

Psalm 145:13c-20; Luke 22:14-23

“Taste: Taste and see that the Lord is good”

Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. s

Tonight’s theme, “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” encourages us to taste, experience, and live into the reality of God’s goodness around and within us. I am a pastor’s son, and as you might imagine, pastor’s kids can have a slightly different perspective on the church. My brother once suggested to our father that he place a small chalkboard out in front of the church, like a bistro or café, announcing the bread and wine pairing for that Sunday. Perhaps something like, “Tuscan bread with a hearty Brunello wine” – helping attract people with taste and its memory.

A friend of my parents, a collector of French wines, once gave my father a marvelous Grand Cru Classe Sauternes that my father decided to use for Holy Communion. The wife of this friend, a Roman Catholic, happened to be in worship that Sunday, and after the service remarked to me, “That was the best tasting blood of Christ I’ve ever had!”

Humor aside, the sense of “taste” is something the early church struggled with. How should one understand bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, when they also retain the look and the taste of ordinary bread and wine? An early church theologian named Cyril of Jerusalem, writing in the 300s, remarked that in partaking of and tasting the bread and wine, “we come to bear Christ – in us [and] become partakers in the divine nature.” Cyril went on to say regarding the Eucharist, “Judge the matter not by taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving that the body and blood have been given for you.” We taste and partake of the divine nature of Christ through faith.

Another early church writer named Justin Martyr, wrote in the early second century that our human flesh and blood are “nurtured” by the flesh and blood of Christ. Justin was expressing the church’s shared experience of sensing the nurturing power of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. As we eat and taste, Christ lives in us helping us understand Christ beyond and in our senses.

Normally, we think of sense as limited to the five senses, yet we also recognize other perceptive faculties such as a sense of balance, pain, and even spatial perception. We also talk about a “sixth sense” as a perceptive awareness beyond the five senses, describing it with language like “gut feeling,” “hunch,” and “intuition.” It is simply inaccurate if we were to assert that our senses and intellect fully exhaust reality, because we experience the existence of something beyond the senses, even if we simply call it a “sense of awe” or “wonder.”

My parents’ friend who said, “That was the best tasting blood of Christ I have ever had!” was with a bit of humor, making a confession of faith that in a delicious Sauternes wine she had

tasted the blood of Christ. It was her faith that reassured her that she had received Christ.

Our spiritual life is characterized by a unique gift we call “faith.” Faith is another way of knowing that opens us to a divine reality beyond ourselves, yet also existing within ourselves.

This may seem abstract, yet a good example is contained in tonight’s reading from Luke as Jesus, holding a piece of bread, says, “*This is my body, given for you.*” Jesus invites our faith to receive and taste, believing that the God who is beyond the senses can also be experienced in ordinary bread and wine.

This week, the familiar words of Psalm 34:8 have been on my mind. “*Taste and see that the Lord is good*” describes the tasting of something beyond ordinary food. In saying, “*taste and see,*” the Psalmist is inviting us to know and to experience the God who exists beyond the senses.

One Sunday many years ago, I was preparing bread and wine for Holy Communion in the small kitchen of the church Mari and I served in southern Japan. A young boy named Haradaku drew alongside me, saying, 「先生、これは本当にキリストのからだですか。何か怪しい。」 Meaning: “Teacher, is this really the body of Christ? Seems sort of suspicious!” The young boy was expressing the difficulty that many, including us, often have in finding God present in the ordinary things of life.

There is a Japanese phrase, *kakushi aji* 「隠し味」, which means a “hidden taste” or “hidden flavor” concealed within the main flavor of a dish. It could be a hint of cinnamon or a hint of citrus that we sense but can’t quite name. To “*taste and see that the Lord is good*” invites us to participate in a reality that though hidden, is grasped and understood together by the senses and faith. As Cyril and Justin suggest, partaking of Christ nurtures us in the faith. Like the phrase, “you are what you eat,” to partake of Christ is to become Christ. He is the goodness of the Lord who takes us beyond our senses, encouraging us to taste and see in new ways. Faith nurtures us to become and to act in new ways in the everyday of life.

Jesus invites us to do this at a table during a meal, helping us taste and see with a faith that goes beyond our senses. Yet faith is not simply receptive or passive; it is active, sending us into the world with Christ to share our tables and food with others, so others may also taste and see God’s goodness.

As we end this Lenten series, titled, “The Incarnate Senses: Christ dwells in you,” it is my hope that you will take time to ponder the mystery of Christ dwelling in you in the ordinary things of life. Faith is not simply intellectual agreement with an idea: faith is God’s grace alive in you so that you might become Christ present in the world.

Taste and see that God is good. In the ordinary things of life, Christ is present in you. Amen.