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Our Saviour Lutheran Church  
Pentecost 19  
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Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, you have them in your home.

There is no doubt one in your dining room.

And maybe one also in your living room.

Your bedroom, too, may contain one or two.

And, maybe you have one as well in the basement or in your garage, or in that room of your house where you do projects.

What am I talking about, but a table, of course.

Yes, in our dining room, we have our dinner table.

In our living room, we may have a coffee table and/or end tables.

In our bedroom, we might have bedside tables, which we also call nightstands.

And, if we do projects, like sewing or woodworking, we probably also have a work table.

If we need additional horizontal space, say if we have company coming over for dinner, or say we are going to do a puzzle or play a game, we might also set up a card table.

There are all sorts of tables for all sorts of purposes.

And whoever it was that first invented the table was an absolute genius.

He or she is a rockstar.

He or she should have earned the Queen Elisabeth Prize in engineering, which is the Nobel Prize equivalent, since there is no Nobel Prize in engineering to speak of.

Indeed, when you go back to your home today, just take a moment and stare at one of the tables in your home, and just think about how amazing it is.

Here is this thing which we can pick up and move, on which we can put things, and under which we can store things.

Here is this piece of furniture which makes our life that much easier.

Tables expand the utility of our home.

I mean imagine our home without tables, such that everything would be cluttering our floors.

What would we do without the table?

It is a serious question, because let's face it, we are always in need of more horizontal space, aren't we?

Just come to my house and see what I mean.

PAUSE

Now, historically, the table can be traced way back to the ancient cultures of the Egyptians and the Chinese.

These cultures apparently used the table simply to put things on top and for writing and for art.

But the "table" caught on.

And soon tables were a ubiquitous. They were everywhere in all cultures.

Today we have them all around our homes.

And they are in restaurants, and in schools, and in businesses.

Tables are ubiquitous.

We even have one here in the sanctuary, although we call it an altar.

But "altar" is just a fancy religious word for table.

Yes, the table caught on. And soon they were everywhere.

And soon they were being use for all sorts of things.

And it seems to be around the time of the ancient Greeks that tables came to be something around which people sat and ate meals.

And, we have to marvel at that.

We have to marvel at the fact that a piece of furniture can serve to bring people together, but it is true.

Now, today, we might argue that it is the television in the home that brings people together.

But before that amazing box with the moving pictures inside came on the scene, it was the table around which people gathered.

Again, what an amazing invention!

PAUSE

And so, of all the kinds of tables that have ever been created—the end table, the coffee table, the work table, the bedside table, the card table...

Of all the kinds of tables that have ever been created there is no other table more important than the dinner table.

Am I right?

I mean, it is the dinner table where we partake of our daily sustenance.

It is the dinner table where we stop all other activities and sit down to refuel.

It is the dinner table where we gather, and eat, and have fellowship.

And our scripture readings today hearken on this very subject of a dinner table.

The Psalmist says, “You prepare a table before me...”

Isaiah says, “The Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines...”

And Jesus our Savior, tells a parable in our gospel lesson about a wedding banquet prepared for the guests...

Yes, this line-up of lessons for today is filled with more delectable aromas than the normal Sunday lessons.

Can you just smell the savory meats, the fresh baked bread, the cooked vegetables...

Is your mouth not already watering?

Walking into today's lessons is like walking into a home with the Thanksgiving meal ready to be served.

It is like going out to a good restaurant, and even before entering, already smelling the good things being prepared inside.

Yes, reading our lessons today is like being inundated by the flavors of all our favorite foods and then some.

The lessons today invite us to the table.

And to the table we have come (point to the altar).

And, yes, the experience of this table, the Sacrament of the Altar, is not at present what we have known, given the pandemic we are currently experiencing.

The gathering at the table is not what we have known.

We unfortunately can't come forward and kneel before the Lord, and receive the bread and wine of Holy Communion as we have done in the past.

Our Worship and Music Committee, in collaboration with the Covid19-Taskforce, is working towards that end.

