

“What was the First Food Eaten on the Moon?”

1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 15:1-8

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

First Baptist Church

Frankfort, Kentucky

September 2, 2012

Communion Devotion

Just what is the answer to the question in today’s sermon title? Many of you have suggested cheese or moon pies, which would have been most appropriate and fine with me. As I was greeting people entering the sanctuary, one of you was even bold enough to mention moonshine, which should not have surprised me since I live in Kentucky again. However, these are not the correct answers. It was a communion wafer.

As you know, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first astronauts to walk on the moon on July 20, 1969, which many historians regard as the greatest event of the 20th century. Weeks before their launch into space, Aldrin went to his pastor, Dean Woodruff, at the Webster Presbyterian Church in Houston. He told Woodruff he wanted to do something special to mark this historic occasion. Together, they came up with the idea of taking communion, just as Columbus did after he landed in the “New World,” almost five hundred years earlier.

And so, immediately after the lunar module landed, Aldrin opened the plastic packages which contained the bread and wine and a card with the words of John 15:5 on it. He read this verse, thanked God for making this historic trip possible and took the elements.

None of this was broadcast on radio and television because it was a private moment of worship and reflection for Aldrin. While Armstrong did not participate, he was quiet and respectful.

So now you know. The first food eaten and the first liquid consumed on the moon were not moon pies and RC Colas, but a communion wafer and wine.

Why have explorers like Aldrin and Columbus, along with many others, taken communion on new and foreign soil? Perhaps it was because the Lord’s Supper communicated an important message that strengthened them for their journey. And what was that message?

Wherever they were, they needed Jesus, and wherever they were, Jesus was with them. Two hundred fifty thousand miles may have separated Aldrin from family, friends and everything familiar, but they did not separate him from the Lord. In the confines of a tiny spaceship on the vast, barren landscape of the moon, Jesus was with him and Neil Armstrong, providing the wisdom, confidence,

strength and courage needed to make that magnificent journey. For Aldrin, taking communion was one way to acknowledge this and express his profound gratitude.

Wherever they were, they needed Jesus, and wherever they were, Jesus was with them.

Is this a message you need to hear today? Are you traveling down an unfamiliar road? Are you facing new and daunting challenges? Are you separated from those you have commonly leaned on for advice and strength? At times, do you feel like you are all alone on another planet?

I have good news for you if you do. As a person of faith, there is no place you can go or challenge you will face which can separate you from God.

Listen to the words of the Psalmist. "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn or I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me and your right hand will hold me fast" Psalm 139:7-10.

Hear the reassuring words of Paul. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 8:35, 37-39.

I find it interesting that Aldrin chose to read from John 15 during communion. In this passage, Jesus used the word, abide, eight times. "Abide in me as I abide in you...because apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus told the disciples the night before he died.

Jesus wanted to assure them what they were going to witness the next day would not separate them forever. Death would not have the final word in his life or their faith. God would raise Jesus from the dead and send the Holy Spirit to indwell them. Jesus would always be with them as a trusted and helpful traveling companion.

Do you need to hear Jesus' reassuring words this morning? Did you come into this sanctuary today overwhelmed by a sense of uncertainty and fear? Are things around you changing and challenging you to confront your limitations? Is the old and familiar giving way to the new and unfamiliar?

Do you need to be reminded of God's abiding presence and sustaining love? Do you need to be reassured wherever you go this week or whatever you face, God will be with you, offering wisdom, counsel, strength, courage, confidence and a way forward?

"Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit," Jesus told his disciples. This is true for us, also. By God's grace, we, too, can meet this week's challenges with courage and confidence.

Who else needs to hear this message of hope? Do you know someone who feels all alone and needs this kind of supportive faith? Is there someone in your family or among your friends who is struggling with feelings of fear and anxiety? Are they traveling down unfamiliar roads and facing daunting challenges?

What could you say which would encourage them? What could you do to help them? How could you make room for them in your life so they would not feel all alone?

Think about these things as we take communion, remembering the one who always makes room for us.