

Integral
Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson
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All month, we've been asking what I find to be a very powerful question:

what does it mean to be a people of integrity?

Misha Lentz talked about what it means to make promises and covenants, even though sometimes we don't keep them.

She reminded us to keep it real, and we try, and reach, and try again, and forgive ourselves and each other.

I told you a story about how being a person of integrity is about being true to the person your heart calls you to be, not someone else,

but that and only that promise.

Schuyler talked about keeping promises to make justice in the world, and making hard choices.

Today, I want to talk about a different, but related, kind of integrity:

the integrity of wholeness.

I think it's interesting that integrity has come to mean both things:

to be an upstanding, honest, person,

and to be an integrated person, a whole person.

Both meanings come from the same root,

the Latin *integer*, which of course we use to mean a whole number.

And it's that same Latin root word, *integer*, that becomes, in Spanish,

integral: whole-grain.

Wholeness is making a comeback.

And it's about time.

I heard a story on NPR last week –
and I bet some of you did too -

interviewing two top food critics about the food trends for 2015.

And they agreed:

whole grains, whole fruits, whole fats, all making a comeback.

Whole foods - not the store, not the brand, the actual thing.

Both critics were excited about something called "Freekeh" - which, really, how could you not be, with a name like that?

It's a green wheat, and all the rage, apparently.

Sometimes trends like that take a while to reach Rockford.

Quinoa (keen-wah) is so 2014. Freekeh is 2015.

Seriously, it's great to see wholeness making a comeback in food.

Actual ingredients. Real things.

I myself have finally kicked the diet coke habit -

talk about fake food! -

and am drinking tea;

something real.

It took a while to get used to,

but I'm coming to love it:

the health, and the ritual, and the taste.

As I've discussed this, other folks have shared they are making similar changes in their eating and drinking..

Wholeness in our food and drink

is making a comeback.

How about in our lives?

Can wholeness make a come back there, too?

For just as we are outgrowing a food culture
of artificial sweeteners and overly-processed content,
we live in a social culture of artificial reality,
overly-processed distractions.

We are pulled in a thousand different directions,
and its hard to know who we are,
to feel like the parts of our lives are connected at all.

We have, so often, no personal sense of integrity,
not as much about honesty - though keeping track of all our
personalities and roles can be hard on the truth -
but about a sense of wholeness, a sense of being an
integrated person with an integrated life.

At least I sometimes feel that way, and so I assume some of
you do to0 -

because I'm lucky, I have a job that encourages me to be a
whole person - at least most of the time.

But I have work, and parenting, and family, and friends, and
trying to have a social life,
and taking care of my body and health.

And I know that so many of you have similar lists of so
many different obligations,

and it's this and that and this and that other thing,
and sometimes we feel like 5 people in one body.

You feel like the parts of yourself are falling apart.

Your stuffing coming out.

Does this resonate with any of you?

Our modern culture, with its idolatry of productivity
it's hyper-speed communications, 24-hour news cycle,
disjointed confusion,
has made this problem worse,
but the truth is that this has always been something of an
issue.

Human beings have always felt a desire to be whole,
to be connected to our own heart and true selves,
to feel like we are living an integrated and complete life.
We've always wanted it.

And there are moments when we get it,
aren't there?

Moments when it all comes together and we feel something
powerful.

Times when we feel that sense of wholeness and enough-
ness,

when we don't feel pulled apart but present, right here,
right now,

when we don't think about what's next or what's missing,
when our to-do list fades away, and we are in the moment,
that moment and no other.

I've had those moments running, and reading a story to
myself or my kids,

and writing, and being in a small group meeting,

I've had them in the woods, I've had them over a good
meal with a good friend.

When you feel whole.

How about you?

You too?

One more place I've had that feeling of wholeness:

in church.

in worship.

in the life of ritual, spirituality.

I gave you the Latin meaning of the word integrity:

integer, wholeness.

One more etymology this morning, and I promise that's it:

religion comes from the Latin for ligament - to re-ligament,

to reconnect, to restore your limbs, your connection.

And religious traditions around the world have found ways
to honor this:

to honor the longing for reconnection, for wholeness,

to address its absence and to celebrate its presence.

Rituals, daily, weekly, annual reminders of our longing,

and of the reality, the truth, that despite how we sometimes
feel,

we are whole, we are one, we are enough, we are loved.

In Hinduism, for example, you restore your sense of

wholeness, in part,

through the practice of yoga, by breathing and being one in
your body.

In Buddhism, through meditation.

In Islam, through the Salat, the daily prayer.

In the Pagan tradition, rituals to honor the seasons of the year,
the wholeness of the earth - and as Betsy shared,
so many of those involve bread, whole-grains, to make and
build community.

Bread has power.
Civilization as we know it is built on this elemental food.
It is real, and symbolic.
The control over its distribution is a matter of justice.
Its traditions create and sustain families and cultures.

