

“His Eye is On the Hummingbirds”  
B, Pentecost 11; John 6:24-35  
August 5, 2018; 10:00 am  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

John 6:24-38 The Message (MSG)

<sup>22-24</sup> The next day the crowd that was left behind realized that there had been only one boat, and that Jesus had not gotten into it with his disciples. They had seen them go off without him. By now boats from Tiberias had pulled up near where they had eaten the bread blessed by the Master. So when the crowd realized he was gone and wasn't coming back, they piled into the Tiberias boats and headed for Capernaum, looking for Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him back across the sea, they said, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “You’ve come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs—and for free.

The Bread of Life

<sup>27</sup> “Don’t waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.”

<sup>28</sup> To that they said, “Well, what do we do then to get in on God’s works?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “Throw your lot in with the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment gets you in on God’s works.”

<sup>30-31</sup> They waffled: “Why don’t you give us a clue about who you are, just a hint of what’s going on? When we see what’s up, we’ll commit ourselves. Show us what you can do. Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32-33</sup> Jesus responded, “The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the *real* bread. The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> They jumped at that: “Master, give us this bread, now and forever!”

<sup>35-38</sup> Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever. I have told you this explicitly because even though you have seen me in action, you don’t really believe me. Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don’t let go. I

came down from heaven not to follow my own whim but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me.

Songs in Service:

Morning Has Broken  
Draw the Circle Wide  
We Gather Together  
No Matter  
One Bread, One Body

**THE PARABLE OF THE HUMMINGBIRDS**

Have you all noticed the hummingbirds of late?! We have been *amazed* to find so many visiting our feeder. We've *longed* for them for years. Clarke has patiently put up feeders and prayed for their arrival, and compared notes with the neighbors – who always seemed to be getting more than we were! It was basically an unfulfilled longing until *this* year! This summer. The sugar shelves at City Market are bare, and we've talked to many happy bird-feeders about this most unusual year.

A few weeks back we suddenly had them in our midst! Lots of them. The memo was out about the Poos' porch! (By the way, did you know a group of hummingbirds is called a "charm"?) Well, as happy as we were for their arrival, they weren't exactly *charming* each other.

The feeder looked like the entrance of Walmart or Best Buy at opening time on Black Friday. There were hummingbirds *everywhere*, pushing and shoving, dive-bombing and challenging each other for the same spot at our feeder. It was utter pandemonium!

It looked like there were just too many hungry hummingbirds for the amount of feeders we had so we thought maybe we just didn't have enough places for them all to eat at the same time. Ah, the answer is to put up more and bigger feeders. So that's exactly what we did. Now every little creature could have a place to feed and plenty of nourishment for all.

To my surprise, it was still the same riot at feeding time. They would fight, buzz and challenge each other for the same spot just as vehemently when the one three inches away was vacant! How can such delicate and lovely birds be so mean to each other when there is plenty for all?

A bigger feeder. Two feeders, one on each side of the porch. More places at the table and more juice before it runs out. But. Even though you would THINK they could all perch and drink at the same time, they don't. Only one or two land and drink at the same time. There is plenty of space. Plenty of elbow room. Plenty of wing room!

"We Gather Together" to ask the Lord's blessing – we sang it earlier! Not so much gathering together for a blessing as one might hope!

There was much swarming and swirling from the parking lot (a.k.a. trees)! Many were zooming in and making sure someone else doesn't get there first. As if! As if there weren't a whole feeder full of juice: food and drink in abundant supply!

And, I thought of the Church. All around the world. All through the ages, even. How we've taken Jesus' invitation to the Table –the BIG feeder with *lots* of places to perch and be nourished, and chased each other off. Prevented others from coming to the table. Squabbled about our turn, our times, our differences in belief in how its done – breaking the bread and pouring and sharing the cup. Emphasized our differences more than our commonalities: all in the name of *what*?

Is it fear? Fear of scarcity? Greed for our hungry bellies or souls? Lack of trust in the Provider? That He won't – at the end of the day, cook up a whole new batch of food if the feeder is running low? That the Provider won't make sure, yet again, each day, that there is plenty of daily bread (or juice!) for all to partake; plenty to go around?

