

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend David J. Powers  
Sunday, October 5, 2025

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Friends, as we prepare our hearts and our minds to hear the word read and proclaimed, I invite you to take a deep breath in with me, to breathe it out slowly. Take another deep breath in. And breathe it out slowly. Breathe in God's mercies and breathe out God's mercies to others. Breathe in God's mercies and breathe out God's mercies to others.

Gracious spirit, you are as close as our very next breath. We pray that you would indwell us in this time. That your spirit would give us a sense of peace. That it would quiet any voice within us but your own. That we might hear the word you have for us this day. And that in hearing we might be called to lead lives of response. So may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you, God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Friends, as we celebrate this World Communion Sunday, the title of the sermon this morning has changed a bit. The title is Remembering and Resisting. Remembering and Resisting. This sermon is going to be pretty simple and straightforward in the sense of the stories that will be told. So, I have six meals that I need to tell you about. Six meals that I need to share with you about this morning. The first is a meal that I got to partake in as I was walking the Camino Primitivo in northern Spain over the summer. That was a 14-day hike that we condensed down to 12 days. And so I had some time with friends and also time on my own to make that hike. We averaged about 15 and a half miles a day. I've told y'all that before. A lot of it was difficult, and so I decided to make my sleeping arrangements each evening as comfortable as I possibly could. Right? Some people stay in dorm room spaces every single night that they hike the Camino. I decided to find as many boutique hotels as I could along the way. I have a pretty involved sleep routine. Okay, maybe high maintenance some might call it. And so I got to take care of myself in rest. All except for one day. The day that I hiked the Hospitalis route of the Camino Primitivo. If you look it up, the Hospitalis route is...is the most difficult day. It's almost right in the middle of the hike. It is the most mountainous of all of the hiking days. It's also the most rural. It's the least appointed. And what I mean by that is that on most days you'll every 3 or 5 miles you'll get a small coffee shop or a little restaurant that you can go to and a place to grab water and go to the restroom, maybe a coffee if you need the extra caffeine. But the Hospitalis route is not that. And I'm going to preach a whole sermon just on that hike in a couple weeks. But the important part for you to know is that you have to carry everything with you before you depart that morning. So all the water you're going to drink that day needs to be in your backpack. All the food you're going to consume that day needs to be in your backpack with you, right? Cuz it's a long day of hiking. So we did that hike and there was no sun, no respite from the hot sun that day. I ran out of water with three miles left on the hike. It was like an 18 mile hike and so it was okay. We were kind of going downhill at the end. But I got to the little town where we were staying that night, and not just me and a buddy, but everyone else who was finishing up that day, and I ran into a

