

Lament & Longing

Sunday October 2, 2016

Rev. Lauren Hodgson; St. Matthew's United Church

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight O God our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

I want to tell you a story about a potato, and egg and a few coffee beans...

This potato was dug up from Sarah's uncle's garden in Stewiacke Nova Scotia. We literally watched him dig it out of his garden and give it to us.

And this egg is from our friends' organic farm in Paris, Ontario. They grow all of the food themselves, that they feed to their chickens and their chickens live in what we like to call a chicken mansion!

And these coffee beans came from a farm in Costa Rica. They were brought to Canada through an organization called "Just Us," which is committed to fair trade practices, and paying coffee farmers a fair wage for their product.

All of these in some direct and indirect ways came from very different places, but all from the ground; the potato, the feed that helped to nourish this egg and the coffee plant, all started from the dirt and ground. Good stories often come from the ground. Good stories often emerge when we are grounded in the moment.

Potatoes, Eggs and Coffee Beans

Once upon a time a daughter complained to her father that her life was miserable and that she didn't know how she was going to make it. She was filled with despair and lament. She was tired of fighting and struggling all the time. It seemed just as one problem was solved, another one soon followed.

Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Once the three pots began to boil, he placed **potatoes** in one pot, **eggs** in the second **pot** and ground **coffee** beans in the third pot. He then let them sit and boil without saying a word to his daughter. The daughter moaned and impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing. After twenty minutes he turned off the burners. He took the potatoes out of the pot and placed them in a **bowl**. He took the eggs out and placed them in a **bowl**. He then **ladled** the coffee out and placed it in a **cup**.

Turning to her, he asked. "What do you see?"
"Potatoes, eggs and coffee," she hastily replied.

"Look closer", he said, "and touch the potatoes."
She did and noted that they were soft.

He then asked her to take an egg and break it.
After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg.

Finally, he asked her to **sip** the coffee.
Its rich aroma brought a smile to her face.

"Father, what does this mean?" she asked.

He explained that the potatoes, the eggs and coffee beans had each faced the same adversity – the boiling water. However, each one reacted differently. The potato went in strong, hard and unrelenting, but in boiling water, it became soft and weak. The egg was fragile, with the thin outer shell protecting its liquid interior until it was put in the boiling water. Then the inside of the egg became hard. However, the ground coffee beans were unique. After they were exposed to the boiling water, they changed the water and created something new.

"Which one are you?" he asked his daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a potato (that has gone weak), an egg (that has gone hard), or a coffee bean (creating something new)?"

In life, things happen around us, and things happen to us. The only thing that truly matters is our choice of how you react to it and what

you make of it. When faced with life's challenges how do you respond?

Now we all have our own boiling water in our life. And possibly as we sit here we don't want to think about the things or the people or the situations that have burned us. We have all decided in those moments to be like the potato, the egg or the coffee. We cannot change how we have reacted in the past we can only change how we respond to adversity now and in the day ahead.

Hearing stories of lament, as we encounter in scripture this morning, through the Book of Lamentations and an epistle, or letter, from 2nd Timothy, we wonder, as people of faith, how to go about our task of clinging to hope, when the world and our lives can just be filled with so much lament and longing...

So, I want, for a moment, to bring you back to the dirt, that first started this analogy. Probably one of the messiest things in our world is dirt and like I said at the beginning a lot of good things come from dirt, potatoes, feed for chickens, coffee. And sometimes when we reach into the messiest of situations, even some good can be pulled out. So how do we make the most of our own mess and help others to find the gems within theirs?

Today, grown from the ground the dirt, arise the wheat and grapes for this sacred meal. And today, joined with others from around the world, as we break bread that has come from the earth and pass to one another we are saying, I see Christ in you and no matter what your boiling water is, if you need me, I will be with you through it. And as we gather at this table, joining hands with all around the world, may we know that we don't face the waters of adversity and challenge alone, but may we know that God is with us. Amen.