



# CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

## ***Do You Have Anything to Eat The Third Sunday of Easter 4/18/2021***

I speak to you today as a sinner to sinners, as the beloved of God to God's beloved, as one called to bear witness to those called to bear witness. Amen.

"Have you ever tried this Zoom?" said no one ever. Just about a year ago. That was actually a live question. Remember just a little bit over a year ago, not everybody was doing Zoom. We all had to figure it out. And then suddenly in the midst of about two weeks, we were all doing Zoom in every way we could.

We had Zoom church. We had Zoom meetings. We had Zoom school. Our entire life became mediated by this teleconferencing technology, whether it be Zoom or Microsoft meetings or Teams or whatever you want to call it. And over the past year, it has been a blessing. It's been really a wonderful thing for us to have this technology. It's made it endurable. It's made possible some kind of communication between us, some kind of progress. Meetings have been made and work has been done and people have learned.

But it has also come at an incredible cost. And the cost, I think, is twofold. There's been the work that you have to do to communicate, which has made being on a Zoom meeting exhausting, you have to say things again or say it differently or say it in another way. And that work has made our lives a little bit exhausting. And there's also something else that's been missing from our Zoom meetings. Something that is hard to define, but it really captures the human element in things.

And that human element is the unscripted interactions that we have, these unpredictable moments of need and vulnerability that happen, these unpredictable moments of joy and surprise. These things have gone missing from our lives, much of our lives. And what is amazing to think about, I think is how much of our lives is made by these unscripted moments, by these moments of need and vulnerability, by these simple things, these quotidian things.

When a child wanders into a meeting on Zoom, it's a nuisance for the person trying to have the meeting. They have to somehow *manage* that crisis. And yet I find myself often kind of delighted by the fact that the child came into the Zoom meeting. It gives me that chance of interruption, that moment of grace, that connection that is more than just task oriented. And sometimes even on Zoom, you can have those interactions, which are truly human.

A few weeks ago, I was asked to be a reference for someone in our parish who was hoping to join an order in Canada, an order of nuns. And I was speaking to the sister in charge of the novices. She said, "Do you think that this person is great?" I said, "Yes." And then suddenly we realized, because I used to live in Canada, we had all these friends in common. And we started playing geography, like who do you know and how do you know them and what do you think?

And then suddenly we just kind of forgot the fact that we were doing a reference meeting because the person was so obviously qualified that we just started to have some fun. I didn't have anything else planned. We started having this conversation. I don't know about you, but whenever I talk to a nun, I have this need to please them. I don't know. It's like a childlike need for a maternal affirmation.

And so, while I was in the conversation, I realized that I had inadvertently left some muffins in the oven because of course, when you're working from home, you multitask in absurd ways. And so I suddenly said, "Sister, I forgot about my muffins!" And she said, "Well, go check them!" And I ran in and I pulled them out and they were perfect. I decided to bring them into the meeting and I showed them, I held them up to the screen and she squealed with delight. And she said to me, "They're magnificent."

I had this rush of joy. I had this weird experience of connection, which had seemed to be missing in action for so long. These unscripted moments, these moments of surprise, these moments of need and vulnerability, they make us human. They make human life truly joyful. And I sometimes wonder if that has been a price that we've paid over the past year. We like to blame the misery of this pandemic on many things, and many things are rightly to blame. But that missing interaction, it seems to say something so important about who we are.

Now, I bring this up before you today because I've been pondering this passage, this verse in the Gospel of Luke in a way that I've never thought about it before. And it's that moment in which Jesus comes in and He reveals himself, He says, "Peace be with you." The disciples are terrified that they've seen a ghost. He shows them his wounds and the disciples are amazed because they're seeing a person who is mortally wounded, and yet somehow still alive.

And then He says something amazing. He says, do you have anything to eat? Why is that there? Now, the most obvious explanation that seems to be implied by the gospel writer is that by eating, Jesus shows He's not a ghost because ghosts can't eat. But who says that? In fact, in early Judaism, there was a debate over whether a ghost would eat or not. And whether or not our bodies would be with us when we are with God. And so there's no real reason for Jesus to have said that or done that.