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problem. See, in northern Spain, the flow of meals is a little bit different than what we're used to. So lunch is served from about 11:00 in the morning till about 3:00 in the afternoon, and then everything closes at 3:00, and nothing opens back up until 8:00 p.m. Okay, some of you all know this rhythm if you've done some hiking or spent some time. It's all fine, well, and good and culturally appropriate in the ways that it is, except if you're a pilgrim whose hike ends every day between 3:30 and 4:00, because it means that all the places you would go to gain some sustenance are closed, right? And so I got to the hostel that I was staying in that night, the only common room I would stay in the entire time. And I was already cranky about that. I was thirsty and I was hungry. And the staff will tell you that I'm generally a pleasant person, but when I get hungry, I get a little hangry. And so it wasn't a great place for me to be in, right? And so I was lamenting this to my fellow hikers and they said, "Oh, this is your first time staying in a hostel, isn't it?" And I was like, "Yeah." And they're like, "Don't worry about it. The pilgrim meal starts at 5:00." I'm like, "What's a pilgrim meal?" They said, "Just come to the basement at 5:00 and bring like 15 bucks." Okay. All right. So, I show up and there's eight people already sitting around this long table. And the host of this hostel comes out and says, "Do y'all all want the pilgrim meal?" We said, "Yeah." And I had no idea what I was saying yes to. And they brought out this huge bowl of pasta salad. Delicious pasta salad. I don't even like pasta salad, but everything looked good to me at that moment. Right. And then they brought out several bottles of wine, more than I'll speak of here. And they also brought out sparkling water, right? And so we started with our appetizer, right? Our antipasta. And then we moved on. They came out and they said, "You want beef?" We said, "Yes." "You want chicken?" Yeah. Okay. They brought up plates of that and potatoes as well. We shared in this meal together. And then kind of like Mr. Ricky on More Than a Meal or on Wednesday evenings, the host came out and said, "Do you want dessert?" We said, "Yeah." And he had this box of ice cream sandwiches under his arm, right? And he just started kind of tossing them to us, right? And at some point, somebody said, "Let's let's go outside. The sun's about to go down. Let's retire outside." So, everybody stood up. We made our way outside, and one of my friends who I've told you about before is a singer. He began to sing some of his favorite hymns. And there was this pilgrim who was just finishing off the trail, and you could tell she was tired and she needed a little bit of water too. So, she came over and joined us at our table. She had a beautiful soprano voice so she started singing with him as well. You know the thing about the Hospitalis day on the Camino is that it is the most difficult. You don't see many people and you're really tired. So on that day more than most days, you might get the sense that you are all alone on the journey. On that day more than most days you might also get the sense that you might not be able to finish the journey that's ahead of you. You might on that day more than most become fearful that the task that lies ahead is too overwhelming to do. I had felt that way. Until I'm listening to these folks that I just met from all around the world, all around that globe that Whitney took with her. Singing hymns that I knew,

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drinking wine and water and telling stories about their journey. And sitting around that table, I realized that the table for me that day, after that most difficult day, was about remembering and resisting. It was about remembering that I was not alone on the journey. And it was about resisting the idea, the myth that I was separated from my neighbor and even from my God.

So there's this other journey that the disciples are going on in the Gospel according to Luke. It's in the 24th chapter, verses.... actually it's almost the entire beginning. We're going to skip ahead but I want to tell you a little bit about it. Jesus has died. He has been crucified according to the Gospel of Luke. And there are some who have left in disappointment. There are at least a couple of disciples making their way down a dusty road, disappointed that the one that they believe to be their savior must not have been. And then a stranger comes up alongside them and walks with them, and they tell him all about this story, this experience that they have had, this journey that they have been on. And then they get to the end of the journey, and he starts to walk along and they call him back. In Luke 24:28, the gospel writer says,

*As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. And when he was at table with them, he took bread, he blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And then he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was walking with us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the 11 and their companions gathered together. And they were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon." And then they told what had happened on the road and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Jesus has been crucified. He has been raised. And yet those whom he's walking with on the path do not know this. And so he draws them back into this meal that he had instituted on the night when he would be betrayed by his friends and arrested. He draws them back in because he knows the importance of remembering and resisting. Remembering for the disciples in this moment, for these strangers on the road, remembering that they are not alone on the journey and resisting the fear that they have been separated from their God. Jesus gives them an example of what it means to remember and to resist. He takes bread, he blesses it, he breaks it, he gives it to them. And all of a sudden in a moment they see that they are not alone and that they are not separated from their God. That's meal one and meal two.

Meal three. In the book of Acts, chapter 27, there's a description of a ship's journey to Rome. This journey carries...this ship carries many different people on it, prisoners, disciples. It has

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law enforcement officers as well of the Roman Empire. The ship is making its way across the sea, and a large storm comes upon the ship, and the ship begins to rock back and forth. This doesn't go on for a night. It goes on for 14. It's a long storm that this ship is caught in the midst of. Paul is on this ship, and Paul is on his way to share the gospel with the Romans, and he keeps telling the people on this ship "everything is going to be okay." But nothing of their circumstance would have them believe that everything was going to be okay. And not simply that everything was going to be okay, but more specifically, God is with us in this storm. God is here and God is present. In the 33rd verse of chapter 27 of the book of Acts, just before daybreak, Paul urged all of them to take some food, saying,

