

Communion Meditation
"Bread for the Wilderness -
Wine for the Journey"

a sermon

preached in

Duke University Chapel

by

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Sermon Text: Old Testament, Exodus 16:10-17
Gospel, Mark 14:17-25

After fifteen years of planning, dreaming, and creating in the wilderness, a small clearing in a central Florida swamp has made history. This past week, I was privileged to see the unveiling of Epcot Center - Walt Disney's "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow". Billed as a showplace of imagination, the travel ads declare that "the unforgettable experiences of a thousand lifetimes await you." For some, it is the fantasy answer to Aldous Huxley's famous book - a brave new world of friendship, amusement, and entertainment.

I admit it is colossal and complex. Amazing adventures help tell the story of humanity's past and present, while painting an incredible picture of our technological future. I marvel at what human imagination can create! Out of a swampland wilderness has come Disney's promised land, one for all the world to know and see. EPCOT - a world which is at last ready to be shared.

As a person of faith, I marvel at the powerful images of "wilderness" and "journey" that God's people have always shared. For out of the wilderness, the desert places, we too have a world to share. Disney's Magic Kingdoms are nothing compared to our faith journeys and visions of justice centered in the Kingdom of God. The "imagineering" that creates Disney fantasies is surely but a dim reflection of the human spirit and soul as God created it.

God's people have always been a pioneer people, a people on the move, sojourners in the faith. God's people are called to wander in the world, seeking the land of promise where milk and honey flow. That land which we seek is no magic kingdom - rather a place where justice and righteousness reign, where all God's people know the law of love.

There is a beautiful, moving spiritual that goes like this:

"I don't feel no ways tired,
I come too far from where I started from.
Nobody told me that the road would be easy
but I don't believe God brought me this far to leave me."

Our reassurance as God's people lies in the journey of faith. It is not the send-off or the destination that marks our journey as Christian disciples. It is the journey itself that redeems us - in spite of trials and difficulties,

in spite of fatigue and discouragement. We have hope on our journey because we move forward with Christ who died and has risen from the dead and is leading us in joy to a land of justice and peace. Recently at a church gathering, I saw a large, flowing banner that boldly declared "The Journey is our Home." How true that is for us who were no people, now we are God's people.

What sustains us on the journey? Just as God provided manna in the wilderness to Moses' motley crew, Jesus fed the multitudes in the wilderness. In the sharing of real food, Jesus also gave himself to the people, forming them into a special community. Bread for the wilderness and wine for the journey - this is what is offered to sustain us. And the miracle of it is that when we do receive it (that) there is no limit to what we have. Resurrection power feeds multitudes. It heals the sick. It rejoices the brokenhearted. It claims the lonely. It shelters the homeless. It comforts the bereaved. It is after all, the power of God that is at work in these gifts of bread and wine. (John Killinger, Bread for the Wilderness Wine for the Journey)

As we receive the sacrament, bread will remind us of the journey of God's people from slavery to freedom, from individualism to community. The wine will remind us of the passover of Jesus, and of the covenant we share today as God's people.

BREAD FOR THE WILDERNESS -- WINE FOR THE JOURNEY - thanks be to God!

Amen.