

HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 10/18/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, October 19 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the gift of evangelism. Ask God to bring into your life people who do not have a meaningful relationship with God. Seek to build friendships with others who need the Lord in their lives. Pray that the Holy Spirit give you the words and actions that will build inviting relationships with others.*

More than anything else, God desires relationships with us. That is the testimony of scripture, both the Old and New Testament. God constantly pursues us and we either go the other way (our own way), or create barriers to make it more difficult for others to have that relationship. God makes it simple, and we make it complicated.

The sacraments are just one reminder of how simple God makes it. Or perhaps a better word than simple is familiar. That doesn't mean that the sacraments aren't important or are trivial. They are the powerful way by which God comes to us when we receive them in faith. But the amazing thing is that God uses very common things to create this powerful, meaningful relationship. And that is also something of which the Bible reminds us.

Water in the Bible is a symbol of new beginning. When the Israelites pass through the Red Sea, it is from their old life of slavery to a new life of freedom. When they cross the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, it is into a new life in the land God had promised to them. Elijah and Elisha passed through the Jordan River just before Elijah was taken up to heaven, and Elisha went from being Elijah's student to being the prophet of Israel. Jesus came up out of the water of baptism to begin the ministry to which God had called Him. And there are many more occasions of water marking a new beginning with God in the Bible. Take a moment and think of some others.

Food, and particularly bread, also is an important symbol in the Bible. It is a reminder of God's regular provision for us. God provided fruit to eat from all the trees but one for Adam and Eve. The Passover lamb eaten by the Israelites the night before they left Egypt signified God's protection from the angel of death. Manna and quail sustained the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. Jesus ate meals with many in the gospels, and the Lord's Supper was the ultimate token of God's ongoing care and nurture of all who believe. What other occasions of eating do you recall from scripture?

Water and food are significant for people of faith. Yet they are both very common. We bath, drink, wash, and eat every day. God chose familiar things to help remind us of our relationship with God. Showering or bathing each day can be a moment of baptismal renewal as we recall that God has chosen us to be God's children. The meals we eat can help us remember that God provides for our needs every day. God chose the common so that we would have these symbols

in our lives many times each day to tell us again and again that we are in a powerful and loving relationship with the God who gives these symbols to us.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey