

Let us pray: God of sacred story,  
we give thanks to your First People,  
upon whose traditional territory we walk  
with gratitude and respect.  
The words you speak have power;  
power to create, power to disturb, power to heal.  
Help us hear your word for us today.  
Amen.

*(Luke 24:13-35)*

Bread is part of common life for most people in Western civilizations. Morning toast, sandwiches for lunch, warm dinner buns with the evening meal are the stuff of everyday life.

Bread is a symbol of life and well-being. For many diverse cultures and religious traditions, the breaking of bread during meal times symbolizes a physical link to the generous Giver of life.

Not only does the breaking of bread signify the vital presence of God, in the receiving and eating, but Christians are invited to see the world through the perspective of God; who has eyes for justice, peace, and complete welcoming love.

I've never actually made bread...I am too impatient to wait for all the kneading and rising, and kneading and rising...I want fresh, warm bread immediately! I admire very much those who make home-made bread and buns...even with a bread- maker!

In the Hebrew scripture, Moses instructs Aaron to place a container of manna in the presence of the Lord to be kept for future generations. Following that, the author of the letter to the Hebrews lists a golden jar of manna among the contents of the Ark of the covenant.

Bread has always had a place in the Holy of Holies for the ancient Hebrew people, for Christians and for those with other definitions of God.

Luke's Gospel story tells of Cleopas and a friend walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus and they're talking about what happened to Jesus.

A man joins them on the road, they don't recognize him....maybe it is their grief and sadness that blinds them.

The man asks them what they are talking about. "Are you the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened? Where have you been? They find it hard to believe that someone doesn't know about everything that happened.

They walk along for a while longer....talking about various things, including the meaning of scripture.

As they near Emmaus, the stranger is about to leave, but they say, "Stay with us, it's late, the day is almost over, you must be hungry." And he agrees.

And so they sit down together. The stranger begins to eat; he takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and offers it to them. And then, Luke tells us....*they recognized him!* And he vanished from their sight.

The important thing isn't whether this *actually happened*, or not, but it's a story about how the Risen Christ came to his followers again, and again, and again....

Dominic Crossan, in his book, "*Jesus; A Revolutionary Biography*" has a similar understanding of the story...

**"Emmaus never happened; Emmaus always happens"**

The historical Easter argument is this: the followers of Jesus, both then, and now, continue to experience *as a living reality after his death*.

What does the word "living" mean? In the earliest days of the Christian community, followers experienced visions, apparitions, "appearances" of Jesus. Today it could mean something more....

The community experienced the power of the Spirit they had known in Jesus, as still being present. Maybe that's why they said, "Jesus is still here, but in a radically new way."

The experiences (then and now) come in many different ways; visions, and mystical experiences, and less dramatic maybe, but Jesus' presence can be experienced in prayer, worship, the Sacrament of Communion, in other people, even most importantly, in our everyday lives.

Borg suggests the truth of Easter is grounded in These experiences, not in what might, or might not, have happened on the Road to Emmaus just over two thousand year ago.

We spend years failing, or refusing, to recognize God, believing we are on a road of our own making. We can be blind to the road-signs, and when we look back, we see, just as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus Jesus/God was there all along.

When do we acknowledge, trust, celebrate...the moments of recognition in our own lives, in our faith community?

Where were we going when the question of a stranger prompted us to confess that we had lost our way?  
And if we do confess, admit with uncertainty, that we finally, really see, then what?

The disciples were the fortunate ones...they had Jesus breaking bread - right in front of them!  
We may not, or maybe we have had, such a real experience....

At the age of 46, Sarah Miles, (raised an atheist,) went into a church in San Francisco, where she recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. And so next came the question, "Now that you've taken the bread, what are you going to do?"

If you believe that the Road to Emmaus story, has, at least, a grain of historical truth to it, you will understand  
-bread, literally, and metaphorically, ....-will always be *hope*,  
-bread- will always be *encouragement*,  
....bread -will always be *strength*.

Bread never speaks of the grave.....only resurrection.

It's amazing to think that we are so wonderfully made that we need this bread to stay alive. God designed our bodies so that we require constant fuel...and God is that fuel.

Every few hours, we require bread.  
Every few hours we require Bread.

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As with most biblical stories, we will never really know for sure if this event on the 'Road to Emmaus' happened or not, but we do know that the recognition of Jesus 'breaking the bread,' is a symbol for salvation;  
*"...this is my body broken for you"....*

A favourite quote of mine by Simone Weil

*(a French activist who deliberately starved herself to death in 1934)*

"The danger is not lest the soul should doubt whether there is any bread,  
but lest, by a lie,  
it should persuade itself that it is not hungry"

Amen.