

Easter 3, April 15, 2018

A Recipe for Real Life

Over the years, I have enjoyed cooking. I am not sure where that love came from. My father was great with the barbecue. My mother had a set of meals that she knew how to prepare, but rarely did she work from a recipe or try anything new. We did not have cookbooks. We were, as they say, pretty much “white-bread Americans”. Heading into college, I started looking at cookbooks (not, I assure you, at the University of Chicago library). and out that new dishes that I wanted to taste had step-by-step *recipes*—instructions on how to prepare a specific dish, or an entire meal. Cindy also has that love, and we always are ready to try something new.

Some of you who are more “mature” will recall the days when there were few cookbooks. The primary one was *The Joy of Cooking*. Now there are thousands of cookbooks and an infinite number of web sites specializing in different ethnic cuisines, and for different diet plans. Yet the assumption remains for all cookbooks: *we work from a recipe*.

Christian faith and life is much the same. There are many kinds of people throughout the last two thousand years who have sought God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. But there’s a set of instructions and directions for knowing God and for living a focused and healthy life. And there is a recipe book to have in hand to help us find nourishment and joy. That recipe book is the Bible. We find the steps and instructions there, and some good images, too. One wonderful way that God’s Word communicates God’s purpose is that the Holy Spirit speaks truth through basic human needs. Hunger is one of those needs. We all have a basic physical hunger that must be satisfied, and we all have a sense of thirst. What the Bible helps us to understand is that these needs are not only *physical* in the human being. These needs are for knowledge and for deep inner peace. These are *spiritual* needs.

But we must have a recipe in order to get the meal to be finished in a healthy way. I know that the Cookie Monster from *Sesame Street* has a new book out on the joy of cookies. Yet we can’t live on cookies alone, or any earthly food. How can we find the recipe for *real* life? The passage from the Gospel according to Luke (24:34b-48) gives some very good direction—especially because we are hearing words from the Risen Christ. We are hearing words about eternal life.

Jesus’ first ingredient in real life is peace and Presence. We can’t cook it up. There are many human ideas we find at work to promote the “way” to peace. Only Jesus can offer it, and he will come to us with the same greeting he gave his disciples: “Peace be with you.” As Jesus comes among his disciples, they are startled and terrified—even though they have seen him before, risen and glorious. He invites them to lay their fears aside, to see him for who he really is. He’s not a ghost. He is not an idea or a dream. He is for real. The Risen Christ is present in Christian life every day and offers us his greeting and his grace. Just like a recipe, we need to follow that direction and have that ingredient.

Jesus also feeds us in the Sacrament. How interesting it is that Jesus shows how real he is by asking the disciples for something to eat. He meets them where they are and in ways that they can understand. I keep looking for the special recipe called: “The Disciples’ Broiled Fish”. Jesus also invites us to taste and see that he is good, that he is God’s recipe for our lives. In our prayer this morning, we prayed to God that he might send us Jesus the true bread that gives life to the world. Our spiritual hunger is fed here at this altar as we share in the bread and wine that are his Body and Blood. We can find the Real Presence of Christ in our spiritual lives. As we say in the Anglican tradition, in the Sacrament Christ is really present—though we know not how.

Jesus also gives us a recipe for life in his Word. He shows his disciples how important it is to have the Scriptures be so completely a part of our lives that they truly may be knit together the soul of each believer. That comes from spending time in prayer and reflection on Scripture so that we can find a rich and full life in ways that God has shown us in his Word. Another prayer during the year, we pray that we may so read, mark learn, and *inwardly digest* God’s Word. For, in the Word, we find the recipe for real life that nourishes our souls and brings us ever closer to God. Follow the recipe—and enjoy the results!