

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost – August 15, 2021

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven.” (John 6:51)

In seminary, pastors are taught to make a connection in the sermon to the common and relevant experiences of the listeners. But people have wildly different experiences in life. Some people suffer from depression, others don't. Not everyone gets divorced. However, every one of us will experience death. We are frail, finite, and mortal and closer to dying than we were yesterday. Death has a way of focusing the meaning of life and helps us see the heart of our faith, Jesus Christ.

One of the great blessings of our faith is that it tells the truth about death, both good and bad, the happy and the unbearably sad. Death is a painful severance. Death is the ultimate ending, the final enemy. We are right to grieve and to feel intense, terrible pain when someone we love dies. The loss is real.

However, we can be completely honest and truthful about death because of Jesus Christ. We believe it when Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, they will live forever.” We believe we know something the world doesn't seem to know, that there is a God who raises the dead. God is not present in us as a memory or in some wishful thinking. God is the one who gives life and gives it again in the middle of death. Jesus was not only raised from the dead, but he embodies life now, he embodies resurrection and eternal life, he is the living bread for all of us. Think about the times Jesus entered into some hopeless situation and the dead were raised. When you find yourself in some hopeless situation, you can believe that what Jesus once did, he continues to do that for you as well.

That's why it's okay to be joyful at a funeral and perhaps even laugh at death. You can be joyful in your grief, not because of how strong-minded you are but rather that your faith reminds you of God's love for you and indeed, for all of us. The same God who defeated death and who raised Jesus from the dead will do the same for you. That is our faith and our greatest hope in life and our ultimate hope in death. The promise is that Jesus is the living bread, and one day, we will all be together again, for eternity. Amen.

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