And still others have tried to see in this passage, some kind of image of the Eucharist because eating fish and the feeding of the 5,000, all of these things were meant to be moments of abundance of God's spontaneous presence in and through God's son, Jesus. But there's nothing in the text to say that Jesus was engaging in any kind of Eucharistic action. There's no moment in which he blesses the fish. He just eats it.

And I am sure that this piece of scripture truly happened, because there's no other reason why the Disciples kept memory of it because it doesn't assimilate to anything else in the Gospel of Luke. Have you anything to eat? The only way we have that with us is if Jesus actually said it. And what did it mean? What did it mean for Jesus to be present with His disciples who had abandoned and betrayed Him? What did it mean for Jesus to enter into that space again and say, "Peace be with you"? What did it mean for Jesus to declare desire and need and vulnerability when He said, "Do you have anything to eat?" I think it says everything.

The older I get and the more I read the Bible, there are certain phrases that mean a great deal to me. These are phrases that are not tied to any theology. They're not tied to any kind of grand sweep of the narrative of redemption in any obvious way. Phrases like we have in the 11th chapter of John in which we read that Jesus wept. Everything else could happen in that text, and our theology of Jesus would remain the same. We would still believe He was the son of God. We would still believe that He had the power of resurrection in Him, but that phrase, "Jesus wept," that phrase means everything to me these days.

And the same, I think, could be said when Jesus says, have you anything here to eat? Like a child who has returned home in the middle of the night after dinner, hungry and needing to have a little bit of support and nurture, Jesus says, "Have you anything to eat?" And of course they do, and they share their meal. It was magnificent because in that moment, in which Jesus entered into that space and created that deep unscripted, joyful declaration of need and desire and vulnerability, Jesus reminded us of what it means to be truly human, because to be human is to experience all those things. You can have everything else about what it means to be a human being, all of our art, all of our culture, all of our knowledge, all of our technology and to miss out on those interactions is to miss, in some ways, The point of being alive.

So Jesus, when He continues to fulfill His own work of assuming human nature continues to be fully human when he says, "Do you have anything to eat?" And yet there's also something incredibly profound. Because when Jesus comes and declares what it means to be fully human in that moment, he also communicates to us that the God who raised him from the dead, the God who is revealed to us as stronger than anything that can stand against it, the God who is more powerful than death itself, that God still comes into our midst, unashamed and

willing to declare need and vulnerability. God needs you. Do you have anything to give him to eat? Jesus has come looking for a meal.

There are two images I want to give to you today just to help bring home the point I'm trying to make. The first is a painting, a beautiful kind of almost monumental painting by George Tooker from 1986. And this is on the cover of your bulletin. Those of you are here, but those of you at home can see it right here. And this incredible painting, Tooker who was trying to think through what it meant to truly reconcile in this world, drew this magnificent, incredible painting, a fresco, the Embrace of Peace. You see in it different races, different genders, all meeting on level ground.

These people are done in a kind of monumental scale. They almost look a little like statues who have suddenly come to life. And they're almost about to run past each other. They're unaccustomed to hugging, much like we are, and they run into each other to embrace with need, and vulnerability, because that is what we are made to do. And that is what it means to be truly in peace. Peace, shalom is the presence of the fullness of God and humanity together.

The second image I want to share with you is from our vaccine clinic that we did yesterday. It's an incredible snapshot that one of our participants, who's not a member of the parish took as she came in and she was just a nice to be part of the vaccination effort, but she said, this is the first time she's gotten a vaccine in a church. This unscripted moment in which she came into our midst to get the support she needed, to get the vaccine she needed - this moment of joy for anybody who participated yesterday, it was ever present, always in our midst.

And as important as this work of vaccination was, and is, as heroic the work of the hundred volunteers and staff members who gathered together to make this type of work possible, as much as this is a witness to the kingdom of God, what I wish you all could have seen was the joy. The incredible moments of winks and gazes and unscripted interactions, which we jump to attention to care for someone who shows up with need, in which we suddenly realize that we have a common friend, in which we suddenly realize that someone has a kind of joke to share or a smile to return or an opportunity to be thankful, and an opportunity to meet.

You and I are living in the presence of a pandemic, but we're also living in the presence of resurrection. Pick up the phone and call somebody, look for a way in which you might be surprised by God. Lean into those moments in which you are surprised and vulnerable and needing connection because Christ has come to take all that and transform it too.

Amen.