



BREAD & WINE

★ HOLYWEEK ★

[MEDITATION ON TAKE THIS BREAD' ... THOUGHTS ON COMMUNITY, FOOD, & THE IM- PORTANCE OF THE TABLE]

"I haven't baked bread since college, when I went through a brief but intense baguette phase, baking pan after pan of slim loaves, wrapping them in dish towels while they were still hot, cradling them like babies in the crook of my arm, arriving at friends' houses and neighbors' homes with still-warm, crusty, golden bread.

This fall, something in me felt compelled to start again. All this talk of bread and wine made me want to knead, bake, break open – steam escaping, crust cracking. It's fall, which brings out a little melancholy, I think. And it's a season of great change in our home: our boys are turning from baby to toddler and little boy to big. Mac's first birthday is this month, and Henry just started kindergarten. One bright Monday morning a few weeks ago, he put on his Superman backpack and climbed up the big stairs of a yellow school bus, and that was that: our boy is big.

Maybe it was the change in the air, or the changes under our roof, maybe it was the nature of writing – so much activity in the mind and the heart and the fingers, and sometimes you have to close the computer and live in the world again: flour, salt, water, roaring hot oven, butter melting into the steaming crags.

I began to bake bread, loaf after loaf, flour in my hair and cuticles, my well-loved red dutch oven put to work for the rising, and the sweet Cath Kidston tea towels we brought home from London this summer pressed into service over the rising dough. When the first loaf came out of the oven, hot and crusty, the whole house smelling like heaven, I almost cried. It was the strangest thing. I make plenty of things that are much more difficult, but maybe that's the point. Maybe it's the simplicity that got me, not the difficulty.

The first loaf did not seem to be going well – the rising seemed halfhearted, and I had myself steeled for a failure. But when I opened the oven, there it was, a gorgeous, crusty, piping-hot loaf that I showed off, bursting with pride, to my mother and my mother-in-law. I was like a child with a project – *I made this! I made it from flour and water! All by myself!*

It felt like an epiphany, a discovery. I wanted to tell everyone I know. I started making loaf after loaf, every chance I got. I ate it with butter

and jam, with cheddar and Dijon, with goat cheese and honey, and mostly just plain, fresh from the oven, so hot I burned both my fingers and my tongue and kept eating anyway.

I've been a self-professed non-baker for a long time, but that's all over now. The signs, really, have been pointing that way for some time. I told myself that the toffee and the mousse aren't really baking – more like melting and whipping. But now my once-a-year-only-at-Christmas Gaia cookies have started appearing in all seasons, the breakfast cookies have become a staple, and Nigella's brownies are making frequent after-dinner appearances. And then my over-the-top summer-of-blueberry-crisp forced me out into the open: I'm baking, people, and not occasionally. But this is it: this bread is the final step. This bread has made me a baker.

Baking bread feels so deeply right, on so many levels, like going back to the beginning. I've been making risotto and reducing balsamic on the stove, caramelizing onions and whipping cream for mousse, dredging chicken for a curry and shucking corn to be grilled. But before all that, under all that, at the beginning: there was bread. The element, itself, the most basic building block: bread.

While I measured and kneaded, while the dough rose, while the oven reached a screaming 450° F (230° C), I let my mind wander:

Why does it matter?

Why does food matter?

Why does the table matter?

Food matters because it's one of the things that forces us to live in this world – this tactile, physical, messy, and beautiful world – no matter how hard we try to escape into our minds and our ideals. Food is a reminder of our humanity, our fragility, our createdness. Try to think yourself through starvation. Try to command yourself not to be hungry, using your own sheer will. It will work for a while, maybe, but at some point you'll find yourself – no matter how high-minded or iron-willed – face-to-face with your own hunger, and with that hunger, your own humanity.

The sacraments are tangible ways to represent tangible ideas: new life becomes something we can feel and smell and see when we baptize in water. The idea of a Savior, of a sacrifice, of body and blood so many centuries ago, fills our senses and invades our present when our fingers break bread and our mouths fill with wine.

