

Sermon* by Rev. Dina van Klaveren

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After 3 days spent painting at the Technical School in Amarateca, Honduras, we celebrated with a US vs Hondo soccer/football match (we won!) followed by a volleyball match (they won!) and I had the distinct sense as I screamed encouragement from the bleachers with 60 some teenaged high school students all around me, that I was at a heavenly banquet, feasting on the joy we know best in communion with others as the people of God. Taste and see that God is good.

After a confusing afternoon in Appalachia, where all of our credit cards were denied and AT&T was down, we stood with 5 carts overflowing with back to school supplies yet were powerless to pay for them until we came up with a plan. By the grace of God and the generosity of those around us, we were able to purchase over \$1,400 worth of school supplies. On the way home, I took a wrong turn and a thunderstorm kicked up. Finally, we arrived back at St. Timothy's Outreach Center to our friends (who were more than a little worried about us), made dinner and twisted off the cap of a cold bottle of Ale 8, a popular local soda, and feasted on the joy of a safe return, a task completed, a meal shared, a journey ended and a delight in being together in our powerlessness and adversity as well as our achievement and productivity. Taste and see that God is good.

And this morning after traveling to General Convention in Salt Lake City, J2A pilgrimage to New Orleans, mission service trips to Honduras and Appalachia; it is most joyous to be here. Right here, with God's people for the Sunday feast. Taste and see that God is good.

14 of us traveled 2000 miles to Honduras to spend time with 120 children at the elementary residential school in Tegucigalpa, 64 students at the Technical School, 55 at the agricultural institute and 14 high school girls at Santa Lucia. We were there for 6 days serving, worshipping at St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral on Sunday, spending over \$1000 per person for airfare and lodging in the guest house. 15 of us traveled 522 miles in a convoy to Estill County, Kentucky to spend a week with a community of folks. It's a lot of time and money for these mission trips. There are moments I wonder if it is worth all this travel when we could just serve people right here in Baltimore. But we all have known isolation and loneliness and separation – thank God for those who cut through the distance and break through the separation. The message that we send when we service these places is - you are worth it. You are worth the drive to Kentucky. You are worth the flight to Honduras.

Why do we go all that way? Why do we leave our homes and pack our duffels and sit in cars and planes for hours? To celebrate the connection we know through Christ. We are all connected. To investigate the finer points of what it means to be in communion with one another. Not just in here, but out there. WAY out there. In a damp lush holler in Kentucky is a little shack where a woman squatter has planted geraniums alongside the entrance to her home. Her name is Belkis and she is a part of us, of the Body of Christ.

Christ is the bread – the center – the food – the nourishment - the stuff that connects us and feeds us when we are in communion in Christ's name. It is indeed HOLY communion. When we gather to feast on football and volleyball and Ale 8 and homecomings and bread and wine, we celebrate this center we share- this Holy Communion.

When we stop to celebrate how Christ, the Bread of our lives, feeds us and connects us even in our experiences of isolation, we live a bit differently. This is where Ephesians 4:25-5:2 comes in. Ephesians says we must be truth tellers. We speak the truth because we are all connected as one body, the bread for this hungry world. We tell the truth because this truth is the only way forward. The second thing Ephesians says is that anger happens. Yet it doesn't lead us away from communion/connection and into isolation. If it does, we stop, notice and sort it out before the days closes on it. Next it says to work honestly and hard so we can share the fruits of our own labor with other people in need. We speak in ways that bless people and live in ways that are generous, tender-hearted, forgiving and forgiven.

This behavior is hard work; an effort to stretch into behavior modeled after God can be exhausting. Yet, our family members and co-workers and neighbors are worth it. God became flesh in Jesus because God believes we are worth it. So we too will let the rest of the Body of Christ; where we might be- far away or right here at home- we will let the whole Body of Christ know that we are all worth it. Worth the bread of life, worth the love of Christ.

*Abridged