The Rufous – you all know all about them! They are just a *little* assertive. Okay, they’ve downright aggressive! They want to have their way. Play by *their* rules. They don’t even let their *own* in for a drink! We’ve seen some serious head-bashing: 3 or 4 rufous, all the same color, *zooming* at each other and preventing access. And, it wasn’t any better with the ruby-throated, for the most part. They were chased off by Rufous too. But. Once in awhile.....two birds *would* alight at the fountain at the same and enjoy a drink. Why? Because they couldn’t *see* each other. Not *fully*, anyway. Whether two rufous or one rufous and one ruby, when directly across, with the glass bottle making them *almost* invisible to each other, they’d pause the fighting and drink – in a moment of peace.

But then, a glimpse. Through the clear glass, or a sneak peak around the circle, and boom! Chased off again.

Or, if there were too many to chase off at once – for *one brief shining moment* there was a communal meal – 3-4 would gather at once. Ever. So. Briefly.

And again, I thought of the Church and the human community. How do we celebrate a bigger circle, a more *abundant* feeder with more places at the table, and not grow more fearful and protective of “*our space?*”

How can we learn not to chase each other off – as if *our* ideas, roles, beliefs and traditions can’t co-exist side-by-side with others’? Does it require that we “sneak in” and not really see each other in order to feast at the same time? Is it only when the other is *invisible* across the way that we can co-exist? Even though it’s the same Holy Table that we’re all drawn to? Invited to gather around?

Consider the hummingbirds. Consider how much we’re like them from time to time. Even buzzing perilously close to the Provider! Almost injuring the One we depend on to prepare more food and set the table and spread the feast.

Consider how we chase each other off sometimes – maybe without even realizing it! Consider how there might be someone hiding across the way – who would *love* to be truly seen and not chased off, but heard, understood, welcomed-in, invited to the circle to dine together.

Consider those glorious moments when there *is* a circle! When we draw the circle wider. When several souls do gather to feast together – all at the same time – even though external forces still hover around, a ways off, and threaten to break up the party.

Consider their perseverance whenever – though shooed off – those faithful still keep coming together, believing it is possible, and that the Holy One wants them there.

Consider something else!

I told Molly about this parable of the hummingbirds I was writing, and she said to watch *right as the day is starting and right as it’s ending* – all the rules change! They sit down to *eat* together! At those pinnacle moments in the day’s cycle, if you watch closely, you will catch them! Four or five or even more. All pulling up a chair. All partaking together. Communion!

And wait! It’s gets even better. Friday night, as I was contemplating how to wrap-up this reflection for today, we saw the unthinkable on our deck in Fairplay. Two birds (both Ruby females ☺), shared a spot! Yes! They took turns at the one hole. Several times back and forth. We couldn’t believe our eyes. All the other spots were busy at that moment, so they decided they could share one fountain.

I saw this just this morning! You see, at first I didn’t believe Molly. I thought it was a nice idea—an idyllic scene to hope for—but I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, so I struggled to believe.

But then, I started to pay attention. In the most devout ways, and I witnessed for myself – this miracle at dawn and dusk.

This morning, bright and early, after a too-short and difficult, tossing and turning night, as we dreamt of our sweet horse and having to say good-bye, I was awakened by the beautiful songs of hummingbirds.

As I sipped coffee, prayed my way into the day, and pondered my morning devotional, there was the most glorious sight: Four, five, even six birds! All sharing their morning “coffee” (nectar-flavored with whipped cream, I imagine!) together at once – greeting the day. Even a non-hummer came to join for a few moments! They most definitely weren’t sure what to do with him.

Consider the hummingbirds.

Let us gather around the Table, and as we do, let us sing a song of invitation, along with the hummingbirds: “No Matter”, p. 35 (SPP) Amen.

#### HYMN Background:

“Morning Has Broken”

First written as a hymn in 1931, to a different tune.

Eventually, in the 1970’s a fellow named Cat Stevens put it on his “Teaser and the Firecat” album and it became quite famous!

The meaning is to be found by each person who sings it. Lesley Fagerberg brought this to us as one of her favorites. Talk to her after the service to find out why!

"We Gather Together"

17th-century Dutch, translated by Theodore Baker

In many American hymnals, "We gather together" appears as a Thanksgiving hymn. Perhaps this is because of the opening line and the general idea that God is with us regardless of our circumstances. However, the hymn speaks more about God's **providence throughout the trials of life.**

“One Bread, One Body”

“From Ephesians 4: May we all be rooted and established in love, completely humble and gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Remembering that there is one body and one Spirit, and one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”