



**Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday
The Rev. Michael A. Bird Transcript**

"Moving Forward in Holiness"

Preaching at our Sunday morning Holy Eucharist, Trinity's Vicar the Rev. Michael A. Bird, recounts a recent time where he was asked to administer last rites over the phone. "It was the last thing in the world I wanted to do," he reflects, "and of course I did it." He reminds us that Christ's incarnation has made our lives holy and that "our holy lives have a purpose and even when we feel lost or alone or betrayed or broken, love will always win."

Watch his sermon online now. The readings are 1 Kings 8: 1, 6, 10–11, 22–30, 41–43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10–20; and John 6:56–69.

Sermon Transcript:

If you've been counting, and I have, we have been in the Gospel of John Chapter 6 since July 25th. Something about the nature of the church, the nature of the way these things have been scheduled wants us to wring out every possible blessing and truth that that chapter provides for us. The conclusion of that chapter is as difficult as the beginning. It presents us with this moment where many, well most, of the disciples pack up their bags and go because this teaching is hard, this stuff is complicated. Well, I think right now we understand hard and we understand complicated. We gather this Sunday in the midst of yet another resurgence of COVID-19. We gather this Sunday yet again amazed at the disasters that befall the people of Haiti. We gather here today in the face of the chaos and the tragedy and the change that is Afghanistan, we gather here today less than a month away from the 20th anniversary of 9/11. We gather here today with all of those things and our own personal turmoils and tribulations and struggles. Then we get this moment where Jesus chases away the disciples. This is not the comforting message that I want to deliver to you today.

I feel like sometimes we rate a little bit better and yet it is the context of this sermon that Jesus has promised us of the complete presence of Christ in every moment of our lives, good or bad or indifferent. This reading that we have today that talks about eating Jesus's flesh and drinking his blood and abiding in him points us to where most people go for the Eucharistic theology of the Gospel of John. That story, that moment, that symbol where we understand why we gather around that altar, that table to share in consecrated bread and wine and recognize the true presence of Christ. We look to John in this moment for John's Eucharistic theology and the Eucharistic theology developed by his community. We remember most in this moment that the word Eucharist is Greek for Thanksgiving. Implicit in our reception of the body and blood of Christ, deeply imbedded in the truth of our experience of the true Christ. Ever present realization of the love of Christ and the grace of God Almighty is the fact that we do this with grateful hearts.

It is our gratefulness that through the work of the Holy Spirit makes things holy. It is our gratefulness that allows us to experience the incarnation of God's love and God's intention for us, and not simply the materiality. This back and forth between incarnational and material is very much a part of the Gospel of

John. It's also very much a part of the readings that we had elsewhere in our liturgy today. The moment of Solomon standing in front of the temple, that moment that mother Beth cheated last week and went ahead to because she heard the readings from Mary last week. That moment where solemn gathers in the temple Solomon has built to contain God and yet names that God cannot be contained within it, but how grateful Solomon was that God would choose to be present, not just for the Jewish people, but for all people. That incarnational expression of the Creator and creation in that moment is for all, and that it has purpose. Then we have Psalm 84 where we said together, "How dear to me is your dwelling place Oh, Lord of hosts. " Owing that the dwelling place of God is all of God's creation.

We come together today in the midst of the difficulties of the world and our own personal struggles and we try to own this eucharistic theology, this theology of gratefulness, this moment of the incarnation, this experience of the real presence and love and light and hope and life of God. We commit ourselves to doing what those 12 disciples did, which is to move forward, move forward in the name of Christ. Not having everything worked out, but in trust and faith and love. Thursday night I got a call from an old friend who had friends who were going through a very difficult time in the hospital, one of our hospitals here in Manhattan. They called me because the family had realized that their loved one was coming to the end of her days. That end was imminent. It was right then, right now, and they could not get a priest to say last rites. I assured them that despite the fact that I've recently moved into New York City, I understand the subways and I could get myself to the hospital, but they were so afraid that I was going to miss that moment that prayers would not be said as that person drew her last breath that they asked me to do last rites over the phone. I have done last rites over the phone or over FaceTime more times than I can possibly name for you in these times of pandemic. It was the last thing in the world I wanted to do. Of course I did it. I said those words that remind us of the love of Christ.

I said those words that remind us of the purpose of life. I said those words that declare that we know life is changed, not ended. I said those words of comfort and assurance through a phone to a family who has gathered around a hospital bed alone. When I had said the last prayer and we had voiced our Amen together, they said to me thank you, which I appreciated. But more importantly, they said to me, "We know that God is here. We know that Christ is present in this moment. We thank you for helping us give voice to that truth." As we grapple with the difficulties of today, as we look for the way forward, we have before us a model of the 12 disciples who said yes and continued to move even in the face of their own doubts, even in their own understanding, even in the fact that we know they got it so wrong in the rest of John. We gather here today to remind ourselves that Christ's incarnation, Christ giving of Himself so completely for us has made our lives holy, and that our holy lives have a purpose. Even when we feel lost or alone or betrayed or broken, love will always win. We hold that so dearly by expressing our gratefulness for God for making each moment holy, for choosing incarnation over materiality, for being present, for being alive, and for abiding in the love of God, that those who are not experiencing it at this moment or are unaware of it might know it because they are abiding in the home in our hearts that we build for them. Let's do that thing. Let's be the body of Christ at work in the world. Let's express our gratefulness. Let's not sit idly by. Let's love and move forward together.

Amen.