

Walk until It's Heaven

Isaiah 11.1-9

World Communion Sunday
October 3, 2010

Where is the church? The church of Jesus Christ is where home is, is where heaven is, is where a picnic is communion and people break bread together on their knees.

- Ann Weems

Reading

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

It is never difficult to choose a sermon topic for World Communion Sunday, because in one variation or another there is but one topic for the day, one central question to answer; what is World Communion? Our topic is no different today, and I would like to discuss two responses to this question, two aspects of the unity we celebrate today.

The varied languages in which the scripture lessons were read this morning - German, Portuguese, and French – suggest one prominent aspect of World Communion; as will the version of our Lord's Prayer we will use later in the service, a tapestry woven from wide ranging versions of the prayer. This first aspect is the sense of unity we feel when we gather around the

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communion table with millions of Christians from all points on the globe. The customs at table will vary widely, as will the elements, the words of institution will be uttered in multiple languages, but in this unified act we will symbolize the truth of Christian community: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. Think about it; as we speak Christians of every stripe and color from diverse cultures around the world are gathering around the table and breaking bread together on their knees. It's a wonderful experience every year when we intentionally think of co-jourmers in faith, companion pilgrims along the way. We gather with them in our mind and in our heart as we share communion and the unity it affords us.

There is a second aspect of World Communion; one suggested by our worship heading in which the poet asks rhetorically, "Where is the church? The church of Jesus Christ is where home is, is where heaven is, is where a picnic is communion and people break bread together on their knees." In so many words it suggests not only the possibility of communion with Christians worldwide, but the possibility of experiencing the world as communion. Every day, each moment, any and all experiences represent an opportunity for communion with God and each other.

A song I ran across recently reminds me of this truth. It's a beautiful song that recounts the story of a dying civil war soldier lying on the battlefield, who with his last breath pleads with a comrade to find his family after the war and tell them of his death. It's the way he refers to his home that touches my heart. "When the war is done just walk until it's heaven," he says, "And you'll be right by my home in Tennessee." Heaven is home; what a wonderful notion. Be it Tennessee, Kansas, or Oregon, the point is that there is an experience of home and family that is so close to heaven that it's indistinguishable; this my friends is world as communion, sensing the presence and love of God in hearth and home.

The same could be said of Ann Weem's picnic that becomes communion when we break bread together and find ourselves in the presence of Christ. Be it on a picnic or at a ballgame; be it gathered around the communion table in church; be it on your way home to be with family and friends; on this day we need to remember that not only is there communion worldwide, but that the world in its variety of experiences represents an opportunity for communion when we but open our hearts to God.