

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 67

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Luke 12:12-21

*Readings are the fall readings from the resource (Of Land and Seasons)

Sermon September 29th, 2019

God's Harvest Inspires Us to Share and Build Relationships with Others

In 2010 we moved out to Radisson, Saskatchewan from our cozy three-bedroom apartment in Saskatoon. This was the first time Erin or myself ever lived in a rural community. Erin at least had two uncles who farmed, and so, knew a little of what rural life was like. I on the other hand didn't have a clue of what it would be like living in small town Saskatchewan. Of course, like every city slicker I carried with me stereotypical views of country folk. Maybe if I listened to a little more country music. Watched a few more Clint Eastwood movies or Corner Gas episodes I would be more in tune. Or just maybe this would feed my stereotypical views even more. Anyways, I was a little nervous to say the least.

At first, I went in with the mentality that as a new graduate of seminary I just needed to pay my dues for the next three years before getting back to civilization. How bad can it be? I thought to myself.

Well, I have to say I was pleasantly surprised. I really enjoyed a lot of aspects of rural life and ended up staying an additional three years. At this time of year, I often think about the farmers out harvesting. I remember driving down the grid roads seeing the farmers hard at work on their combines. Collecting grain so that we can eat. I also remember how quiet it was in my office and that I didn't need to start any ministries till after thanksgiving. Unlike, the city where we are going full blast by mid September.

When I heard verse 11 in our reading of Deuteronomy, "then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house" (Deut. 26:11 NRSV), I remember the annual fowl and fall suppers that happened in Radisson, Langham, and all the other neighboring towns. Farmers coming together, giving of their first fruits, to celebrate with the community all that God has given them.

Since I was a minister of two communities I had the privilege of enjoying two suppers. I knew some parishioners who travelled to other neighboring towns hoping to get four or five of these suppers in. The food was wonderful, and the event was a good way for us to acknowledge and celebrate all the hard work our farmers do in helping us put food on our tables.

Actually, these events inspired us as the church in the community to put on a free barbeque for our farmers right before harvest to show just how much we appreciated all that they did.

Before moving to Radisson, I didn't think much about where my food came from, but after living in Radisson I developed a deep appreciation for those who worked to put food on our tables. Whether it is the Farmers who seed, water, spray, and harvest the crops to the people who turn the grains into bread to the local store who gives us access to it.

One other thing that really stood out for me that is interconnected to my experience of the fowl suppers, was how generous farmers are all the time when it comes to the distribution of food. They are always more than willing to share of their first fruits with others so that everyone in the community has access to food. Whether it was from their garden or their field or even from their barn. We had one parishioner that used to give us a whole box of different cuts of meat from one of their cows every Christmas. For farmers, food and hospitality go hand and hand.

Well, in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we hear Paul give thanks to the church in Corinth for sharing of their abundant crops with others in the community so that everyone could eat. Sharing food with one another was a common practice in the early church, and as we heard in Deuteronomy, also in the early Israelite community. So, for all of God's people, food and hospitality go hand and hand.

Another example, is an experience I have had working with the Turkish Muslim community. Every month some of their Muslim leaders and some of us Lutheran leaders gather together to hear and talk about stories that are found in both the Qur'an and the Bible. Every gathering the host prepares a meal for their guests. And I have to say, when one of the Muslim leaders is hosting we are eating of their first fruits. As a Lutheran, I have been to a lot of potlucks in my lifetime. But, my first experience in the home of one of our Muslim leaders gave me a deeper appreciation for this idea that food and hospitality go hand and hand. The food was unbelievable, and I could tell the women worked really hard all day to prepare this food for us.

After my first experience, I thought to myself. "I was a stranger to them and they treated me like we were friends for years." I can now say after a year and half of this ministry I have become dear friends with them all.

Food has a tendency of bringing us together. When we share of the harvest it is good for us. The line that sticks out for me in our Deuteronomy reading this morning is: Together with the aliens who reside among us. Or in other words together with the immigrants. That may seem like a challenging invitation in a time where we feel more scarcity, but a challenge that comes with so much promise. One that comes with hope

that as we sit around the table and eat of the harvest we grow in relationship together. We establish bonds and bridges to peace. We take care of each other.

In our gospel, Jesus shares a parable about someone who had an abundant harvest, and yet, didn't share it with others. Instead, built bigger barns to store the grain. Unfortunately, this person dies, before being able to enjoy this harvest, and so, the harvest goes to waste, because he didn't build relationships in his life. He had no one to leave his grain to.

When we gather around food we are building relationships whether it is at a fowl supper or at an interfaith gathering, or in an intimate family gathering like Thanksgiving or at the Mustard Seed or at the communion table where we come together as sisters and brothers in Christ.

God gives us an abundant harvest and invites us to share it with one another, because with food comes relationships.

Let us pray, loving God, thank you for your abundant harvest that touches our lives in so many ways. May we share of your harvest with others building relationships with people of all walks of life in our community. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

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