



Creation Season

Proper 25, Year A, October 26, 2008

*Special Recognition of the Place of Food in our Lives
Food as a Sacrament/Holy Element*

A Bulletin Insert for the congregations of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota

Lessons (Revised Common Lectionary)

Deuteronomy 34: 1-12

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Matthew 22: 34-46

Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17

Psalm 1

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



(Reflections on the One Great Commandment) Our life makes sense when its two interlocked parts (body and spirit) permeate one another – then, and only then. To love God with our whole being, and to love our neighbor as ourselves – these do not exist in two separately sealed plastic bags. They constantly interact in real life. Love of God empowers love of neighbor. The latter discloses the depth and scope (or lack thereof) of our love of God.

Jesus' genius was to see that at stake in "religious" discourse is much more than "the greatest law" (Mt. 22:34-40). At stake is life itself – the blessed "greatest good" (summum bonum) for people and planet alike. ("He is God not of the dead, but of the living," as Jesus had just said. Mt. 22:32) Further, what holds life together in body and spirit is love – love for God, love for neighbor.

Food is a relational reality. It takes a community to raise a crop, distribute it, process it, preserve it, and consume it in the service of life itself. As such, food is a fateful meeting place of our love for God and our love for neighbor. Otherwise, food is a fateful disclosure of community broken, fragmented, decimated – toward God, neighbor, and self.

Who, what, how far away or near is the neighbor? If a familiar house on a certain street and a specific face and voice bespeak a single neighbor, the cosmic totality reaching out into space bespeaks the far extent of the "neighborhood" into which God placed us at our births.

If it takes a universe to raise a genuine humanity, a true "Mensch," and if it takes a humanity shaped by love of God to use food in the service of the neighbor's life rather than in self-aggrandizement (as in storing one's food-wealth in ever larger commodity-barns) – if all that is true, then we see clearly the incredibly beautiful life-giving peacefulness of God's great holiness ("qadosh") moving outward from worship into world.

Notice: "In contrast to the traditional view that uncleanness was contagious, Jesus regarded holiness/wholeness as contagious. ... Holiness, he saw, was not something to be protected; rather, it was God's numinous transforming power. God's holiness cannot be sullied; it can only prevail." [Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (Fortress, 1992), p. 117.] Jesus thus moves quite beyond Levitical purity regulations.

Food, so intimately bound to earth, is no less bound to the holy love of God, by which it was created. As such, food builds community – here and wherever people's love for God cannot be contained until it reaches their neighbors and neighborhoods to the ends of the earth.

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