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Belonging to the Broken Body

We were driving through the southside of Chicago with a friend of ours some years ago and she mentioned that sometime we should try this one particular restaurant that we happened to pass. At that point Ole said- how about we go, right now! So we did. No more waiting or anticipation for a future date. We feasted right then and there.

Jesus said, “today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

My body knew I needed it before my head and heart could catch up. It was one of the first times in my life I realized I was longing for good news- today. Not words from days gone by or a place-holder promise for a distant tomorrow. The faith I had held onto was stretching beyond its boundaries. I, too, felt like I was being stretched thin. Most words felt hollow. I needed a word from the one who spoke to the people that day in the synagogue and now- from beyond Galilee or even a rock-hewn tomb. A word that was tangible enough to address me some 2000 years into the future. Right now.

That’s why those words felt so life-saving. Words that met me in my vulnerability. Bread placed in my hands and a stranger’s voice: *the body of Christ given for you*. In that moment- filled with so much, Christ had come all the way to me. As food and drink. God, in my body. My today. My right now met with the fullness of Jesus Christ.

As the dove rested upon Jesus at his baptism he was filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit. Fresh from forty days in the wilderness his mission is clear. He is the one who will enliven and vivify those ancient words spoken to Isaiah. He is their very embodiment. Fulfillment. What is it he was sent by God to do? Bring good news to the poor. Proclaim release to the captives. Recovery of sight to the blind. Let the oppressed go free. Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Words of welcome and salvation for the poor and captive, blind and oppressed. Forgotten. Lost. Expendable. These actions done in public were seen as a threat by others. Those with vested interest in the way things have always been. Conspiring to snuff out this carpenter's son and his burgeoning movement he met the same end as countless others. Led to the hill outside the city. There he was. Identifying with the abandoned and forsaken until his last breath. The Word could not be silenced for long. The God who he came to reveal worked from that death one more surprise. Set loose from that grave he still lives. Traveling from every past to your today. He will never leave you alone. Always drawing near, close, with his real presence. For you. Especially when we are empty, at the end of ourselves, with nothing left to give. He is a living savior.

What does your today hold? I know some of you have carried fear, uncertainty, anxiety, confusion, and sadness into this place. We are afraid for so many reasons, afraid for so many people.

Let me speak as a member of the LGBTQ community to the others in the LGBTQ community who like me are members of Grace. You are a beloved child of God. Today. I see you. God delights in you. The word God spoke over you at your baptism and each day of your life is more powerful than any other word that could be spoken about you no matter where it comes from. God's promise for you is irrevocable. You belong in the church, this church, and the world as your full self not in spite of but because of the good news of Jesus Christ. Today.

All of us. Captive to sin, bound by death. Blinded by our own failed attempts to save ourselves. We are raised to new life. Today. We are forgiven. Today. Set free. Today. Given all the fullness of God. Today. Christ's body is placed in your hands. Today. Yes- We feast. Today. we must. The word comes to you today in your need. Calling you out of the narrow confines of your self and placing you again in the house of God. You are never stuck. You who were dead are alive. While we were still weak Christ died for us. "You (you all) are the body of Christ." Today.

As members of this body we know that those who seem to be weaker are indispensable, members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect. Those we are ashamed of are essential. We need them (you), just as the eye needs the ear.

As in Nehemiah, so for us. From this encounter with the word we are *sent*. Today. We join those who are weaker, less respectable and follow their lead. It's our mission now too. Always has been always will be. Anointed for such a time as this. To bring good news to the poor. Proclaim release to the captives. Recovery of sight to the blind. Let the oppressed go free. Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Could be a paraphrase of our baptismal covenant.

As we feast, as the body, and we must, right now, we become what we eat. A living breathing eucharist (Gift) for a starving and breathless world. Taken. Blessed. Broken. Given.¹

As Luther said, "As Christians we do not live in ourselves but in Christ and the neighbor. Through faith we are caught up beyond ourselves into God and through love we descend beneath ourselves through love to serve our neighbor.

Our tomorrows are held in God and we have all we need. Our daily bread. Enough for today.

¹ Credit to Episcopal priest Ian Cron for this powerful image