We don't experience this connection, this remembering, this intimate memory and celebration of Christ, only at the altar. We ex-

perience it, or at least we could, every time the bread and wine are present – essentially, every time we are fed. During that last meal, that last gathering of dear friends and disciples, Jesus was inviting us to gather around a table and remember, in church buildings and outside of them, during the sacrament of Communion and outside of it.

When you offer peace instead of division, when you offer faith instead of fear, when you offer someone a place at your table instead of keeping them out because they're different or messy or wrong somehow, you represent the heart of Christ.

We tend to believe that what we've done is too bad – that our sins and mistakes are beyond repair, and our faults and failures too deep and ugly. That's what shame tells us. But if we take a chance and come to the table, and if when we are there we are treated with respect and esteem and kindness, then that voice of shame recedes, just for a little while, enough to let the voice of truth, of hope, of Christ himself, get planted a little deeper and a little deeper each time. The table becomes the hospital bed, the place of healing. It becomes the place of relearning and reeducating, the place where value and love are communicated.

When the table is full, heavy with platters, wine glasses scattered, napkins twitted and crumpled, forks askew, dessert plates scattered with crumbs and icing, candles burning down low – it's in those moments that I feel a deep sense of God's presence and happiness. I feel honoured to create a place around my table, a place for laughing and crying, for being seen and heard, for telling stories and creating memories.

I do sometimes feel a sense of God's presence when I write, or when I listen, or when I read the Bible. I often feel that sacred flickering when I hold my baby, or when I kiss Henry's eyelids when he's sleeping. I feel it when I look across the lake or when I see the ocean. But more than anything, I feel it at the table.

Body of Christ, broken for you. Blood of Christ, shed for you. 'Every time you eat the bread and drink the wine,' Jesus says, 'remember me.' Communion is connection, remembrance.

My friend Shane says the genius of Communion, of bread and wine, is that bread is the food of the poor and wine the drink of the privileged, and that every time we see those two together, we are reminded of what we share instead of what divides us.

In our tradition, we take Communion as a part of the church service every month or so. We pass a plate of bread, and another with tiny cups of wine – juice, actually. The taste of grape juice always reminds me of church, because until I had children, that was the only time I ever encountered it. We also celebrate Communion in less formal places – at a camp, or on a retreat. It isn't terribly uncommon to take Communion together in a makeshift way, in a home or a backyard or on a beach, one person reading the Scripture, another passing the bread and wine around a circle of friends, a small group, or a team that serves together.

I believe that the bread and wine is for all of us, for every person, an invitation to believe, a hand extended from divine to human. I believe it's to be torn and handled, gulped. I believe that we can practice the sacrament of Communion anywhere at all, that a forest clearing can become a church and any one of us a priest as we bless the bread and the wine.

And I believe that Jesus asked for us to remember him during the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine every time, every meal, every day – no matter where we are, who we are, what we've done.

If we only practice remembrance every time we take Communion at church, we miss three opportunities a day to remember. What a travesty! Eugene Peterson says that 'to eyes that see, every bush is a burning bush.' Yes, that, exactly. **To those of us who believe that all of life is sacred, every crumb of bread and sip of wine is a Eucharist, a remembrance, a call to awareness of holiness right where we are.**

I want all of the holiness of the Eucharist to spill out beyond the church walls, out of the hands of priests and into the regular streets and sidewalks, into the hands of regular, grubby people like you and me, onto our tables, in our kitchens and dining rooms and backyards.

