



“God, what is it You want to do through me?”

The Faith of Eleanor

Some friends tease me and say that I learn all my best lessons in the kitchen. When I am not writing, I am cooking, or baking or reading. I try not to do these things simultaneously as there are often disastrous results and one of the potential work products suffers or at the very least is delayed. My mind is often moved to wandering, wanting to make connections where there are none. Equally often, I make connections that lead me to rise and grow and see a new perspective on the question of “what is it You want to do through me?”

Maybe today, God/I/she/my sweetie just wants me to bake bread. Set the starter in motion, allow it to rise to overflow to demonstrate God’s goodness.

When I think of communion, I think of unleavened bread. Gluten free, no grains, nut flours, “mmmm” ...cooking and baking without an oven. I smile, we all have our part to play. Today: “to God be the glory”!

Small flat wafers made mostly of wheat made to resemble what we think was common back in the day. Unleavened bread at the Last Supper for sure was on the menu. I wonder “the why”; the chemistry, the history about these things, who cooked, who prepared it, who was invited to the meal and why we commemorate these things? So you are not surprised that when Pastor asked us to meditate on “overflow,” I found it curious that the items overflowing in my life in the kitchen was my sourdough starter and a dishpan left with the water flowing over the edge as I ran to do something else and left the spigot running.

Ashes were used to smudge our heads on Ash Wednesday and to remind us that we will return to dust and ashes soon if not very soon to mark our shared mortality. The part we do not share with an immortal God. Again, forgive me as I digress, ashes were also the most common leavening agent to allow bread to rise back in the day. It would take hours if not days to bake a soft light bread that rose quickly in a very hot oven or flat stone. I had a recipe once but have not ever baked with the ashes from a wood fire. Sourdough bread which requires no yeast (a commercial leavening agent) takes days if not weeks or months with careful tending and watching and a fair number of steps that may or may not be under your control.

Having made sourdough starter more than once; the process and product you use to get the dough rising can vary wildly even when it starts simply with just flour and water and a closed container. I could tell quite a few funny stories of how it ultimately turned out or did not, but from every experience, even if I didn't write it down, I learned something from both watching, experimenting, and then baking and eating the bread or pancakes. I wonder about such things.

One of the steps in creating and nourishing and feeding the starter is that as it bubbles up and rises from the container, periodically you divide it in half and discard (or) take that extra portion from the overflow and start anew. You have faith in the things that you cannot see but are indeed evident. Just follow the instructions.

Set the right ingredients, right conditions; set it and forget it. Once having started, you are filled to the overflow and can easily rise out of your container, and share when anyone else may need it. I get it now.... I get it now; this is how to be a source of encouragement & fill to the overflow! Faith; right conditions; overflow.

We are told to eat unleavened bread in humility and gratitude to honor the time to create the conditions that allow the bread to rise that may not always be available. Fermentation, whether it is my sauerkraut, pickles, yoghurt or bread is a luxury of place and patience and safe conditions. When Moses led them from bondage, leaving expeditiously, leaving when called did not allow them to wait. More lessons learned. A time and season for lent and every good thing.

Wow! Wow! Wow!

References in case you want to try making some overflow or making things rise:

- <https://giveitforth.blogspot.com/2020/01/pot-ash-leavening-aka-cooking-with-ashes.html>
- <https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/sourdough-starter-recipe>

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