

Deep in the Feast: Called to deep living.

Isaiah 25:6-9; John 20:1-18; Acts 10:34-43; I Corinthians 15:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

What is your most favorite food? Please tell it to your neighbor near you. Just one item.

For me it's what my mother made often. She called it Spanish rice casserole. Now Rose has made this dish a few times, as have I, but it doesn't quite match up to my Mom's. Maybe it's the kind of rice she used, or some ingredient she put in – like some Taiwanese herb. But this dish always comes with warm wonderful memories of being at that dining room table. I can vividly picture that place, my parents & my siblings and remember several others who often ate with us.

What is your most favorite meal? Bring all your food experiences down to one specific meal – the whole menu. (Pause) Than this coming week tell someone about it. Or even cook it for others.

Last question: What is one of your most favorite memories around food? I suspect we have lots of them, from celebrations like Easter, potlucks, an occasion with friends, birthdays, or a precious family memory. We could share about a number of them. Tell someone about it this week when you are tired of talking about the weather.

One meal of many that stands out for me is when my Dad and I overnighted in Hong Kong. For dinner we went to a restaurant and ordered a whole duck. Just the two of us. The first dish was Peking Duck, where the crispy skin is carefully cut off, with just a little bit of meat. Then we wrap pieces of it in a special crepe, adding a kind of plum sauce. Next we had two different flavored stir fried dishes, with the duck meat. Most of the rest of the duck ended up as a soup. What a feast – just my Dad and I and the duck! That was good full deep in the feast living!

Today we have communion food. It too comes with many memories of special times, faith commitments and various congregational occasions. It's a celebration as well as a time to be thankful for Jesus. It's a time of serious contemplation as well as remembering our status

as sinners in need of this food that points us toward eternal life and heavenly values.

The Lord's Supper is the breaking and eating of bread to symbolize Christ's body broken for us and drinking wine or grape juice to remember the blood he shed for our sins. We symbolically intermingle Christ's blood with our own, sharing a meal together as a community, as friends in faith, making Jesus a part of us and us a part of him. It's a time of deep meaning about deep living. And Easter Sunday is a good a time to partake because we celebrate that **Jesus is risen! (He is risen indeed!)**

Have you ever wondered, "Where does the saying 'He is risen! With the response, 'He is risen, indeed,' come from?" We tend to use this at Easter. It would seem obvious why we say it, but where does it come from? Is it in the Bible? Who said it first and when did it catch on and become so popular?

The traditional Easter greeting in the Western church is the exclamation "He is risen!" The traditional response is "**He is risen, indeed!**" The words are sometimes accompanied by the exchange of three kisses on alternate cheeks, depending on the church. In the Orthodox and Catholic churches, this greeting is called the "Paschal greeting" and is a very old custom.

The greeting is ultimately based on Luke 24:34. Translations from the Latin Vulgate version, of around AD 400, to the ESV - English Standard Version, in 2001, have translated this verse nearly identically: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Exactly how the saying became a standard greeting in the church is not known, although there are various theories regarding how it came into common usage. But it's a natural wonderful way for followers of Jesus to greet each other.

This greeting was more common in Eastern and Byzantine liturgies than in the Western church. There is a tradition in the Eastern Orthodox Church that the saying was made popular by Mary Magdalene when she supposedly addressed Emperor Tiberius in Rome with the words "**Christ is risen.**" (**He is risen indeed!**)

Using this address should be more than an empty tradition. These words remind us of the joyous news we celebrate at Easter, that Jesus' death was not in vain, and that He has the power to overcome death. Saying this is a way to share and affirm this incredible truth with each other and with the world. Exclaiming this, could be the best short summary of the Good News. The resurrection of Christ gives us hope for life now, for our salvation, our resurrection, and eternal life. **He is risen! (He is risen, indeed)**

I have some riddles for you. A man rode into town on Friday. He stayed for three nights and then left on Friday. How is that possible?

The answer - The man's horse is named Friday.

Here's another one: Anthony and Cleopatra are lying dead on the floor of a villa in Egypt. The window was open and there is water and glass all over the floor. There are no marks on either Anthony or Cleopatra, and they were not poisoned. How did they die?