Holiness abounds, should we choose to look for it. The whisper and drumbeat of God's

Spirit are all around us, should we choose to listen for them. The building blocks of the most common meal – the bread and the wine – are reminders to us: 'He's here! God is here, and he's good.' Every time we eat, every time we gather, every time the table is filled: **He's here. He's here, and he is good."**

(Shauna Niequist, author. "Take This Bread" chapter excerpt from Bread and Wine. | Follow her @sniequist)

[INTRODUCTION TO LITURGICAL SEASON :: HOLY WEEK]

Holy [ˈhōlə] *adjective* : 1. Belonging to, or derived from, or associated with a divine power; sacred. 2. Regarded as worthy of worship or veneration; revered. 3. Living according to a strict or highly moral religious or spiritual system; saintly. 4. **Specified or set apart for a religious purpose.**

(thefreedictionary.com)

Week [wēk] *noun* : 1. The period of seven days generally reckoned from and to midnight on Saturday night : She has an art class twice a week. 2. **A period of five or seven days devoted to a specified purpose or beginning on a specified day : Holy Week.** Origin : Old English *wice*, from a base probably meaning 'sequence, series.'

(New American Oxford Dictionary)

"The most sacred moments, the ones in which I feel God's presence most profoundly, when I feel the goodness of the world most arrestingly, take place at the table."
(Shauna Niequist)

I've always found the practice of Communion fascinating. Some of

my earliest memories as a part of the family of God involve sharing the Eucharist meal with other Christ-followers, whether as a family each New Year's Eve growing up, quietly reflecting on the year that has passed in the silence of our church's chapel, or standing in the middle of a dusty Mexican field as a week of missional service culminated with the sharing of tortillas and juice (!), to the time I choked down the a high proof glass of strength offered to me by an Anglican priest in Johannesburg, South Africa, a man who gulped down the leftover drink in the cup that week, much to my fascination.

While Communion remains fascinating to me as a sacramental practice central to the faith, I must admit it continues to be mysterious in nature. At times I have pondered where I stand upon the theological divide, asking myself "Is

this merely an empty ritual? Am I actually consuming the body and blood of Jesus as some sort of religious cannibal? Or is it something else entirely?" Regardless of position, what grows in importance with me each time I share the Eucharist meal is this: the reality that Jesus himself used common, central items within his final meal with his friends to point to something historical (I am the Passover lamb, the new Moses coming to lead you from slavery to freedom), something about to take place that no one yet understood (My body will literally be broken, my blood shed, within the next few hours, for the restoration of all things unto God), and something so common, made divine (Each time you eat and drink, do so remembering me, and what I have done for your good).

Donald Miller remarks that the disciples would have been confused with our modern practice of Communion, writing *"How different it would seem from the way they did it, sitting around somebody's living room table, grabbing a hunk of bread and holding their own glass of wine, exchanging stories about Christ, perhaps laughing, perhaps crying, consoling each other, telling one another that the person who had exploded into their hearts was indeed the Son of God, their Bridegroom, come to tell them who they were, come to mend the broken relationship, come to marry them in a spiritual union more beautiful, more intimate than anything they could know on earth"*

(Searching For God Knows What).

As I grow older, over 20 years into following Jesus in the way of God, all I am realising is this: Anything that I can do to remember the person, life, and work of Jesus, and do with consistent rhythm, is worth doing as often, and as meaningful, as possible. It's for this reason that my appreciation and practice of the Eucharist meal only grows in importance each time I share a table with my family and friends, for "every

crumb of bread and sip of wine" (Shauna Niequist) bears witness to Jesus himself, should my heart be receptively open to it.

Welcome to Holy Week 2015, 3rd Place. May "every crumb of bread and sip of wine" be ripe with meaning, thick with worship, arresting your heart once again to the mystery and passion of Holy Week, the last week of Jesus' life on earth, where all was finished for good, much of it finalised around a table shared with friends.

(Chris Kamalski, Visual Liturgist | Follow him @chriskamalski)

"The music, the prayers, the bowing and rising, the incense - all of it was breaking down my defenses. That's what good liturgy does. It breaks your heart open and turns you towards God."

(Fred Bakson, Soil and Sacrament)

[INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST :: WHY GATHER AROUND THE TABLE?]

Q: "How does a table become a temple? What's going on when we share a meal?"