*"Today is the 14th day that you have been in suspense and remaining without food, having eaten nothing. Therefore, I urge you to take some food, for it will help you survive, for none of you will lose a hair from your heads." After he had said this, he took bread and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat. And then all of them were encouraged and took food for themselves.*

They were 276 people on that ship. Paul follows the example that has been laid out by Christ. A striking image in this ship, an image of hope and community in the midst of crisis. Even amid the danger, a diverse group of people, prisoners and officers, wayfarers, they break bread as a sign of courage and solidarity. Remembering and resisting. Remembering that they are not alone on their journey; resisting the fear, the myth of separateness from God and neighbor.

On this World Communion Sunday, I had finished my sermon by Wednesday evening of this week. That never happens. I'm usually a 4:00 a.m. on Sunday morning sort of guy. I was just going to tell you about three meals and then point to this one. But then I had a couple of congregants reach out on Thursday. And so there's two other meals I need to tell you about.

On Thursday morning, a group of ICE officers gathered at Bryant's Breakfast on Summer to share biscuits together. Maybe you've been. They sat around tables together in plain clothes but with identifying markers of who they are. They sat less than a block from St. Michael's Catholic Church on Summer. St. Michael's provides the most extensive ministry to Spanish-speaking people in our city.

They moved from Bryant's to Crosstown Concourse and had lunch there. Easily identifiable. Those who have spent time in Crosstown Concourse know that it houses Church Health. 51% of Church Health's patients, those who are receiving care from Church Health, are Spanish-speaking.

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The presence of these meals was certainly not to break the myth of separateness, but to make known presence, right? And that's important for us to know, in a week and in a couple weeks where we have as the city of Memphis begun to...we've begun to come to grips with what it is going to look like for us as a city over the next weeks and months. We're not quite sure, but what we do know is that there will be and there is a greater narrative of...of separateness that pervades our society. There's a myth not only that we are separate from each other but indeed that some don't fully embody the *imago dei*, the image of our God.

So in the face of those meals, meals four and five, in this moment in our city and our nation, what should followers of Christ do on this World Communion Sunday when followers of Christ from all around the world gather around table together? What should we do?

We follow the example of Jesus and follow the example of Paul. And we offer a meal instituted by our Lord. It is a meal bent on remembering and resisting. At this table, we remember that we are not alone on our journey. We resist the fear, the myth of separateness from God and neighbor. We claim that the same thing that is true for each of us as we gather at table is true for every single person in the world, that they are indeed beloved children of God, bound together with us in this holy mystery of the body of Christ. We offer this day a meal that helps us remember and ultimately helps us resist. We know not what the next few weeks will look like for our city, but we do know that there are people who are scared here. And they are not people who are perpetrating crime in our community. They are people who show up to receive health care, who show up to do good and faithful work. What should the Christian do when faced with the myth of separation? When fear surrounds?

The first thing we do on a day like this is we gather at table to say that we remember our oneness in Christ and to resist any way of thinking or moving in the world that would somehow undermine that. It is simply bread and simply juice. But it is also a meal that makes us remember and enables us to resist.

Let's pray together.

Gracious and loving God, we are not separate from one another.

We are not separate from one another.

We are not separate from one another.

We are bound together in your body. We are bound together in loaf and in cup. We are bound together over and against fear. Whether it be from the tumult of the sea or the tumult of our nation. We are bound together by your love and by your grace. So we pray this morning, oh God, that at this table and at tables across your world, that those who follow and call upon the name of

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Jesus Christ might remember this day the sacrifice you made so that we would never forget that indeed we are bound together by your love and by your grace. We gathered this day so that we might collectively with hearts renewed by bread and cup resist any ideas that would run contrary to that. Feed us at this table. Call us forth to be your people. For we ask it in the name of the One who we remember, the name of the One who resisted. Amen.