

Bible Study #6

Breaking Bread with Sinners and Saints

Opening Prayer

Holy One of Blessing who names us Beloved:

Strengthen and uphold us as we grow in the power, authority, and meaning of the name by which, in which, and through which you have knit us together. Nurture within us spirits of gracious responsiveness to the ways in which you continue using this identity to knit our own beings to Yours in this particular space and time. Grant us the grace to be faithful stewards of the Name you've entrusted us with together as members of this fearfully strange and wonderful, bloody and bruised Body of Christ—given, marked, broken, and living for the world.

Luther's Small Catechism

"Give us today our daily bread."

"What is this?"

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

"What then does 'daily bread' mean?"

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

– Martin Luther, *The Fourth Petition of The Lord's Prayer, Small Catechism*

Introduction

In Luther's catechisms we are taught to *"expand and extend our thoughts not only to the oven or the flour-bin but to the distant field and the entire land"* to see that our daily bread necessarily includes the many things and conditions that bless human flourishing and community.

Show Video

"Breaking Bread with Sinners and Saints"

Bible Study and Discussion

Read Hebrews 11: 8 – 16 and Matthew 25: 34 - 36

In God's story we are reminded that we are a people who know what it is like to be strangers in a strange land. Welcoming the stranger is a theme that runs through the whole story of God.

Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber: *"There are things that are barriers that the traditional church just sees as being a normative*



expression of church, but it's not normative, it's cultural. So having pews in a row and slight formality and nicey-nice chit chat, all of that stuff, there's nothing wrong with it, it's just makes people uncomfortable who aren't native to that context. So the idea of House for All Sinners and Saints is that people, especially postmodern urban young adults, don't have to culturally commute... in order to be part of the community."

JP agreed that you shouldn't have to *"bracket very specific parts of your identity so that you could fit in someplace that you didn't really want to be."*

- *Where have you felt like a stranger?*
- *Where do you feel welcome?*
- *What has helped you to feel welcome when you have been a stranger?*

House for All Sinners and Saints includes a population that isn't typically found in traditional congregations: *"We have... gay folks and transgendered and people who have never been part of Christian community in their entire lives."*

- *With is the "cultural context" of your congregation?*
- *How might someone from a different generational or cultural context experience your church gathering?*
- *How do you welcome someone who is a "stranger"?*

Read 1 Corinthians 12: 7 - 26

The Apostle Paul illustrates the value of each person in the body of Christ to the whole, in all its unity and diversity.

Pastor Nadia explained that the community of House is not just *consuming* but is *producing*. *"They write pieces of the liturgy, they write poetry, they make art. The whole liturgy is led by the people who show up. So, it's not where you sit in rows and the two important people in the front do all the important things and occasionally you get to say something back."*

- *What kind of "bread" is nourishing the House community?*

- *In your congregation, what cultivates imagination and creativity? What hinders it?*

True participation means that the participants may affect the outcome of the happening. Pastor Nadia said, *“The cost is that sometimes things might be a little clunky or they might not be what I chose, but it’s completely worth it because they are really owning it.”*

- *How could your congregation encourage imagination and creativity for the liturgy and other church gatherings?*
- *In what ways could this enhance your life together?*

Read Isaiah 55: 1, Romans 6: 23, and Ephesians 2: 8 - 9

The salvation of God is always a free gift.

Asher told the story of his “coming out” experience at House for All Sinners and Saints as compared to college. Since his parents are quite conservative, it was rough for him. But at House, Nadia and the community was supportive, and they shared in a re-naming rite.

Asher said, “ My dad actually ended up coming. He was bawling the whole time. Nadia handed him tissues at several points. I was re-named as Asher.” The experience was completely different compared to when he basically “got kicked out of his college ministry because he was gay “

The Lutheran Theology of the Cross emphasizes that God comes to us just as we are and that there is nothing we must do to earn or achieve God’s love and acceptance.

However, sometimes we have difficulty accepting ourselves—and others.

- *Share a story of when the power of God’s unconditional acceptance has healed and renewed you or someone you know.*
- *How have you experienced the welcome and acceptance of God in the Lutheran theology of the cross?*
- *How may this theology of welcome and acceptance bring healing to ourselves and to our relationships?*
- *How may we be mindful of and facilitate how this theology of welcome and acceptance may bring healing to our hurting world?*

Read Mark 2: 23 - 28

With the coming of Jesus, it seemed that nothing changed and yet everything changed. He honors his roots in the ancient Story, but opens up our hearts and minds to its larger scope and purposes.

The House for All Sinners and Saints website says: *“House for All Sinners and Saints’ is a group of folks figuring out how to be a liturgical, Christo-centric, social justice oriented, queer inclusive, incarnational, contemplative,*

irreverent, ancient - future church with a progressive but deeply rooted theological imagination.”

Tim: *The thing that appeals to me about House is that even though its appearance is unorthodox for church, its message and theology is as orthodox as you get.*

Pastor Nadia: *“It’s important for the Lutheran Church to be open to the ways that Lutheranism can look.”* She explained that tradition can be enlivened by those coming to the Church as adults and seeing the tradition through new eyes. *“The strangers who come in end up re-introducing the people who have always had the thing to what the thing really means, which is really beautiful.”*

- *When has a “stranger” blessed you and given you fresh insight into our traditions*
- *How does a strong foundation of “orthodoxy and tradition” create a sense of lavish freedom in the work of the Kingdom?*

Poem

*Learn to live and love
accordingly attuned to
the compass with which
your Maker has endowed you--
Imago Dei irreplaceably displayed
within your own heart.
May you courageously trust
that sacred thread
by which you are tenderly
knit together with infinite
wisdom, intention, and affection
carefully hemmed in each and every stitch--
back inside your mother’s womb
and every single moment
since.*

Closing Prayer

Join in prayer together:

May we bear the name Beloved by which you have called us in the Name of Christ. May we share it in the name of Mercy. May we offer it in the name of Justice. And above all grant that we all may be worthy to call ourselves Christians, for the sake of your Christ whose name is Love, and in whom, with you and the Spirit, we pray. Amen.

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House for All Sinners and Saints website and other resources:

**www.houseforall.org
www.urbanservantcorps.org
www.glbtcOLORADO.org/RainbowAlley.aspx
www.praxus.org**