The answer - it is helpful to know Anthony and Cleopatra are fish. The dog, Brutus, knocked over the fish bowl, which broke and spilled water all over the floor.

Here's a harder one: A man lives on the 10th floor of a building. Every day he takes the elevator down to the ground floor in order to leave the building. When he returns home he takes the elevator to the 6th floor and walks up the stairs to reach his apartment on the tenth floor. He does this everyday, unless it's raining. If it rains, he rides the elevator all the way to the 10th floor. Why does he do this?

Did you ever play these kind of mind games? Some of us will puzzle for hours to figure them out. Others of us will simply wonder, who has the time to think up these riddles? Especially when we hear the answers, we groan and really dislike them. But it's called "Lateral Thinking." It challenges our regular thinking patterns.

In the case of the man living on the 10th floor - the reason the man would only go the 6th floor on his return home, was because that was the

highest button he could reach on the elevator control panel. He was a short man. On days that it rained, he had his umbrella with him, so he could use the umbrella to punch the button that indicated his floor.

Here's a last riddle. On Friday night, a man dies. He's buried that same night. On Sunday morning, His friends arrive at the grave, only to discover His body is gone. What happened?

One of the problems of Jesus' resurrection, is that some people try to make sense out of every thing that happened. They try to understand exactly how Jesus could die and then come back to life again. But I can't tell you how this worked. Logically, scientifically, factually and rationally, it makes no sense. Our experience does not support Jesus' resurrection, because we have never seen a person who was dead for 3 days, come back to life. But still, we affirm, **Jesus is risen! (He is risen indeed!)**

It is easy to disbelieve who Jesus is, because we don't see physical evidence of His resurrection. We weren't there, so how can we prove there was a resurrection? We can come up with lots of excuses for not believing in the resurrection. We can't prove to someone or even to ourselves that Jesus rose from the dead, much less believe this and stake our lives on it.

But there were and are many witnesses, we included, that Jesus rose from the dead. And many people, over the years, who adamantly did not believe, when they seriously studied this event, ended up finding themselves believing & declaring, **Jesus is risen! (He is risen indeed!)**

I could name quite a few people, and you could also, but I'll offer the story of just two. The literary scholar, C. S. Lewis, is another witness to Jesus' resurrection. When he was writing about his conversion to Christianity, he indicated that he had believed Christians "to be wrong." The last thing Lewis wanted was to embrace Christianity. But after evaluating the basis and evidence for Christianity, Lewis concluded that in other religions there was "no such historical claim as in Christianity." But his knowledge of literature forced him to treat the Gospel record as

a trust-worthy account. “I was by now too experienced in literary criticism to regard the Gospels as myth.” Finally, contrary to his strong stand against Christianity, Professor Lewis had to make an intelligent decision.

He wrote: “You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalene College, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.”

The empty tomb tells us of God’s ultimate power and ultimate purpose. The Holy Spirit keeps inviting you and I and the world to declare with commitment and faith, belief and conviction, **“Jesus is risen!” (He is risen indeed!)**

Throughout his suffering, many times Jesus was tempted to show his power to escape his death. But he knew that beyond all demonstrations of power and miracles, it was the ultimate power over death which had to be revealed.

Charles Colson, a favorite author of mine, who started, Prison Fellowship, was the former counsel of President Nixon, and a convicted conspirator in the Watergate scandal. He offers a unique personal insight into why the resurrection was real. Is his story an example of, “that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose?” (Romans 8:28) Colson wrote that the Watergate cover up was the final straw convincing him Jesus was raised from the dead.

He wrote: “There were only 8 or 10 of us in the inner circle around the president who really knew what was going on. All we had to do was stonewall for a couple of months and the Watergate scandal would be over. We had all the power and prestige of the presidency at our fingertips. And if the truth broke, there would be embarrassment and perhaps a prison sentence. There was no grave danger, our lives were not threatened, but we couldn’t hold the conspiracy

together for more than 3 weeks. We could not contain the lie. Once prosecution was possible, the natural instincts of self preservation were so overwhelming that one by one the conspirators, (including myself) , caved in and stood in line at the prosecutors’ office to escape jail.”

