

1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

BREAKING BREAD IS VITAL

Most if not all of us know that the expression “breaking bread” means sharing a meal, and not necessarily literally ripping bread apart.

Now when was the last time you yourself enjoyed bread at a meal?

Did you warm it or toast it?

What, if anything, did you spread on it?

We have so many varieties here in the USA: white, rye, whole wheat, pumpernickel, French, Italian, bagel, bialy, matzoh...

Around the world, in various sizes and shapes, bread is essential to life.

The most vital of all human food, bread is filling, nutritious, and usually delicious, too.

Yet we also need to remember that Jesus said,

“It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

In addition to physical food we always need spiritual food, too.

In my prayerful reflections this week,

I found it fascinating that in all the ways Jesus revealed himself to people after his resurrection, especially in speaking Mary’s name, perhaps the most interesting is the revelation to his fellow travelers on the road to Emmaus on the day of his resurrection.

Think about it!

Jesus pretends to know nothing about the crucifixion,
so the men tell him about Jesus of Nazareth,
including some of the reports from women among his followers
who said Jesus had risen from the dead.

As they continue their journey, Jesus teaches them
what scripture says, from Moses and the prophets, all about Messiah.
The men are so impressed by his teachings,
they convince him to stop his journey and stay with them that night.
When he blesses and breaks the bread, giving it to them,
the men suddenly see clearly that they are in the presence of
Jesus of Nazareth, the risen Lord.

In that moment of revelation, Jesus vanishes from their midst.
They realize with great joy how blessed they have been,
and instead of spending the night or continuing to Emmaus,
they return to Jerusalem to find the disciples.
There they excitedly share how Jesus had been revealed to them
“in the breaking of the bread.”
Just imagine the looks of awe around that room.

Our short reading from 1st Peter is deep in meaning and insight—
not bad for an undereducated fisherman from Galilee!
What Peter may have lacked in education he more than made up for
with the zeal of his faith.
He reminds his audience, who were exiles in other lands,
that despite their sinfulness,
they have been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ,

who was the perfect sacrificial lamb.

“He was destined before the foundation of the world,” says Peter,
“but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake.”

In other words, at their particular time in history, God’s chosen action
was to raise him from the dead and to give him divine glory,
to reveal God’s plan for salvation and renewal of covenant
with his people.

“Love one another deeply from the heart,” he says.

And this they can do because they have purified their souls
by faith and obedience to God’s truth; now they can have genuine love.

Peter tells them that they have been born anew,
of eternal stock, through the living and lasting word of God.

These new spiritual lives cannot be threatened or endangered.

He announces their salvation is sure and eternal,
because of their faith in God and God’s Son the Christ.

Sisters and brothers, when we break bread together,
whether at the Lord’s Table or sharing a community meal,
we celebrate the joy of our mutual faith,
the assurance of our salvation,
and our genuine love for one another.

We also celebrate our loving concerns for our neighbors—
people we know and people we don’t yet know—
praying for God to pour out blessings upon them, too.

Breaking bread together is vital,
not only for our physical sustenance,

but also—and even more importantly—
for our spiritual nourishment.

Let's never forget that Jesus is the Bread of life.

We encourage one another in growth, through worship and fellowship.

And when the time is right, we will add that we encourage one another
in Bible study and other gatherings.

We pray:

Wherever we are:

We know we are together, united in faithful prayer.

We thank you, we glorify you, we worship you,

and we count on you, especially during these devastating times,
to bless us with continuing faith and health.

In your precious name we pray,

Amen.