

AUG. 5, '90

COMMUNION SUNDAY IS INDEED A DAY TO REMEMBER. IN FACT, MUCH OF WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TODAY IS REMEMBERING. WE ARE THE FAMILY OF GOD, THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY DISCIPLES OF JESUS, DOING WHAT FAMILIES EVERYWHERE LIKE TO DO WHEN THEY GET TOGETHER. THEY SORT THROUGH THE HAPPENINGS OF THEIR PAST, AND THEY ASK EACH OTHER HOPEFULLY, "DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN...?"

TODAY WE ARE FAMILY, COMING TOGETHER, REMEMBERING OUR SPECIAL HISTORY AND THE ONE WHO HAS GIVEN US CAUSE TO REMEMBER: JESUS FROM NAZARETH, JESUS THE JEW WHO GATHERED HIS DISCIPLES IN A ROOM TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER, JESUS WHO MADE THIS DAY OF THE NEW COMMANDMENT TO LOVE AS HE LOVED. EVEN THE MEAL JESUS CELEBRATED WITH HIS DISCIPLES, THE PASSOVER, WAS A REMEMBERING, A RECOLLECTION WITH JOY OF THE GREAT RESCUE OF GOD'S PEOPLE FROM THEIR SLAVERY IN EGYPT. IT SEEMS AS IF WE COULD SPEND THE WHOLE DAY REMEMBERING, WHILE THE STORIES KEEP COMING, LIKE CHILDREN ON OUR FATHERS' KNEE, BEGGING, "JUST ONE MORE STORY. DAD, JUST ONE MORE!"

OUR MEAL TODAY, THE LORD'S SUPPER, IS NOT A MEAL OF MEMORY, BUT ONE OF HOPE. IT POINTS US FORWARD. IT DIRECTS US TO THE FUTURE. IT ~~KEEPS~~ US FROM BEING SENTIMENTALISTS, ALL CAUGHT UP IN THE PAST, WHEN GOD REALLY DID THE SPECTACULAR. SO, WE KEEP PRAYING, "THY KINGDOM COME!" JESUS HIMSELF POINTED US IN THAT DIRECTION AS HE ATE WITH HIS DISCIPLES, FACING HIS DEATH AND VOWING NOT TO EAT WITH THEM AGAIN UNTIL THE KINGDOM HAD COME.

TODAY WE ARE STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS. JESUS ESTABLISHED THE KINGDOM, BUT THE FULFILLMENT AT THE END OF THE AGE IS STILL NOT HERE. WE HAVE THE CROSS, SOMETHING LIKE A FLAG PLANTED IN HOSTILE TERRITORY, A SIGN TO US FAINT HEARTED SOULS, THAT THE CRUCIAL BATTLE HAS BEEN FOUGHT AND WON AND THE ONLY REASONABLE THING TO DO IS TO LOOK FOR THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF GOD AND LIVE ACCORDINGLY. THIS MEAL WE EAT IS TO HELP KEEP US LOOKING FORWARD, FOR WE EAT THE BREAD OF NOURISHMENT, AND WE DRINK THE WINE OF HOPE.

WE DO THIS AS A BROKEN PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE DENIED. STARVATION, BROKEN FAMILIES, BLOODSHED, REVENGE - WE ARE BATTERED BY FORCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, VICTIMIZED BY THE POWER PLAYS OF OTHERS. THERE IS A REAL SENSE THAT WE ARE VICTIMS, STRUGGLING, FIGHTING, TRYING TO KEEP FROM SINKING. IF THAT IS TRUE IT IS NOT

the entire truth. Today we declare, affirm and even EAT AND DRINK TO A NEW REALITY IN OUR MIDST. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS ARE THE SEEDS OF THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD! IT IS NOT THE END OF GOD'S WORK BUT THE BEGINNING—WHATEVER SUFFERING OUR EYES SEE AND OUR EARS HEAR, WHATEVER RAVAGES OUR MORTAL FLESH ENDURES, WE KNOW THAT ONE HAS LIVED AMONG US WHO IS NOT ONLY THE PAST OF GOD'S ACTION, BUT THE FUTURE, TOO. THERE MAY BE MANY DESCRIPTIONS OF REALITY, BUT THEY ALL PALE BEFORE THE ULTIMATE ONE IN JESUS. SO WHAT DO WE DO AT THE ALTAR TODAY? REMEMBER THE LAST SUPPER, TO BE SURE. EXPERIENCE OUR FORGIVENESS, BY ALL MEANS, BUT WE ALSO CELEBRATE GOD'S NEW WORK ON EARTH, AND EVEN MORE, WE ARE CELEBRATING HEAVEN ON EARTH! A WORLD IS BEING RESTORED IN WHICH VICTIMS BECOME VICTORS THROUGH JESUS' LOVE. THAT IS THE COMING WORLD, THE MOST REAL OF ALL.