A: "The very idea of Jesus – of God living a human life, with fasting and feasting written into every page of His story – begs us to take our meals more seriously. In John's account of Jesus's life, the first revelation of His glory is when He turns water into wine. Exquisite wine. Somewhere between 600 and 900 bottles of exquisite wine. Jesus understood the power of meals so clearly that He was able to use them to condemn oppressive social and religious structures by simply eating with the right (or the wrong) people. When we want to start a movement, we aim for a viral video or a growing Twitter following. Jesus did it by sharing His table. He gave His followers a meal that would become the center of their worship, and His followers would come to call that meal Thanksgiving, which is what Eucharist means. And then, when he came out of the grave, raised from the dead, giving us a glimpse of unending, enduring, eternal life, He cooked a meal for his friends on the beach where they feasted together.

This is good news for anyone who has ever shared a meal with the people they love and wondered why it felt so sacred. **This tells me I'm not crazy for thinking my table is sometimes something like a temple."**

(Jason Adam Miller, Pastor, Artist, and Teacher at Granger Community Church. This interview is excerpted from a blog series entitled "feast, pt.1," on feasting as a preparation and celebration of Thanksgiving. | Follow him @jasonadamiller).

[LITURGY FOR THE SEASON :: HOLY WEEK SCRIPTURE]

At some point during Holy Week, gather family and friends around your table. While sharing your freshly baked bread and a local South African choice red wine, join together in sharing the Eucharist, breaking bread and sipping wine *"in remembrance of me,"* (Luke 22:9) as Jesus instructs his friends during their last meal together prior to his arrest, trial, flogging, crucifixion, and death. Create a space around your table to let the events of the last week of Jesus' life linger in your midst, the reality of the crescendo of his death and the unexpected joyful chaos of his resurrection wash over you, a wave of emotion experience once again.

Holy Week Liturgy to Read Each Day

- **Palm Sunday** (Sun, Mar 29th) :: Psalm 118:19-29; Phil 2:5-11; Mark 11:1-11, John 12:12-16
- **Holy Monday** (Mon, Mar 30th) :: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 36:5-11; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11
- **Holy Tuesday** (Tue, Mar 31st) :: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:18-31; John 12:20-36
- **Holy Wednesday** (Wed, Apr 1st) :: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32
- **Maundy Thursday** (Thu, Apr 2nd) :: Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 116:1-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-35
- **Good Friday** (Fri, Apr 3rd) :: Isaiah 52:12-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:16-25; John 18:1-19:42
- **Holy Saturday** (Sat, Apr 4th) :: Lamentations 3:1-24; Psalm 31:1-16; 1 Peter 4:1-8; John 19:38-42
- **Easter Sunday** (Sun, Apr 5th) :: Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

11 DINNER PARTY RECIPES ... ENCOURAGING LIFE AT THE TABLE

As Julia Child (!) writes in *My Life in France*, “No one is born a great cook. One learns by doing.” Even the most natural chefs will admit to you if pressed that their skill and passion was almost always first borne out of repeated exposure learning in the kitchen with someone they loved. It’s as if the creation of gourmet dishes takes place most naturally in the company of community, belying the mythical image of the solitary chef slaving away in front of the stove. To spur the deepening of community (and incredible shared meals!), each liturgical season will feature recipes themed in the spirit of the season. *Bon Appétit!*

Note on baking bread:

Our hope is that your experiment in baking bread will result in your sharing of Communion together in community at some point during Holy Week, using the most basic of food and drink to remember the most central act of sacrifice Jesus gave to us: the breaking of his body and the pouring out of his blood, for the restoration and reconciliation of man to God.

Sullivan Street Bread

Ingredients and instructions by Jim Lahey, owner of *Sullivan Street Bakery*.

“I’ve been hearing about this recipe for years, but my fear of yeast has kept me away. And then all at once, on a cool fall day, I plunged in, and I have to tell you, this is incredible bread, and incredibly easy.

