



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

April 4, 2010
Easter Sunday
Mary Newbern-Williams

RCL: Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

LM: Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8; John 20:1-9

How many times have you searched for something misplaced, only to find that you had overlooked it?

In addition to faithfulness and obedience, the call of Jesus Christ requires recognition. Recognizing the call enables us to discern how and to what Christ is calling us. John's Gospel brings us full circle in highlighting the importance of recognition as Mary Magdalene finds herself at the tomb, filled with grief and concern about Christ's missing body. Sometimes when we're consumed with what we think is happening, we miss the real issue. The key point is that Jesus had told his disciples that he would die and rise again in three days. Mary is the first to discover it is actually true. When Jesus' voice and presence enable her to recognize the truth (vv. 14-16), Mary responds with continued discipleship (v. 18).

We are called into service with and for God's creation. We can only fulfill this call to service if we recognize that there is a need. In a crumbling economy, as poverty and unemployment rates rise, with nations in conflict and turmoil and the safety of children at stake, it is difficult to recognize that Jesus' call is ever before us. We must open our eyes, just as in Luke's Gospel the disciples share a moment of clearer perception and recognition. Even for those who walked and talked with Jesus, they did not yet know him in his resurrected body. When he broke bread with them, something familiar touched their hearts and "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him" (24:31). As people of faith who today are considered leaders in society, we are challenged to new, creative, and uncharted ways of recognizing Jesus and answering the call.

Bread for the World maintains that there should be enough food, shelter, and clothing for everybody as part of ensuring a decent quality of life for all. Isaiah 65 provides a powerful backdrop for the work of Bread for the World and other organizations devoted to eliminating hunger, poverty, and oppression. Promoting justice, working with others to break the cycle of poverty and hunger, and advocating for those in need are ways God works in and through us to usher in God's "new heaven and new earth" (v. 17). These



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actions confront entrenched systems that keep people in poverty and help build foundations so that poor people can use their own talents and abilities to provide for themselves and their families.

Part of Isaiah's vision is that people will build houses and inhabit them rather than see them occupied by others who are more powerful (vv. 21-22). In many modern cities, housing redevelopment results in gentrification. As houses in blighted communities are redeveloped, the cost of homes skyrockets, driving the original residents out because they cannot afford to pay higher mortgages or rent. Many families must relocate farther away from their places of employment, family members, and support systems. Often middle- and higher-income families benefit by moving back into the city, while poor and impoverished families move farther out, increasing their transportation costs to shop and keep medical appointments and forcing their children to change schools.

Many church and civic groups in certain states also advocate for tax reform for poor families, recognizing that high taxes keep people from breaking the poverty cycle and prevent them from enjoying a fair standard of living. Isaiah 65 gives a strong message for those who suffer and are impoverished, a message of comfort and encouragement like that offered to those who were physically and spiritually in exile in Isaiah's time.

Today's challenges feel like exile to those who suffer: high infant mortality among poor people who do not have adequate health care; cuts in funding sorely needed by organizations that help those in need; a volunteer military system in which poor and oppressed people join to help care for themselves and their families and become the front line during times of war. God's age—the new heaven and new earth—will create a time when infants will grow up to old age in a healthy society, when the age of peace will reign, and when concern for the well-being of all will be a priority.

Bread for the World is one of many groups joining voices with those who are poor and disenfranchised, urging our religious and political leaders to realize that until there is an acceptable quality of life for all, the work continues, the challenge continues, and the charge continues. Our challenge is to ensure those necessities of life through our advocacy and leadership and to nourish ourselves for the struggle with prayer, continued Bible study, and commitment to service to those in need. Our challenge is to recognize that we are the heart and soul of organizations like Bread for the World through our activism and support.

Recognizing the need for advocacy for and with poor people is a first step in responding to Jesus' call. Recognizing that food and shelter for hungry and poor people are integral to Jesus' call provides the content and vision we need to sustain us.



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Children's Time [Larry Hollar]

“Newness” is a constant theme for Easter. If you use Isaiah 65 today, talk about what a new heaven and new earth are about—how the fresh things God is doing affect all of God’s creation. Have the children list some of the new things that happen this time of year; bring ideas of your own and maybe some visible reminders—buds from trees, flowers, seeds. Talk about some new things at the church. If you’re involved in the Christmas in April program or some other service project, talk about how those produce newness for needy people. If you did your Bread for the World Offering of Letters during Lent, talk about what’s new in the legislation that people wrote letters about.

Musical Suggestions

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today—*The Presbyterian Hymnal* 123

O Day of Peace— *The Presbyterian Hymnal* 450

Seek Ye First— *The Presbyterian Hymnal* 333

Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old— *The Presbyterian Hymnal* 337

Be Thou My Vision— *The Presbyterian Hymnal* 339

Called as Partners in Christ’s Service— *The Presbyterian Hymnal* 343

Easter People, Raise Your Voices—*Songs of Zion* 6

Study War No More— *Songs of Zion* 138

He Lives (I Serve a Risen Savior)— *Songs of Zion* 30

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year C
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