

TASTING GOD

Rev. JT Smiedendorf
Acting Lead & Intentional Interim Minister

June 7, 2026

Text: A Communion sermon related to Psalm 34:1-10

CENTRAL FOCUS:

Incarnated faith is embodied faith; felt and experiential, awake, active and walking in the world,
sensuous in amazement and abundant in wonder.

*"I bless God every chance I get;
my lungs expand with Divine praise.
2 I live and breathe God;
if things aren't going well, hear this and be happy:
3 Join me in spreading the news;
together let's get the word out.
4 God met me more than halfway,
God freed me from my anxious fears.
5 Look at God; give the Divine your warmest smile.
Never hide your feelings from God.
6 When I was desperate, I called out,
and God got me out of a tight spot.
7 God's angel sets up a circle
of protection around us while we pray.
8 Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see—
how good God is.
Blessed are you who run to the Holy One.
9 Worship God if you want the best;
worship opens doors to all Divine goodness.
10 Young lions on the prowl get hungry,
but God-seekers are full of God.*

These are the words of our ancient tradition.

May the Living Word of God in Scripture be alive within us, among us, and beyond us.

A long time ago, an Aboriginal man was out on the hunt. He had performed a ritual of preparation for the hunt and had done what was required to prepare for the hunt. As he is on the hunt, walking, waiting, watching, he knows that it is not just he who is hunting now, but that he has become **First Hunter**, that he is like—and maybe even the same as—that first human who hunted in this way.

By becoming First Hunter in the ritual dance, he will know how to hunt properly. He will hunt successfully, finding and killing game for the people to eat.

He will hunt in proper relationship to the animal's Spirit and to the Great Spirit so that the sacred covenant of exchange is maintained and there will be future game.

He honors the sacrifice of life of the animal and the gift it has brought his people.

I've used the drum to help us experience some of the ancient stories. It is a way of trying to enter a sacred space, to change our consciousness to appreciate and experience a sacred story differently, more deeply, more with our whole selves... and to try to enter into an 'EveryWhen' space.

Ancient peoples may have had an easier time imagining their participation and connection with their sacred stories, their myths. They were not limited to the literal as so many of us are in this scientific age. Through sacred stories and their accompanying rituals, Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples let the boundaries of linear time dissolve. They entered an "every-when" space. They let themselves experience the sacred story as happening again, feeling its power and learning its lessons for themselves.

Today, we are offering the ritual of communion. We will be tasting bread and grape juice, but we are invited to more than that. We are telling an ancient story of faith and invited to participate in an experience of Christ Presence, to really let it in and become part of us.

Theologian Matthew Fox comments on Psalm 34, our Scripture reading this morning:

"Wisdom is always taste—in both Latin and Hebrew, the word for wisdom comes from the word for taste—so it's something to taste, not something to theorize about. 'Taste and see that God is good,' the psalm says; and that's wisdom: tasting life. No one can do it for us. The mystical tradition is very much a Sophia tradition. It is about tasting and trusting experience, before institution or dogma."

And so many other Scripture examples like this one can be named:

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Hebrews 6:5and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come...

1 Peter 2:3 ...if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

You could imagine right now a favorite food. Imagine its smell, the feel of it in your mouth and its taste. Our imaginations can help us to be in the experience, to know that food in our bodies.

I like imagining faith as embodied faith.

Embodied faith is incarnated faith; felt and experiential, awake, active and walking in the world, sensuous in amazement and abundant in wonder. Rituals, like communion, are one place to embody our faith in a way that leads to more embodiment of our Christ Path in the world. They are among the many ways to taste God.

Tasting God is true to the tradition of Hebrew understanding, which is by nature earthy and in the body. It is true to the witness of the early followers of Jesus who said that God in Christ is with us in human life,

tasting life, alive and intimate. These are the same early followers who experienced the coming of an embodied Spirit at Pentecost.

Because of that embodied experience, their community was changed. And so it is with us. Those experiences that we can feel in the body change us. **Feeling is the whole body's way of tasting.**

If we are really with such an experience fully in the moment, the barriers between then and now dissolve. Often that means that the barrier between us and the ancestors dissolves. We connect with the reality of being not just us, being JT or Birdie or Philip or whoever, but with being human like so many before us. As we ingest the communion elements, we can remember and join with those many ancestors of many ages who have participated in the communion ritual. The ritual can connect us to the ancient flow of Spirit that continues still, the deep river of divinity and humanity.

Even as the everywhen space comes to be, it does not imply escape from our lives, but deepening into life. Myths and their rituals are there to help us meet life as it is. They are not really about history or science. They are stories of the inner and outer Mystery that are meant to help us live our lives, together. These sacred stories and their rituals offer us a chance to taste God, to experience Divine presence and Divine wisdom. A myth is true if it works, if it helps us live well, to cope with the realities of life and the passages of life. It guides us amidst the ambiguity of life to make life-affirming choices, to discern what is valuable and enduring and life-giving from what is illusory and shallow and life-draining or even death-dealing.

Like Communion, the ancient sacred stories were not just told for amusement nor at any ordinary time or place. They were told within a sacred space, within a ritual space, in a special way as song or chant or dance, often with the sound of a drum.

We are called in our sacred Communion story and ritual to open ourselves like those at the first Pentecost to a meaning-full and power-full meeting with Spirit, where we each know in our own way the love and wisdom and power of Christ. We are called to experience it, to taste it, to know it in our bones. And in this meeting and eating we are nurtured and inspired to respond in the world with the same compassion and the same passion for justice as Jesus exemplified.

Perhaps it is a good thing to have grape juice instead of wine, but perhaps we lose something of the potency, complexity, and bitter sweetness of the message about life when we just have the sweet juice. Life isn't all sweet, is it? Both the sweet and the bitter are welcome here.

So, when the time for our ritual of communion comes, bring your soul's questions and longings to the Table.

Bring your griefs and burdens.
Bring your hopes or your lack of hope.
Bring your joy or your lack of joy.

Come to God's Table where even amidst the presence of loss and betrayal, there is an offering of life and hope.

Come to God's Table where even amidst occupation and injustice, there is an offering of compassion and a witness for justice.

Come to God's Table where even amidst prejudice and exclusion, there is an offering of a place for all where social status, income, cultural background, skin color, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, athletic or intellectual abilities do not rank or separate.

Come with awe and wonder at the Creation and at the Creator who brings the world into Being and who can bring life out of death.

The Communion Table is our timeless story. It is a doorway into the mystery of the divine and human that is happening right now and has always been happening.

Let us tell the ancient story and live it again.

AMEN