Thinking about bread and thinking about integral, Spanish
words,
led me to the great Pablo Neruda poem, Oda al Pan, Ode to
Bread.
I've asked Tim/Martha to read you a portion of this poem in
Spanish this morning,
and I've printed the translation in your program.
These words speak to human power and human longing:
that the daily bread will be for every person,
that there will be enough for all the peoples of the world,
that victory, bread, will set the world free.

Ode to bread

. . .

O bread familiar to every mouth,

we will not kneel before you:
men
do not
implore
unclear gods
or obscure angels:
we will make our own bread
out of sea and soil,
we will plant wheat
on our earth and the planets,
bread for every mouth,
for every person,
our daily bread.
Because we plant its seed
and grow it
not for one man
but for all,
there will be enough:
there will be bread
for all the peoples of the earth.
And we will also share with one another
whatever has
the shape and the flavor of bread:
the earth itself,
beauty
and love--
all
taste like bread
and have its shape,

the germination of wheat.
Everything
exists to be shared,
to be freely given,
to multiply.

. . .

This earthly *Victory*
does not have wings:
she wears bread on her shoulders instead.
Courageously she soars,
setting the world free,
like a baker
born aloft on the wind.

-Pablo Neruda

That is our wish, too:
that all the people will be fed,
will have and know they are enough, are whole and worthy
of love and justice.

Bread has power.
I was talking about religious practices, reconnection
practices,
that move us toward and remind us of our integrity.
And you can see where I'm going with this:

In Christianity, through communion, the people are reminded of their wholeness and restored unto it. The act of sharing the bread and the wine, a ritual that honors the unity of the church and the unity of the person, serves to restore that sense of your worth, your dignity. At least, that's what the ritual should do. About the last etymology thing, I fibbed. One more: communion means with-union. To come into unity, to come into wholeness.

And this brings us back to whole-grain bread. When we were discussing this month of integrity, what does it mean to be a people of integrity, Tim, who is both our musician and our resident linguist, shared the thing about integral being whole-grain in Spanish, and we thought: whole grain communion.

Communion.
At this church.
On Sunday.

And I thought, let's not talk about it, let's do it. So help me out, folks. I'm guessing that the last time that communion - not an apple communion or a flower communion or water communion, or something else,

but a Christian communion of bread and wine,
or bread and grape-juice,
was celebrated in worship was 1942.

Is that right?

Anyone remember a later date?

The communion script we'll use today is the script from the
Unitarian hymnal of 1937,
the red one.

How many of you remember using this hymnal here?

This isn't some tradition which is foreign to us.

This is our tradition.

This is our history.

This is our ritual.

We have mislaid it for some time,
but wholeness is making a comeback,
and things that are old are new again.

So we're going to do this.

And you can watch, or you can participate, it's ok.

You can speak the words, or not, or just some of them.

Do pay attention,

because though some things are similar,
if you come out of a Catholic or Methodist or Lutheran or
similar tradition,

you'll notice that the words are not the same.

This is a theistic communion script,

it speaks with affection about God,

but it is a Unitarian script,

there is no trinity, and no son of God.

There is talk about brokenness, and confession, and the need to heal and restore,
but there is no talk here about irredeemable sin, or hell, or any of that.

There is celebration, but there is no triumphalism.

There is memory, but not historical amnesia.

If this ritual used to be important you, but you couldn't do the words,

I hope that what we do here today will reclaim it for you.

If this ritual is new to you, give it a try.

If you're uncomfortable with what we are doing, know that that's OK.

I'm a little uncomfortable too, but sometimes you need to push the limits to discover the truth, or at least, a truth.

We are using grape-juice this morning, so everyone feel free.

Thanks to Teresa Wilmot, who lent us this set which her daughter Erin purchased in Taize, France.

When the time comes, if you wish, come down the center aisle, take a small piece of bread,
dip it in the chalice, and eat.

Then return via the side aisles.

This is, of course, an open table and everyone is welcome - no fancy style here.

We do this to return again to who we are.

To who we have been.

We do this as one among many paths to wholeness,
one way in which people of faith,

including ourselves,
can restore a sense of balance, wholeness, and integrity.
So, be as present as you can be, and listen to the words,
feel the power of this ancient practice,
and may you take from this whatever hope, joy, truth, and
kindness you need in your life.

We'll begin with a song from our choir,
come, my way, my truth, my life, a communion song which
is in our current hymnal.

and then I shall follow the script from the 1937 hymnal;
the only amendments I have made to this text
are for gender inclusive language;
otherwise it is the same.

There are parts for you, which are printed in your insert;
I've not reprinted the whole thing, so you'll see when we
get there.

But first, music.

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a way as gives us breath;
Such a truth as ends all strife,
Such a life as killeth death.
Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a light as shows a feast,
Such a feast as mends in length,
Such a strength as makes his guest.
Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a joy as none can move,
Such a love as none can part,
Such a heart as joys in love.

