

Bread for Feasting  
Easter – April 20, 2025  
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Our series Bread of Life wraps up this Easter Sunday with the theme Bread for Feasting, so I've been thinking about feasting these last few weeks. Can you think of the last "feast" you attended? When I think about a feast I think of tables full of food, special recipes or food specific to an occasion. I think of decorations and probably lots of people. Typically I think of a feast as something you prepare for the celebration of something special: a wedding, Thanksgiving dinner, a graduation party, but it can also happen in the midst of the ordinary: a church potluck, a block party.

Recently I saw a picture of a feast that really stuck with me. It is a picture of a long table set beautifully for dinner with red tablecloths. It's a table set for at least a hundred people, with little fairy lights and flags strung above it. But this table isn't in a beautiful field or a big barn. This table is in the middle of a street and the street is in the middle of Gaza and everything you can see surrounding the table has been bombed to bits.\*\**(Show picture)* This is a table set for people preparing a feast to break the fast of Ramadan together, to celebrate together even as they are surrounded by war and death and destruction. And every time I look at this picture I have a lot of different thoughts but one of them is something like "oh look, there's resurrection."

Looking at this picture made me think of an experience I had in the spring of 2002, the spring after 9/11 happened. I was invited to my Jewish friend's house to celebrate Passover. The story told at the Passover table is the story of freedom but is told with bitter herbs, salt water, and unleavened bread to remind people of the hardship of slavery, the tears of the Israelites, and the haste with which they left Egypt. In addition, many modern Jewish people include a solemn reading commemorating those lost in the Holocaust. And in 2002, we also read a piece written to remember all those who died in planes and towers.

I remember how we were in a beautiful house set with a beautiful feast and we were so solemn and somber as we remembered. And then, when the readings were done, there at that table after thinking about just how bad things can get with the air around us thick with memories of the worst people can do to each other, we celebrated and feasted. There was laughter and joy and storytelling and hope for a better future. And I remember thinking something similar: "oh, look, there's resurrection."

I've had a few other experiences feasting with marginalized communities, enough to know they know something profound about how important it is to press pause on the suffering and pain and worry of life for a while to remember what it is to love the brief

chance we get to inhabit these human bodies. To take time for belly laughs and colorful celebrations and dancing and sharing whatever you have. To feast, and even if just for a few minutes, practice resurrection.

I'm not saying other communities don't know how to feast, but there is something powerful, something a bit outside of time and space, that happens when people who have been told they are less than, people who have been shoved to the side, abused, oppressed, people who have been afraid for their lives or who have looked into the face of real hunger or fear, when those people put aside all of that for a time of feasting and resurrection.

I think of this when I think of the disciples because they were marginalized people. They were people living under a ruthless oppression; people living under others who used their power recklessly and made callous decisions with far reaching implications without a care for the people it would hurt; people who did whatever they could to enrich themselves, taking more and more, as though they would never have enough, even though they lived in gilded palaces while so many starved; people who saw those who came from other places, who worshipped other gods, who spoke different languages, as disposable.

That is the world the disciples lived in. A world where the best they could hope for was to scrape by and not find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Which isn't to say they didn't feast too. Certainly, they knew what it was to put their suffering aside for a night and laugh and dance and feast with family, but they also had little or really no hope that anything would change.

At least until they met Jesus. They met Jesus and suddenly they thought maybe the world might be different. This man seemed to really care about their real problems. When their bellies growled he fed them. When people couldn't see or hear or walk he healed them. When people had spent their whole lives invisible, he saw them. And now they had some hope. Now, maybe, just maybe, the world, their world, their lives or at least the lives of their children, might be different. Maybe the Romans would finally get what was coming to them. Maybe the people in power would finally know what it is to go to bed hungry and to keep your eyes down so as not to draw any unwanted attention. So, on that Passover night, 2000 years ago, they feasted with Jesus with the hope of a world about to be transformed.

And then the Romans crucified him. And he didn't even fight back. They crucified him and that was it. It was over. Time to go home. Time to stop getting carried away by pipe dreams. Time to live in the real world where people like the Romans always win.

Except, oh, look, there's resurrection, a flesh and blood return, and with it the promise that the people in power might seem like they can take everything, control everything, squash everything, even kill, but they cannot stop resurrection. The Romans wanted people to feel like resistance was futile but Jesus showed the disciples in an upper room and on a beach and on the road to Emmaus that we belong to a God of resurrection. We belong to a God who can take our worst pain and redeem it. We belong to a God who can bring us through situations we didn't think we could survive; a God who gives us glimpses of hope in places that seem hopeless; a God who gives us more strength or courage than we imagined we had. We belong to a God who resurrects again and again by turning our scarcity into abundance, hopelessness into joy, scraps into a feast. But God doesn't stop there. We worship a God who invites us to be resurrection people - to participate in resurrection firsthand.

The first couple of times the disciples saw Jesus in the upper room, Jesus focused on letting them take in the enormity of his resurrection and promised them his peace and presence through the Holy Spirit. But then, on his third visit, Jesus had something else in mind. Jesus helped them with their catch of fish, as he had done before, making sure there would be enough for a feast, and then he called them to shore. Now it was time to teach them how to be resurrection people.

After they filled their bellies, Jesus told them three times "feed my sheep." In other words, keep doing what you've seen me doing. Which means, feed each other with real bread, so no one goes hungry and feed each other with metaphorical bread by reminding each other with the truth that we are all beloved, beautiful children of a God who created us and calls us good. Feed each other with the promise that the kingdom of God is not some far off, post-death place in the clouds - though there is something beautiful to come - but that the kingdom of God is also already here. Right now. The kingdom of God is a feast and we have all already been invited. Jesus says, "Come and eat." And when we gather around together, sharing our food, sharing our stories, more often than not, we will find ourselves saying, "oh look, there's resurrection."

That is what we are doing when we sing and shout Alleluia today. We are proclaiming that we are resurrection people. We say Alleluia because we resist the idea that the world has to be a place of war and hate and destruction and greed. We say Alleluia because we don't believe the lies that some people are better than others or more deserving or more loved by God. We say Alleluia because we will not keep our eyes down in fear or accept a model of scarcity in a world with so much abundance. We say Alleluia because we will not be made to be hopeless or to hide in some upper room or to shut off our feelings of empathy for those who are suffering. We say Alleluia because we know our call is to keep setting the table and preparing feasts and celebrating

together and because we plan to keep inviting everyone, even the folks we don't like or understand, even our enemies.

We say Alleluia because we believe that "every time we gather in resurrection hope, it's a potluck. Everyone brings what they can. Sometimes we whip something up with ingredients we have on hand. Sometimes we make an extra effort to bring something special. Sometimes we sneak in and trust other people will have brought enough to cover us this time, because we just don't have anything left. And we promise another time, we will bring enough to cover for somebody else."

So say it with me - Alleluia. We are resurrection people. In this Easter season, let us think about how we are going to set the real and metaphorical tables in our lives for feasts. Let us think about how we are going to feed each other's actual bodies with bread and how we will feed each other's souls with the stories we tell from two thousand years ago and the stories we tell from our own lives. Let us practice resurrection by preparing feasts so that when we least expect it, we'll look up and say "look, there it is again, resurrection." Alleluia. Amen.