

By: Rev. Mark Breese

Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.

Oatmeal

I know oatmeal is not something that people think about every day. I would even venture to say that for most people, thinking about oatmeal is—unappealing. Let’s be honest: on the face of it, there is not much to recommend oatmeal. Personally, I can confidently say that oatmeal is among my least favorite things to eat. And yet, nearly every morning, I eat oatmeal. Go figure.

Psalm 46:10

“Be still, and know that I am God...”



I guess there are two main reasons for this. One is that my dad ate a lot of oatmeal. He was among those rare (exceptional?) people who liked oatmeal. I think he did anyway—he had a bowl nearly every morning, usually with a diced banana. *And* on those rare occasions we went out for a family brunch, those ones with a big buffet, he would get a bowl of oatmeal! He must have really liked it. Right?

The other reason I eat oatmeal is because it’s easy to make. You see, I also love a nice breakfast of bacon and eggs, or a big omelet with cheese, broccoli and mushrooms, or best of all, a big stack of pancakes with scrambled eggs and sausage! But those things take time to make, and there’s a lot more cleanup. Oatmeal is easy: one pot, one bowl, one spoon. If you make it in a microwave, you don’t even need the pot!

I suppose I should add that I know it’s good for me to eat it oatmeal, so that’s part of it. It’s a more healthy choice than bacon, eggs and pancakes every morning. What’s more, even though breakfast is a relatively inexpensive meal, oatmeal is probably the most expensive breakfast there is.

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Most of all, I think oatmeal has just become part of my daily routine, my daily pattern. The importance of patterns cannot be underestimated. It is the observation of patterns (and the unexpected exceptions to those patterns) that in many ways is at the heart of math and science: of understating all sorts of things—even human relationships. Patterns help us understand and order our world.

Yes, I know. Some of you are raising an eyebrow and thinking “Really, Pastor Mark? Oatmeal is like math? That’s not much of a recommendation.” Maybe. But just stick with me here... like oatmeal in a bowl.

You see it’s really the patterns that I want us to focus on. Sure, oatmeal is not exciting, not even to someone like me who eats it every day! However, these days especially, the pattern of my morning oatmeal is helping me to order a strangely changed world. I am deeply thankful for this small, plain, regular thing that literally sustains me each day. And *that* is why I’m mentioning it to you at all.

I’m pretty sure that if you stop and have a good think, you will find that there is at least one daily routine that helps structure your day, that feels normal—that *the doing of it* brings you comfort. And if you reflect further on it, even meditate upon it, it will be revealed to you as blessing!

Maybe it’s brushing your hair. Maybe it’s a song that you are playing a lot. Your favorite radio station. Knitting. Laundry. Walking. Pushups. Dusting. Cooking. Watching ‘The Bachelor’ reruns. Reading a book. Re-reading your favorite book. Calling your mom or your friend. Looking out the kitchen window when you wash the dishes. Singing in the shower. Maybe it’s prayer or meditation itself.

Or maybe it’s not just *one thing*, but a different thing day to day—things that you never noticed much before, that you didn’t give a second thought, but are always helpful, even life-giving, because they are part of your daily pattern.

Pay attention! These once mundane things are there waiting for you to notice, to celebrate, and *to see as the blessings they can be*. Why in the world it should take a Global Pandemic for us (for me!) to notice some of these things, these blessings, is beyond me. But there it is—another blessing.

So today, and a lot of days recently, for me it has been Oatmeal. Making it is a meditation. And as I sit here, typing up this reflection, I feel so thankful and blessed to have this small, comforting thing to sustain me, spoonful by spoonful—with a few sliced canned peaches, and maybe a little maple syrup . . . to make taste just a little less oatmeal-ie.

Pastor Mark

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