

Devotion, Second Week of Eastertide, 2023

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

The Presbyterian Outlook sponsored a Holy week webinar on “Baking as a Spiritual Practice.” The focus was on baking bread, with the connection to communion bread and the manna provided in the wilderness to the wandering Israelites. I was once in a theology class where one of the students made bread as she talked about worship. And once Jim and I took a class on making bread at a fall retreat in Montreat.

I love homemade bread – the rising of the yeast, the smell while it’s baking, and that hard outer crust that shelters wonderful, soft bread in the middle. And it has to – it absolutely has to – be eaten with real butter. No margarine. Every so often when I was little, my mother would buy a frozen loaf of yeast bread and would bake it and the four of us would eat every bit of it at one sitting.

There’s just one problem. I’m not a baker. I’m very impatient when it comes to the kitchen – I want 5 ingredients or less and a max of 20 minutes prep time for our dinner, and even then I’m impatient. I love to eat – don’t get me wrong – I just don’t love to cook. So this idea of baking being a spiritual practice is pretty foreign to me. When Jim and I came home from that retreat in Montreat, we swore we’d make bread. I even bought a roll of parchment paper. It’s never been opened.

So I guess I will have to make do with smelling baking bread as a spiritual practice – if I can find someplace nearby to visit where they’re doing that! If you love to bake, I’d love to hear your thoughts about how this can be a spiritual practice, and what makes it so – is it the kneading of the dough? The rising of the dough and the punching down of it so it can rise again? All I know is that the aroma is something I can dream about, as well as the taste.

It’s no wonder that Jesus focused on bread throughout his ministry. When he broke bread at table, something extraordinary usually got said or happened. I try to remember that when I preside at communion – that piece of unleavened bread that represents the bread of life, our Savior. I hope you have some good bread this week as we continue to rejoice in Eastertide at the resurrection of our Lord.

Jeanne