BREAD AND WINE SIGNAL A NEW REALITY CREATED BY GOD. THAT IS WHY IN THE THIRD CENTURY, THE EASTER EUCHARIST WAS SERVED TO THE NEWLY BAPTIZED ALONG WITH A CUP OF MILK AND HONEY—SIGNS OF ENTRY INTO THE PROMISED LAND. FOR US, TOO, BREAD AND WINE BRING GOD'S PROMISED FUTURE TO US. WHEN WE EAT AND DRINK WE SHARE IN THE NEW CREATION. WE BECOME PART OF THAT NEW REALITY, LOOKING TO GOD FOR COMPLETION. THINK ABOUT THAT TODAY. SOCIALLY WE MAY BE COARSE OR REFINED, HERE WE ARE ACCEPTED. DAILY WE ARE PARTY TO INJURY BY OTHERS: HERE WE ARE FORGIVEN. POLITICALLY WE DISAGREE AND ARE SOMETIMES DISAGREEABLE, HERE WE ACKNOWLEDGE WHO RULES US AND WHO OUGHT TO RULE US.

TO COME HERE IS NOT TO HAVE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE RESETTING THE LAST SUPPER IN THE BLUE HAZE OF ANOTHER WORLD, TAKING US OUT OF THIS ONE. TO COME HERE IS RATHER, TO RECEIVE FOOD FOR THE DAY, TO KEEP US LOOKING FORWARD TO GOD'S CONTINUED WORK AND HIS FINAL VICTORY. IT IS TEMPTING TO WANT TO GIVE UP. IT IS TEMPTING TO SIDE WITH POPULAR OPINION, WHICH MAKES YESTERDAY ALWAYS LOOK BETTER THAN TODAY AND THE FUTURE QUITE HOPELESS. IT IS TEMPTING TO WANT TO BRING IN TOMORROW BY A SHORTCUT WITHOUT COMPASSION. BREAD AND WINE ARE SET BEFORE US TODAY TO GET US PRAYING AND HOPING AGAIN. "THY KINGDOM COME COME!" MAYBE ONE OF THE BEST SIGNS IS A STOMACH THAT RUMBLES AND GROWLS AND HUNGERS FOR THIS GOOD FOOD.

AS I THOUGHT ABOUT THE BREAD AND WINE, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT IT IS THE OPPOSITE OF THE JUNK FOOD WE SOMETIMES GORGE OURSELVES ON, JUNK FOOD IS QUITE LITERALLY A FOOD OF DEATH. WE EAT IT

WHEN WE DESPAIR OF THE FUTURE: WHEN WE EAT, DRINK AND ARE MERRY, WITH NO THOUGHT FOR TOMORROW, WHEN WE ABANDON A DIET AND SAY "NUTS" TO THE FUTURE AND OUR HEALTH. TO ATTEMPT TO LIVE ON SUCH FOOD, WHICH ON SOME SCALES HAS MINUS FOOD VALUE, WOULD BE SUICIDE.

IN CONTRAST, BREAD AND WINE BRING US THE FUTURE, NOT ONE THAT DESTROYS IT. WE ARE BACK TO BREAD AND WINE, SIGNALING NOT JUST ANY FUTURE FOR US, BUT THE ONE OF GOD'S MAKING. IT IS INTERESTING AND MORE THAN AN ACCIDENT OF HISTORY, THAT BREAD IS A SYMBOL OF THE BASICS OF LIFE AND THAT WINE IS A SYMBOL OF JOY AND FULLNESS. TO THAT NOTE, I CAN ONLY COMMENT THAT NOTHING IS MORE BASIC, MORE REAL, THAN THE SUFFERING LOVE OF JESUS ON THE CROSS. NO JOY IS MORE FULL THAN BEING IN AND WORKING IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S KINGDOM.

AS WE SHARE THE BREAD AND THE WINE, WE ARE FILLED AND HUNGRY AT THE SAME TIME. WE ARE FILLED WITH EVERYTHING GOD GAVE, THE COSTLY SACRIFICE OF HIS SON. BUT WE ARE HUNGRY, TOO—OR AT LEAST MAYBE WE CAN PRAY HE WILL MAKE US HUNGRY—FOR THAT NEW WORLD THAT HAD ITS CLAIM STAKED ON GOLGOTHA. THIS MEAL TODAY IS BOLDLY AND BRAZENLY HOPEFUL. IT IS A VICTORY BANQUET SERVED IN ADVANCE. BUT THEN, WE MUST ADMIT, WE HAVE WITNESSED THE KEY BATTLE.