

Mutant ministry (Luke 24:36b-48)

Bread and fish are not much of an Easter dinner.

by [Craig Satterlee](#) in the [April 18, 2006](#) issue

The risen Christ breaks bread in Emmaus and then eats fish in Jerusalem. Easter, or at least the first Easter as Luke describes it, is not as much about an empty tomb as about food. Jesus spends Easter Day eating. His followers celebrate Easter not at an empty tomb, but around a table. So we might consider Easter as a multicourse meal rather than a trip to the empty tomb, and experience resurrection by eating.

We enter Jesus' dinner party between two of the courses. The 11 are discussing the first of these courses, bread served to Cleopas and a companion. In Emmaus, Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Cleopas reports that they talked a lot about scripture, and experienced Jesus as risen.

Our minds turn to two other meals, an earlier and a later course in Jesus' Easter feast. Jesus served the earlier course in an upper room on the night of his arrest. Sitting with the disciples, Jesus took, blessed, broke and shared the bread. He referred to the bread as his body and to the accompanying cup as the new covenant in his blood. It was a Passover meal, so scripture again figured prominently. Jesus serves the later course—Jesus' body and blood "in, with and under" bread and wine—whenever Jesus' followers come together to share scripture and gather around the table.

Just as we begin to connect the dots between the meal in the upper room, the meal at Emmaus and our celebration of the Lord's Supper, we look up and see Jesus standing in the midst of Cleopas and his companion, the 11 and those who are with them. Everyone is terrified, so Jesus shows his hands and feet and invites his friends to touch him. But our minds are on food. What is Jesus doing with the broiled fish? We get it: Jesus has indeed risen from the grave because apparitions do not eat. But is ghost-busting the only reason that Jesus eats broiled fish?

Bread and fish are not much of an Easter dinner. Why bread and fish, loaves and fishes? Our minds race to other meals that appear to be courses in Jesus'

resurrection feast. Jesus served the first of this pairing in a deserted place when he blessed bread and fish and gave them to a multitude. All ate their fill, and there were leftovers to boot. This meal served as a foretaste of the feast that Jesus will serve when the reign of God comes in all its fullness. Surrounded by people of every time and every place, surrounded by all of creation, Jesus will serve up the great and promised feast, the final course of Jesus' resurrection banquet. No one will be hungry; all will be satisfied. The last will be first and the first will be last, and the feasting will continue forever.

What about all those other meals Jesus attended and served? Could Jesus' eating and drinking with the poor, the outcast and the despised also be courses in this resurrection feast? Jesus certainly raised people to new life at those dinner parties! And if resurrection happened at those tables, does that mean that Jesus, risen from the dead, is present and bringing new life to every table at which the hungry are filled, the despised are loved, the outcast are welcome and the poor receive the reign of God?

Dare we allow our minds to wander to still other meals? What about Abraham's feast with angels, manna in the wilderness and the cake that the angel of the Lord provided Elijah—were they also courses in Jesus' resurrection feast? What about the family dinner, the business lunch, the snack shared between classes? Are they part of Jesus' Easter feast?

We are called back from our wondering by Jesus, who confirms our musings. Jesus has finished eating and is talking about scripture. We are not surprised, since scripture seems to be the topic of conversation at this Easter feast. Jesus gives those gathered a panoramic view—the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms—all in one sitting. Jesus points out that he—and with him death and resurrection, repentance and forgiveness—can be found throughout scripture.

It may be easier to testify to the risen Christ by making a trip to the empty tomb than by eating around a table. A trip to an empty tomb confines Easter to very early morning on that first day of the week when women went to anoint Jesus' body. We know when, where and how resurrection happened. We know when Easter is over.

Celebrating Easter by eating means that Jesus could show up, that resurrection could happen, at any table, at every table. We have no way of knowing when, where and how the risen Christ will bring new life. Rather than being confined to one day,

or to 50, Jesus' Easter feast continues as one meal leads to another, and tables get larger and larger, and closer and closer together.

Only time and space separate all the courses in Jesus' resurrection feast. Overcoming time and space does not appear to be a problem for our risen Jesus, who can be in Emmaus for the bread course, Jerusalem for the fish, and at every table around which people testify to Christ from the scriptures, preach repentance and forgiveness in Christ's name, and share bread and wine in remembrance of him.

And so rather than making an annual trip to the empty tomb, we celebrate Easter by eating together and sharing scripture until that day when Jesus, risen from the dead and standing in our midst, overcomes time and space and everything else that separates the tables around which we gather.