We have been talking about how and when we might get back to some semblance of how we used to celebrate Holy Communion.

But when exactly that will take place is very hard to say.

So for now, it is what it is.

PAUSE

But I would have us remember that Holy Communion, even when we were celebrating it prior to the pandemic, was by most standards something different from those other meals in which we gathered around a table.

For in this meal, we only partake of a nibble of bread and a sip of wine.

It is hardly enough food to sustain the physical need of our bodies.

But the spiritual food contained in the communion meal...the spiritual food, which is the very promises of God...the spiritual food is that which we call feast to be sure.

The nibble of bread and the sip of wine we might understand as mostly symbolic.

This is how Jesus told us to celebrate communion, such that we are to partake of bread and wine, and so this is why we celebrate communion that way we do, with some alterations given the present reality.

Jesus tells us to take bread and wine and remember the meal he had celebrated with his disciples.

We do this because Jesus tells us to do this, but sisters and brothers in Christ, it is the Words...it is the Words which are most important to remember.

Jesus says, "This is my body given for you."

"This is my blood shed for you."

In short, Jesus reminds us that on the cross, he has sacrificed his life for our sake...this is body given for you...this is my blood shed for you.

On the cross, Jesus has died and our sin has died with him.

And because Jesus has been raised, we shall live also.

That is the feast of communion.

That is the promise of Jesus...such that Jesus is saying, "I forgive you of your sins, I renew you in your life and I strengthen you for service, and I am with you even now, and when you go forth from this place."

I forgive you of yours sins, I renew you in your life and I strengthen you for service, and...and I am with you.

That is the feast. It is the feast of the promise of our Lord.

That is the work of Christ's cross connected to this meal.

And that is the power of this table around which we gather this day, and every Sunday.

There is a reason why the cross and table are so prominent here in worship.

For cross and table are connected by Christ's Last Supper, his last meal before his crucifixion, where at that Last Supper around a table, Jesus reminds us of his sacrifice for us on the cross, whereby he offered his body and blood for our salvation.

Yes, tables have all sorts of purposes in our lives.

We put things on a table.

We might do some writing at a table.

We may do various kinds of work at a table.

And we gather and we eat at a table.

And I have said it before and I will say it again, there is something holy about that most special of all tables, the dinner table.

At the dinner table we stop what we are doing and we gather with others to break bread and eat, and we converse with those across from ourselves, talking about our day, talking about what is on our hearts.

There has always been something holy about eating at a table with others.

But even more so, there is something holy about this table.

At this table, we recall that Jesus laid down his life, that he sacrificed his life for the world.

That is why then we call it an altar after all.

An altar is where somebody makes a sacrifice.

And so, Jesus Christ is the feast, he is the menu as well as the host who invites to dine.

He is the feast of rich food and of well-aged wine.

He is the wedding banquet.

He is the table spread before us.

For he has swallowed up death forever.

He has wiped away the tears from all faces.

And he has taken the disgrace of the people away from all the earth.

PAUSE

Yes, Jesus has invited you and me to the table to dine.

And it is not just this table in this sanctuary to which Jesus has invited us.

No, Jesus has also invited you and me to the table in the kingdom.

And if we try hard enough, if we close our eyes, and imagine with all our might...we can almost smell the good food and drink at that heavenly banquet table, like we can almost smell the aromas wafting to us from the words in our readings this morning.

There is a place for you and me at the heavenly table.

We know it, for Jesus has promised as much.

Christ has made sure of that we have a place at the table, because Jesus has taken our place at the cross.

That is the good news, sisters and brothers. That is the good news.

And in response to this good news, God in Jesus Christ bids us simply to go out into the world, to go and to tell others that there is a place for them as well as the table in the kingdom.

People need to hear that good news, that they are invited.

They need to hear that good news, because so often our world excludes this or that person for this or that reason.

People need to hear that good news.

There is a place for all people, for all people at the table of our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.