

Sermon 2009 Pentecost 2
Text: Mark 4:26-34
Theme: "The Mystery of the Feast"

Just about every one of us remembers the bean plant experiment when we first planted a bean seed and watched with utter wonder as the bean plant sprouted and slowly became a bean plant. We transplanted it to a larger pot or the garden and lo and behold that little seed that we planted in a milk carton grew into a large plant and began producing beans!

Today, scientists can explain how that all happens but the miracle is no less because we cannot reproduce it. Human beings cannot create life and even if we can explain how it works, the mystery is still there. Likewise, theologians can explain how faith comes to be, but we cannot reproduce it and so the mystery is no less powerful today than it was in Jesus' day.

The color of the Pentecost season is green because green is the color of plants that are alive and growing. During this season of the church year we focus on the growth of our faith. Faith is a gift from the Holy Spirit but what we do with that gift is up to us. Our geraniums that we had on the cross for the day of Pentecost are a perfect example of what I mean. They were beautiful up on

the cross. Then they came down from the cross and were set in the Trinity Center. I'm not sure if anyone remembered to water them and they were set away from the windows so they received no light. By the next Sunday, our beautiful geraniums looked pretty sickly. In just a short time of neglect, their blooms fell off and their leaves yellowed and they looked more like weeds than flowers.

How's your faith doing? There is never a time when your faith is done growing because it is just like those geraniums. No matter how beautiful your faith is today, it only takes a little neglect to wilt and wither the most spectacular faith. That is why worship and the sacraments are so important. That is what feeds and waters our faith. The Word of God, the water of Baptism and the Body and Blood of Christ are the sunshine for our faith, the nutrients, the water; these are what keep our faith strong and alive and beautiful.

That is why we are here today right? We don't come together to hear an entertaining speech – although I try my best not to bore you. We don't come to hear a musical performance –

although Mary and Kurt do their best to play well. Our lay readers, our choirs, all of our musicians and I practice every week in fact, not because we are trying to put on a good gig, but because we understand that we are in effect the conveyors of grace to you. We deliver the faith building Word of God in word and song and bread and wine and water and we want to be sure that our delivery does not hamper you reception.

You know that with me it always comes back to food, but if you go to a restaurant with great food but the silverware is filthy, flies are all over the place and the wait staff is completely rude to you, are you going to go back? Maybe once in a while, if the food is really good. Maybe every so often you will brave the environment. On the other hand, if the food is okay, but the ambiance is fantastic, the wait staff acts as though you are their family and treats you like royalty, you will be drawn back over and over again because of the good feeling you get when you eat there.

Well, here at Trinity, we have the best food available for the soul. Now we strive to serve that food in a way that will draw

people here week after week. We strive to get our human foibles and frailties out of the way of the magnificent feast that we offer. We already know that we offer the best food available, now we try our best to serve that fare up on beautiful china and flawless crystal with the perfect background music to carry the feast.

What does our china and crystal look like? It looks like people who care about each other. It looks like people who strive to learn one another's names. It looks like people who care whether you are at the dinner table or not and call you when you are missing. Don't believe for a moment that people really want to be less connected. I have learned over the years that people pull away not because they want to be isolated but because they are afraid. They are afraid of being judged. They are afraid of being condemned. They are afraid of what will be demanded of them if they eat at this restaurant.

Remember the first time you encountered dinner at a swank occasion? Remember the sinking feeling when you encountered five glasses and 16 pieces of silverware and everyone except you seemed to know just what to do with them? You stared at the

place setting like a cow stares at a new fence and did not even know which goblet of water was yours. You just prayed that you wouldn't die of thirst before the people on either side of you decided to take a drink of water. Then perhaps for you, like for me, an evangelist arrived.

Evangelist; just a fancy word for one who delivers the good news. I can still remember every detail of that moment, how she stopped at my table and kindly leaned over to me and said – “with all of the equipment here, I feel like I’m about to perform surgery instead of eat dinner. I think that you basically start from the outside and work your way in with each new plate of food, but good thing the taste doesn’t depend on the utensil used to eat it huh?” I did not know it at the time but she was the hostess of the banquet and she made it her mission to put all of her guests at ease and help them to see the environment as an enhancement for the banquet not an impediment to the banquet.

We too are the hosts, or at least the underhosts of the greatest banquet in the world. Our call is to make every guest

feel welcome and to see all of the accoutrements of worship as enhancements for enjoying the feast, not impediments.

We are evangelists. We get to be the underhosts of our Lord's most magnificent feast. I get to be the maître de. I get to welcome the guests to the Lord's table. And you get to be the family that banquets together every week and is constantly inviting everyone you know to receive all that they need to make their faith grow and flourish. We don't really know how it works. That's a mystery. We just know that it does work and we know how much more wonderful this life is when we walk with the Lord Jesus and eat from his table week after week. Go forth and spread that good news underhosts, evangelists, family of God, and watch God's garden grow. AMEN.