A few notes: I use my beloved, battered, scratched Le Creuset dutch oven, and it works perfectly. Also, every time I make it, I hope that

this time it’s going to rise into a huge, puffy, impressive sphere, and really, it never does. Mine never doubles the way the recipe says it will. This is nerve-racking every time, and then the bread is delicious every time. Like life, right? We freak out, generally, for nothing. That’s how this bread is. It makes me nervous and makes me certain I’ve failed, and then it delights me with that crusty, crackling, gorgeous loaf. Bread baking is an emotional roller coaster. Hold on tight.

Also, I use cornmeal to dust it because I like the gritty yellowness, and I’m pretty generous with it, especially on the tea towel so it doesn’t get all sticky.

A few more things: the recipe instructs you to let the dough rest for 12 hours – feel free to leave it longer than that, but not shorter. At our house, I bake it at 450° F (230° C) for 45 minutes, and that’s perfect. You might find that 500° F (260° C) works better for you, or that in your oven you need the whole hour, but my recommendation is that you start with 450 and 45 minutes.

And then call me and yell and dance around your kitchen, because you have cracked the code, found the grail, unlocked the key: you have made bread.”

(Story by Shauna Niequist).

Ingredients

3 cups cake flour
1/4 teaspoon yeast
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
1 1/2 cups water
Olive oil (about 1 teaspoon, for coating)
Extra wheat bran or cornflour for dusting

Equipment

2 medium mixing bowls
pot with lid (Pyrex glass, Le Creuset cast iron, or ceramic)

Wooden spoon
Plastic wrap
2 or 3 cotton dish towels (not terry cloth)

Directions

Mix all of the dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Add water and incorporate with a wooden spoon or spatula for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Lightly coat the inside of a second medium bowl with olive oil and place the dough in the bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let the dough rest 12 hours at room temperature (approximately 68° F / 20° C).

After 12 (or more) hours, remove the dough from the bowl and fold once or twice. Let the dough rest 15 minutes in the bowl or on the work surface.

Next, shape the dough into a ball. Generously coat a cotton towel with flour, wheat bran, or cornmeal; place the dough seamside down on the towel and dust with flour. Cover the dough with a cotton towel and let rise 1 to 2 hours at room temperature until more than doubled in size.

Preheat oven to 450° F (230° C). Place the pot in the oven at least 30 minutes prior to baking to preheat. Once the dough has more than doubled in volume, remove the pot from the oven and place the dough in the pot seamside up. Cover with the lid and bake 30 minutes. Then remove the lid and bake 15 to 30 minutes uncovered, until the loaf is nicely browned. Cool on a wire rack.

Makes 1 loaf

(Recipe by Jim Lahey, owner of Sullivan Street Baker. Excerpted from “Take This Bread” chapter in *Bread and Wine*.)

12 [TABLE TALK ... QUESTIONS THAT SPARK CONVERSATION]

Think back on a few of the fondest family memories that you have in your past. Chances are high that a portion of this cherished memory takes place at or near a dinner table, in close proximity to a shared meal. What is it about tasty food shared around a common table that lends itself to transformative questions, challenging discussion (spilling over to argument!), and hilarious laughter? It almost feels as if good dialogue is only sparked in the midst of filling bellies and common shared space. Thus, our hope this liturgical year is to deliberately engage shared conversation – at least one per season – together, seated around your table. Here’s a few questions to spark your dialogue:

- Why gather around the table at all? Why not simply eat in front of the TV or kitchen sink?
- What is it about shared food and common space that lends itself to great discussion?
- How does a temple become a table? Why does something sacred often transpire when we share a meal?
- How does the Eucharist (Communion) meal become thanksgiving? Why would the Church throughout history refer to Communion with this word, which literally means “thanksgiving?”
- Trace the sacramental practice of Communion throughout history, discussing how for the vast majority of the Church the Eucharist was the central act of regular worship practiced to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus. A great resource to start your discussion with: *THE SACRED MEAL* by Nora Gallagher.
- Share the bread and wine of Communion with each one another at the table.

