

Holy and Loving God - may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight oh Lord our strength and our redeemer.

Have you ever been with someone who always gets the forest and the trees? Someone who can pick up the details in a movie, a story, or a book, and they seem to be able to handle all the details, but they can immediately understand the larger meaning as well? They point out that thing that was lurking there all along.

My son, Will, does that with music. He is the only soul I have ever known that critiques a movie soundtrack because it was too “on the nose”. “It is just too obvious with all that tension; I wanted a little more subtlety.” Seriously, I have no idea how his sensitivity to it has been so accentuated, but I think he gets more from the soundtrack than the dialogue sometimes.

Such was the case when I was watching the last episode of “Breaking Bad”. As I told Trisha this week, I really struggle to watch it. The plot is spectacular but the story lines leave me unsettled and I don’t sleep well when I have watched it. Anyway, the important part is the song that ends the show: “Baby Blue” by Badfinger. I heard the song telling the story of the 5 seasons of TV drama that I just finished. It makes me think, all I had to do was listen to the song! I hear in it the regrets of Walt while simultaneously recognizing that he had indeed “Broken Bad” and really loved this thing he did. IN FACT, it felt like such a summary that I wondered out loud if they hadn’t modified the story to actually fit better with the song!

It’s like when Melville says “Call me Ishmael” and summarizes the character that he would go on to spend 135 chapters developing. Or maybe Dorothy and her slippers. You remember, she had the power all along. Of course, the catch is that without experiencing the narratives of these stories, without understanding their fullness, the slippers, songs, and references are hollow.

Through the month of July Trisha and I have been talking to you about what it is to be the church today, and especially during this season after Pentecost. Remember that Trisha opened the month by explaining the different seasons of the liturgical year and how this season stops

being so much about Christ... Well, it's still about Christ, but this is the **doing as the church** part of the year. We have waited for Christ in Advent, celebrated his arrival at Christmas, prepared in Lent, saw Christ killed on Good Friday and risen at Easter, then we observed Pentecost where the Spirit arrived, and **now we go and we do**. This season is where the warmups are done, the anthem has played, and the Umpire says "PLAY BALL".

Trisha also talked about being stiff-necked people. That God's frustration with the Israelites was that they were so unleadable-Do you remember that? She talked about God's forgiveness of this because God knows who we are intimately, and still she asked how we can find more flexibility, more willingness to be lead.

The next week I talked about Oscar Romero, and I remembered how he heard God's call, and after recognizing, he did it! He recognized the community around him, how he had to do more to be in that community. He recognized and then he acted. It isn't a call to perfection, but it is a demand to pay attention, to hear God's call, to trust in that, and to take a step. I suggested that we try to find that 2% that we could change in ourselves to be the church.

Last week Trisha was back and she talked about the difference between being healed, and being cured. Knowing that we are mortal, and that any "cure" is temporary our hope is to be **healed** while we are here. Living in relationship with Christ is the way to be healed.

So, in our last week the lectionary gives us 2 feeding miracles to think about. The first involved Elisha, a prophet of the Old Testament, and the feeding of a crowd of 100 out of the first fruits of the harvest. The second is the familiar telling by John of the feeding of the 5000.

I want to point out just a couple of differences in the passages this morning. First, Elisha has no power to feed those hundred people, right? He orders the man to offer the food, but Elisha counts on the Lord to feed the people. Just like the Manna from heaven when the Israelites were in the wilderness, God provided, not Moses. Moses was prophetic and Holy, but he is not God. That is not the case on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus multiplies the gifts of this Boy exponentially. It is also noteworthy that these are not the first fruits of offering, maybe this is his family's meal for that night? Whatever their original destiny, they are an

afterthought. They were not brought as an offering, for these are not “worthy” as an offering in the Jewish tradition.

This focuses the eye all the more sharply, then, on Jesus. We see Jesus take the mundane, the ordinary, the sufficient, and he makes it extravagant. He makes this modest meal an abundance for the entire crowd. And I want to note here that this story appears in all 4 Gospels. Each with a little bit different spin, but in each of the gospels Jesus feeds the crowd. This story is meant to remind us of another great feeding story that also happens to appear in all 4 gospels, and the one that has been with us the whole time. The Last Supper.

Anytime we hear of Jesus feeding, we should think at least in some way about the Eucharist. Especially as Episcopalians, we should think on this sacrament. You see on Sunday that is where we are going.

The architecture of this place speaks to this so clearly. The font, the table and the pulpit are all prominent here, and the table is central. These 3 elements and their place in a church tell us a lot. Some spaces have the pulpit as large and central. Sometimes the baptismal font is a pool at the altar. As Episcopalians we try to balance the three, and luckily St. Clements shows us this visually every time we enter. In the center of ourselves as a community is the proclaimed salvation of Christ each Sunday.

The liturgy of the word, which will wrap up in just a moment, leads us to pray for ourselves and our neighbor. After we reconcile in the peace, we move to the table, and this is where our communal time is leading. This service is a movement to this sacrament. It is showing us on the micro level how to be the church on the macro level. Just like the song at the end of *Breaking Bad*, or the intro to Moby Dick, or the Ruby Slippers in the *Wizard of Oz*, we have had the synopsis right here in front of us the whole time, hiding in plain sight.

According to the Catechism of the Episcopal church which is in the back of each of your prayer books, after Psalms and before the calendars. It says that in the Holy Eucharist we receive: “Forgiveness of our sins (like Trisha remembered for being stiff-necked), the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another (which is how or why we recognize the

commands of the Gospel and act on them as Oscar Romero offered), and the foretaste of that heavenly banquet which is our nourishment in eternal life (That true healing and cure).”

Each week this sacrifice of Eucharist has been helping us resolve the questions we have been asking. And it is my hope that in saying that that you on some level say, “yeah sure it does help a little, now that you mention it”. And this act has been given to us by Christ. Not reserved for God behind the shroud of the temple but entrusted to us to be a corporate act of reconciliation, praise, and Grace. Here. This morning, at St. Clements. And at tables around the world. We are about to celebrate the sacraments, and after that? PLAY BALL.

Amen.