

Hillcrest Congregational Church, UCC
Rev. Dr. Loletta M. Barrett
Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2-14, 2:18-23, Luke 12:13-21
Communion Homily

The scriptures for today are from the lectionary, but the week that I had brought them home to me. Two of my dear friends passed away in one week. Sometimes we can wonder about where the meaning is. Life is short. One of them was 82, the other was 50. No matter how many years we are given it is too short to enjoy all there is and to get to know all there is to know and to get to meet all the wonderful people, and to make a difference.

In our scripture reading from Ecclesiastes the writer is struggling with this very thing, “vanity, all is vanity.” He has struggled, he has risen to the peak of his life. He has done it all, seen it all, owns it all. He should be satisfied, but he finds in this dark hour of the soul, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity;” whether we know it all, whether we have it all, whether we seen it all and done it all. What a downer.

The good news is this is a question we can answer for ourselves. This is a question God has given us, to find the meaning of our lives.

And in our second scripture reading we again find someone who has done it all. He has this magnificent crop; at the peak of his success, a farmer with bigger and bigger barns, filled with all the material good he could ever want. And yet, in one of the devotions I read, the man said to himself, he talks to himself- “Look at

me, I'm wonderful, I have it all." And the devotion writer says that is the problem. He is self-centered. He has all this abundance but he has shared it with no one. He talks to himself; not to God and not to the people around him.

If we can learn or get anything out of this life, what will it be?

This table, the communion table is God's table. Jesus taught about it as a new opportunity for all of us, and he lived it. One of my friends had a tradition of the "orphan" dinner. All the people who had no where to go on the holidays, or whose family and friends had rejected them, or who simply couldn't make the trip, were invited to her home. Everyone was welcome. No matter who you are, or what you had done, or what you looked like. Gay/straight, single/married, transgendered, white/black, physically able or disabled, Christian/Jew/atheist, all were welcomed at the table. This is something I honor about my friend.

And where did she learn that? Right here at this table of celebration. You see, all we really have is that connection of relationships; our relationship with God and our relationship with each other. Nothing is permanent, except love. Love has no beginning, it has no end. It connects us eternally. It is represented here at this table, an open table, for each and every one of us. God's table.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed he sat at the table with his disciples, his friends, and yes, even the one he knew would betray him. And he said, "do this in remembrance of me." We remember the breaking of the bread and the sharing of

the cup, and the cross. But we also remember the table that he set; he didn't exclude anyone, even Judas was welcomed.

And at the end of the meal he took the bread that they had been eating and he broke it and said, "take this bread and eat it. It represents my body that will be broken for you, and you and you and all of you, so that you will remember everything I have taught you." And then at the end of the meal he also took the cup that they had been drinking and he blessed it, saying, "this is the cup of the new covenant. When you eat this bread and you drink this cup, remember me. It is for you and you and you, all of you." This is love. This is love.

Come to the table and rejoice in the relationship that God has with us, and the relationship we have with each other, and with all those who love.

Please pray with me.

God, we give you thanks and praise for every blessing that you have poured upon our lives. You are so incredibly generous. We have so much, and sometimes we forget even the breath we take is a gift of love. Bless this cup and this bread that we might be nourished and empowered by it; that we might be filled up to overflowing. That we might take it out to the world, that we might share this open table with every one we meet. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, the Christ, who taught us about you and your love, and how to show it. Amen.