but by loving them instead of defeating them.
- For Solomon, that was wisdom.
- And for us, that is the “True Food” that Jesus is offering us.
- How often have you heard this one:
 - Give a man a fish and he eats for a day
 - Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.
 - But there’s one more...
 - Teach a man to teach and you can feed the whole world.
- In other words, “make disciples”
 - This has been my hope, with the teaching I’ve done over the past few months.
 - I enjoy teaching to learn. But even moreso I want to teach to teach. I want you all to be able to turn around and guide others in the way you’ve been guided.

- As you may know, we've had Confirmation classes that just came to an end, which is good because Confirmations are this Wednesday
- But I'd like to share with all of you one point that came up, and seemed like it needed clarifying
- And this is the perfect time to do it, because we just read about Jesus inviting us to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Which would sound revolting, except hopefully we all know he's talking about the Eucharist
 - The bread and the cup. The body and the blood
 - But it turns out there are a lot of conflicting ideas about what it means, and what happens when you take it.
- Invite three volunteers to come forward. (Ideally the three youth.)
 - Give them three large construction paper "hosts"
 - One of these is red with an "x", the other two are green with a checkmark
 - Ask one volunteer to look down at their shoes, the other two to look up at the ceiling
 - The middle one is looking up, holding a green host

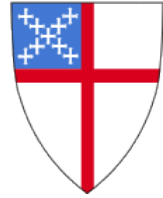
- So these are three communicants. (A, B and C)
 - Two came in with an attitude of respect, of seeking and self-reflection. This is what the Eucharist calls for.
 - One came in with an attitude of entitlement, or division or self-righteousness.
 - Two of them received a consecrated wafer, like normal.
 - But after the second one, the priest ran out and had to get the reserve. And oh no! He grabbed some bread that had not been consecrated. So it was just normal bread.
- So here's my question for you:
 - Out of these three, who is Jesus present with?
 - Trick question: all three of them. Because God's love is unconditional, and Jesus remains present with us even when we go wrong.
 - So here's a different question: out of these three, who received the spiritual benefits of the Eucharist. Who *experiences* the real presence of Jesus?
- Obviously Person B does. They had the right attitude *and* received a consecrated host.

- But what about Person A and Person B
- Discuss! (Volunteers can sit)
- We don't have a choice to make when it comes to a perfect Eucharist.
 - Even I can't do that. Yes, it's my job to make sure and do it correctly, but I can't promise to never make a mistake.
- We don't have the power to control others, or control our environment, what do we have power over?
 - Ourselves!
 - We can choose our attitude as we enter into prayer and worship
 - We can choose our attitude as we receive communion
 - Just like Solomon chose wisdom, we can choose an attitude of respect, and seeking, and self-examination.
 - *That* is what makes this "True Food"
 - Not the "magic words" that I say over them, or the fancy gestures I make over them.
 - It is your heart that does it.

- And your heart is so powerful that it can overcome the failures of a priest. Your heart can make an invalid wafer valid!
- Why? Because it was never about the formula to begin with.
- We keep these traditions out of a sense of honor for the story that got us here.
- But these traditions have never had any power over God.
- Doing them well has never forced God to show up, and doing them poorly has never kept God away.
- When God created us in the divine image, God gave us *each* that power, to connect with God, or to push God away.
 - I am inviting you this morning to do the former
 - Reach inside your heart, as you pray, as you sing, and as you receive
 - And choose to connect.

- The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

Sunday closest to August 17



Proper 15
Year B
RCL

Track 1 *or* *Track 2*

1 Kings 2:10-12;
3:3-14
Psalm 111
Ephesians 5:15-
20
John 6:51-58

Proverbs 9:1-6
Psalm 34:9-14
Ephesians 5:15-
20
John 6:51-58

The Collect

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

The Psalm

Psalm 111

Confitebor tibi

1 Hallelujah!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, *
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the LORD! *

they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, *

and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; *

the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; *

he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works *

in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; *

all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, *

because they are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption to his people;

he commanded his covenant for ever; *

holy and awesome is his Name.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; *

those who act accordingly have a good understanding;

his praise endures for ever.

The Epistle

Ephesians 5:15-20

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that

is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel

John 6:51-58

Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”