Colson concludes, “I know that the disciples could not perpetuate a lie like the resurrection, because it was not just their reputations that were at stake, their lives were in danger. They had no clout, they had nothing to gain by the lie, and yet every one of them stood fast in the conviction that Jesus was alive. Take it from one who saw first hand how vulnerable a cover up is: nothing less than a witness as awesome as the resurrected Christ could have caused those men to maintain to their dying whispers that Jesus is alive and He is Lord! Each apostle, except for John, died a martyr’s death.”

They died rather than recant their belief in the resurrection. I don’t believe the disciples would have died for a lie. I mean, would you die for a lie? History has shown people will give their lives for what they believe is true, but not for what they know is false.

When it comes to believing in the resurrection of Jesus, we cannot simply seek knowledge. Instead, we must seek faith. Nobody comes to faith and trust in Jesus because of knowledge of Him. Even Satan has knowledge of Jesus, only he doesn’t believe in Jesus to follow Him.

It must be our heart and soul that is pulled into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul tells us in Romans 10:9-10, ‘If you believe in your heart and confess with your lips that God raised Jesus from the dead then you will be saved.’

Do you see where our believing comes from? It comes from our heart and soul. The heart is the source of all that we long for. It is the place where we make some of our greatest decisions. Our heart is what will lead us to Jesus, if we are willing to let down the walls we have erected to protect ourselves from truth and senselessness.

In Ezekiel, God said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove

from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you.” (36:26-27) Our hearts matter to God. This is why we must look to our Creator with our hearts.

Because if we don’t, the healing, the joy, the peace, the belief, the truth, and the love which awaits us, will never be there. We will miss out. So, this Easter, allow that to happen in your life. This applies to everyone, whether you have known Jesus for 100 years, or you are searching. We need to allow our hearts to be connected to the heart of God so we experience the Creator’s presence in our lives, now and always.

All it took for Jesus was to call Mary by name. Then her heart knew **Jesus had risen! (He has risen indeed!)**

That address to her in the garden, over came all the logic & puzzlement, questions and doubts, fears & griefs that she had. She probably didn’t understand it all, and never fully grasped how he rose from the grave. But she knew, deep down, when Jesus called her, “Mary.” So she ran to the disciples and said, “I have seen the Lord.”

This is the declaration we make when we take Holy Communion. At times we have the Lord’s Supper as part of a meal together. It’s a feast, a holy feast where our hearts say, I have seen the Lord. Not just in a logical, rational, educated, way, but one our hearts and personal experience knows is the most real truth in a world of hurt, violence and often senselessness. As followers of Jesus it becomes our favorite feast. It’s the call to real deep living. The kind of living that is a light on a hill. It’s the God prepared feast for you and me. It’s the only food that fills our hungry souls. Let’s partake.

Let’s prepare for Holy Communion as we take in a hymn, the responsive reading from Psalm 118, and listen to Acts 10:34-43. Let’s prepare to be deep in the feast, responding the Jesus’ call to deep living.

(Hymn, Read Psalm 118 and Acts 10:34-43)

(Invite deacons up, explain the cup and bread.)

Let’s take time for short silent prayers and then I will pray. (Pause)

It is our duty and delight, Lord God, to give you thanks and praise for all that you have done for the world. Our hearts are full of gratitude to you, because you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life. We thank you Jesus was born among us; that he lived our common life on earth; that he suffered and died for us, that he rose again, and he is always present through the Holy Spirit.

We celebrate this feast in the company of the saints, past & present & to come. With them we proclaim, **Jesus has risen! He has risen indeed!**

(Pass the bread – open it – hold it – eat together)

The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread; when he has given thanks, he broke it & said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” So feast on Jesus in your hearts with thanksgiving. Take and eat.

(Prepare cup – open it – hold it – drink together)

“In the same way, after supper Jesus took the cup saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread & drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” So ministering in Jesus’ name, I offer it to you. Drink this in remembrance that Christ died for you and be thankful.

Prayer: Almighty and most merciful God, you have called us to sit together in heavenly places at this feast of your love. May we partake of the very life of Christ that He may live in our hearts again. May we continue to be changed into His likeness that at last He may present us without fault or blemish before his glorious presence with great joy. May we respond to your call to each of us by name, into the abundant deep living we are offered. May we continue to proclaim, “We have seen the Lord! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Jesus has risen! (He has risen indeed!)