

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood – Jan 3, 2016

Second Sunday after Christmas

Fed to Be Different

Ps 147:12-20 & John 1:1-18 – Sermon Text = John 1:18

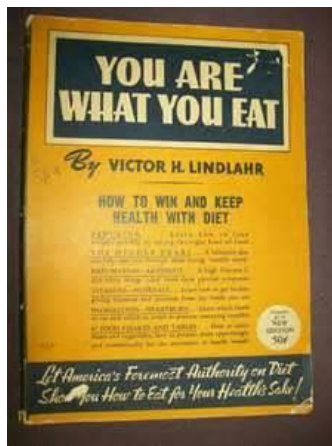
***No one has ever seen God.
It is God the only Son,
who is close to the Father's heart,
who has made him known.
(John 1:18)***

[Hymns = 563, 548, 530, 556]

Show of hands –
how many of you ate too much over the holidays?

I certainly did -
too much sugar, too much fat, too much wine –
and I feel it.
So do my scales.

Our bodies are intensely sensitive
to what we put into them.
Nutritionist Victor Lindlahr published *You Are What You Eat* in 1942.
The phrase passed into common use
with the rise of the natural foods movement in the 1960s.



And it still makes sense to me.

I got thinking about this truism this week
as I was pondering how we are fed in and through the church
to be followers of Jesus in a fearful and divided world.

Because that's what God is inviting us do in this world –
follow Jesus.

And that makes us different.
It connects us with God's particular perspective and power.
It creates a unique focus for our lives.
It grounds our lives in a relationship
with the energy of love that created the world.

John is the New Testament writer that,
more explicitly than any other,
emphasizes the power of God's love
Follow Jesus, as God has enabled us to do,
and you will discover that, by God's grace, you are filled with that love,
you participate in that love,
you contribute to that love.

And that makes you different.
It makes you conscious of being in a relationship
with the Creator, Redeemer, and Enhancer of the whole universe.
It makes you conscious of being in a relationship
with the caring and loving energy
that flows through and offers flourishing to
every being in creation.
It makes you conscious of being in a relationship
With the God of the Gospel
who gives you a love that casts out fear.
who brings together in peace all his beloved creatures.

It is this relationship that enriches and energizes our lives,
that gives us the courage and resilience
to be and make a difference in this world
that is so stuck, far too often, in fear and division.

A friend sent me a link to a TED Talk this week.
It's by Robert Waldinger,
the current Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development.
It's the longest longitudinal study of humans yet,
following individuals and their development for over 75 years.
The talk focuses on their most important finding to date –
that quality of life is largely determined by quality of relationships.
It's relationships that matter –
with God, with others, and with yourself.

People who are more conscious of and attentive to cultivating good relationships are healthier and happier.

And I think that's what we are fed for in the church.
That is what nourishes us as we follow Jesus.
It's the enriching love of God
that brings us together to nourish each other
in the delight of flourishing
as God intends in and for the world.



This is an intriguing image of the last supper
that I found in a post on Facebook
in a group called Casa: An Experiment in Doing Online Church.
It's moderated by Rafael Vallejo,
who ministers at Beaches and Queen St East Presbyterian Churches in Toronto.
It originally appeared in an issue of the Global Catholic Worker.
I don't know yet who 'SK', the artist, is.
As always, I'm fascinated by the faces –
fearful, confused, suspicious, tired, darkened, calm.
Jesus' face is reflected in the cup
as his hands reach out to touch and bless the bread and wine.

This is the table of the first followers of Jesus –
ordinary people drawn from the lower ranks of society
who found in their relationship with Jesus
a source of dignity and worth
that made them want to be and make a difference in the world.
That's what the church was fed to be in the beginning.
And we're still fed to be that way at this table.

So, come, taste and see that the Lord, as always, is good.