

Made Whole

Readings:

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Galatians 5:9-10; 22-25b

Mark 10:46-52

Wholeness in scripture is about so much more than our personal desire to feel good. Galatians shared with us that as we live in the Spirit we will be people of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Paul writes to the People of Colossae that as God's people we are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. We are to bear with one another and forgive one another. Above all we are to love one another as love binds everything together in perfect harmony. Colossians goes on to say "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and with gratitude in your hearts sing *to God.*"¹

As I began to ponder what it means to be nourished by God and how that transforms us I was reminded of times in my life when I had a glimpse of what that meant. Like many of us I have some of those rough road times that I reflect back on when I think about being nourished by the spirit. I have come to discover there is something to knowing God is with you that gives you a kind of peace that is beyond understanding.

Frederick Buechner writes "Peace has come to mean the time when there aren't any wars or even when there aren't any major wars... But in Hebrew peace, shalom, means fullness, means having everything you need to be wholly and happily yourself... Jesus said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." (John 14:27). For Jesus peace seems to have meant not the absence of struggle but the presence of love."²

It seems the presence of love is the most important nourishment we can receive and give. But how is it we come to know love and embrace the soul food of the spirit? How do we become that salt or yeast or bread or fruit?

Our 'Hungry for Justice' group had a long conversation about this on Tuesday night. And we came to the conclusion that we need a foundation, a place that feeds and nourishes us

¹ Colossians 3:12-17

² Buechner, Frederick, "Listening to Your Life." Sept. 8th

so that we might feed and nourish our world. Without that it is hard to live in love and faith in our world full of the unsatisfied, often overworked, underpaid and desperate.

For me personally it was living in the midst of people who were dissatisfied with life in an individualistic, selfish society that drew me back to the roots of my faith. It was looking around me and knowing there had to be something more. It was that which caused me to turn around and discover to be a person of faith required a little more faith and trust.

Joyce Rupp suggests to be nourished by God one needs to meet with God. Come to know God. “It is a knowing which comes about by taking what has been given to us intellectually about our God in the scriptures, in tradition, and in all of life and then pondering this in openness, freedom and vulnerability, taking it in to our hearts and allowing it to transform us. This knowing of the other in our lives in a personal way comes about by walking through our very ordinary days, walking with a heart that is open to surprises and wonders in the simple beauty of people and events. It comes about through a listening spirit, one that is sensitive to the graced insight of the moment and aware of the feelings that accompany that insightful moment. It is based on the belief that it is out of the daily stream of busy-ness and activity, ‘the here and now,’ that we often experience the revelation of God and the blessing of sacramentality.”³

To be nourished one must take time to reflect, ponder, pause and be aware that there is more than that which we see on the surface. Reflection calls us to be in tune with life around and within us. Still, reflection for some is more natural than others.

Even I had a bit of a jolt when I read the “Hungry for Justice” assignment for this week. To act out our ‘returning to God’ we were asked to “implement an info-techno Sabbath time.” Now for some of you this may sound easy but listen to the challenge. We were to set aside an hour with no iPod, Internet, TV, radio, BlackBerry, Cell phone etc. We were to use this time for quiet reflection or intimate conversation with a loved one or friend about what gives your life meaning.”⁴ An hour? I was ashamed when I discovered how hard that sounded to me. What it told me is that perhaps I need to go back and pause and reflect on the priorities I have made at this time. But what is key is for me is that it’s not about guilt it’s about being nourished and made whole.

“Giving oneself to the process of reflection” allows us to develop spaces in our day in which we meet with God. It encourages us in our everyday lives to take in moments of belief in a God that dwells within, freeing us up to remember we are in the midst of The holy loving presence.

³ Rupp, Joyce “Fresh Bread and other gifts of spiritual nourishment” © 1985 pg. 14

⁴ Wallis, Jim “Hungry for Justice, A six-week guide for praying daily, building community, and changing the world” pg. 16

When we allow ourselves to enter into that space in our daily lives we are more likely to have the ability to be the salt, yeast, life bread, and fruits of the spirits. It isn't about the amount of time you spend as much as it is about the openness to the spirit you allow.

Many of us were blessed in our discussion after watching "the Soloist" last Sunday night. But I have heard a few people reflect on how they were moved when one person shared that in her profession when she is faced with the challenge of working with a difficult person she stops and prays that she might see God within them. In the midst of community others began to Imagine what it would look like if we all did that as we encountered 'the others' in our life. If we took the time to remind ourselves to view people with God's love. Or put ourselves through a quick check list of those ways in which we as people of faith can live out the spirit.

I want to acknowledge as I say all of this that every single one of us has times where we need to be on the side of being nourished by one another. Once again that is why our faith is not held up as an individualistic pursuit, rather a community network that lives out these qualities for one another.

Joyce Rupp says as we allow ourselves to be nourished we will begin to trust and "This trusting means that we are ready and willing to be "kneaded" to be open to the struggle and the pain that may come, to be transformed from a tiny handful of dough into a living loaf of bread. This trusting develops when we are praying daily to be present to others with the attitude of Jesus, when we are constantly aware of the great need to lean on the love and the strength of God. At those times we are stretched and are called on to let go, to let the rising happen. This trusting is lifelong and always needs to be encouraged by other trusting hearts who are "handfuls of dough."⁵

I think any faith our life practice will tell us that we must nourish our spirit. We as Christians might say we need to feed our hunger for God. All of us at times allow our spirit to hunger – sometimes for days – some times for years. And yet feeding our spirit will make us whole. When our spirits are fed we are more likely to make wise choices, cope with our life struggles, and have the strength to nourish one another.

When we are nourished we are more likely to find a way to stand with one another. We are nourished not as we do for God but as we dwell with God. Perhaps it might even bring us to a place where we are "willing to have nothing to show for our day's work except faithfully standing by the cross of another, or giving love in a celebrative moment, or attentive perceptive listening with our heart. This kind of presence creates peace, energy, and acceptance in the heart of another."⁶

⁵ Rupp, 14

⁶ Rupp, 15

As Rupp continues she shares a beautiful description of holiness. She says “Holiness is knowing we have tasted God and knowing that we can never be satisfied with just that one taste. It is choosing, in spite of our fear, to go more deeply. Holiness is facing the pain of the world and crying out with its suffering. Holiness is stopping to gasp in amazement at how love stirs in the joy and beauty of ordinary events. Holiness is feeling an awesome restlessness that pursues us even though we try to run away from it. Holiness is choosing to keep on struggling and believing that there is such a thing as eternal life, that there is such a one as eternal love. Holiness ... knows God as a companion on the journey of life.”⁷

And I believe it is in our our nourished holiness that we discover fullness of life or wholeness. We discover ourselves the way God has created us to be in the fullness of life. Nourished and transformed. May we so live. Amen

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