

Easter 3B  
Celtic Evensong + Eucharist  
Luke 24:36b-48

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On the morning my dad died, almost a year ago,  
I called my best friend Will from my empty Cary Street apartment  
and asked him to come,  
now,  
please.

I called our vicar Will Stanley, too  
(the only person I knew here in Richmond)  
and so my two Wills arrived at my new home where I sat on the floor  
in shock and disbelief.

It was breakfast time.

“Are you hungry?” they asked.

“I don’t know.” I said.

My best friend turned to our vicar and said,  
“She has trouble eating when she grieves. Why don’t we all go get bagels?”  
And so we walked to the corner  
and ordered bagel sandwiches at Nate’s  
and ate them sitting on the grass under the strong rays of Richmond’s 8am sun.

I remember how chewy the bagel was,  
the feel of poppyseeds crunching between my teeth—

I remember how my tears salted the bagel as I ate,  
making the meal taste brighter in the way that salt always does—

I remember how the rhythm of bite-chew-swallow  
slowly drew me back into a body that felt like it might evaporate.

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My spiritual life is inseparable from the physical reality of  
who I am in this one body that I have.  
My faith and my body are irrevocably intertwined.

Just like the Psalmist, my body expresses the truth of my heart at every turn:  
my heart melts like wax,  
my throat grows parched,  
my every groan, sigh, and gasp reaches out to the divine.  
When I most need God—  
when I don't know what to say or do and have no words left in me—  
my body knows what to do,  
how to ground me in what is holy even on the worst of days.

And so I have always believed almost anything can be helped by something good to eat.  
For the bagel story I share tonight  
I have a hundred more of bites consumed  
in the midst of the mountaintops and valley floors of my life.  
When I triumph, I celebrate with food,  
and when I descend to the darkest depths,  
I know the power of a meal to heal,  
to restore,  
to remind me exactly who and whose I am.

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Jesus knew this power too.

He said to his friends, "Have you anything here to eat?"  
They gave him a piece of broiled fish,  
and he took it, and ate it,  
and in so doing brought the invisible truth of God-come-back-to-life  
right up into the evident truth of his body  
standing in the throng of his grieving, awe-struck, unmoored friends.

"It is I myself," Jesus tells the disciples  
as in their joy they wondered and disbelieved.  
It is I myself.  
Me.  
The one you love.  
Feed me, please.  
Let's have some fish.  
Eat with me, and remember who I am,  
And remember who you are, too.

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It matters to me that we have a God with a body like ours.  
A God who breathes and laughs and eats fish with his friends.

A God who cries and aches and dies.  
I think it means that we have a God who  
draws together what is holy and what is physical,  
and who knows that our very bodies  
can point us back to ourselves,  
can help us remember the miracle of this grace-filled life,  
even when the changes and chances of this life  
might make everything feel totally out of our grasp.  
Take, eat, says the Lord.  
This is my body, just like your own.  
Remember.

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On the day my dad died—  
truly one of my worst days—  
the sheer magnitude of that loss  
threatened to render me completely undone.  
In the space of just a minute my world tilted on its axis  
and not a single thing made sense—  
everything I knew became slippery to the touch.

I think that bagel eaten on pokey grass under the hot sun with the Wills—  
that bagel saved me, a little bit, that day,  
because it put me right back into my body  
in an hour when all the edges of things had become blurred.  
With every bite I was reminded of the miracle  
of this beating heart,  
these strong legs, these salty eyes.  
I was reminded:  
I am still here.  
It is I myself.  
Even in this,  
Even on that day:  
Take, eat.  
I remember who I am.