

Sermon: Holy Ghost in the Machine**Scripture: John 21:1-14****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: May 4, 2025**

We like machines, we humans do. We have this incredibly creative human capacity to pull materials together in ways that have never been put together before to accomplish tasks that we want to accomplish and to accomplish them faster and more efficiently. Take this rock, chisel it down to a sharp point, put it on the end of a stick and voila we can kill an animal much bigger and more ferocious than ourselves and have it for dinner. Or make round this block of wood, make another and put an axel between the two and a platform on top and we can move across the ground so much faster than on our two feet. Or put this chemical compound together with that compound and dull the nerve endings of our very sensitive bodies. Or make a box that can receive information coded as 1's and 0's, process it with certain instructions, store it, and produce a needed result which now has us moving on many levels faster and faster. We like machines, we humans do.

And we believe that in making these machines we are making life better, easier, richer, fuller and that we are progressing to...well, "to where exactly" is a good question. To immortality? To complete mastery over the earth? To wealth beyond our wildest dreams? To our bodies not hurting or diminishing or dying? To Godhood? Where is all this going and what are we progressing to with all our machinations? It is being argued that we are progressing to a point where the machine will be all there is and we humans will be replaced. Whether you believe that or not, it's not far

fetched to suggest that we're being a little crazy with it all... or more than a little. We're not stopping long enough in any of this "progress" talk to ask what is it we are progressing towards.

And here's a question. In all this progress, are we becoming more human or less human?

I think we all want to become more human and if so do we really believe that machines, technological advancement, is the key to getting us there? Cause we all seem pretty smitten by it all...

or is it that we are bitten by it all.

Or have we done the biting.

The Book of Genesis in our sacred scriptures depicts human sinfulness and waywardness arising from our taking a bite out of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And consider this - what is probably THE most recognizable symbol of technological advancement in the modern world - an apple with a bite taken out of it. As the foundational myth goes, Adam and Eve took a bite out of that fruit to become like gods and not long after their progeny built a tower in Babel to try and reach the heavens.

And we haven't stopped reaching and biting ever since, despite millenia of evidence that such reaching and biting, such grasping for the power and knowledge and control which is God's alone, ruins us and the earth of which we are a part.

I know a lot of us are so troubled by what our current president and his administration are doing and how it smacks of greed and narcissism, arrogance and meanness even, but maybe the waters of our soul should be troubled as much by where we've been going for ages now with our love of machines and the control and the dominance they give us over the earth

her peoples and the violence that they often require to be operated and sustained. Trump, the billionaires and the tech bros are clearing the way for the machine and all the aggressiveness and violence that it requires.

But all along there's this haunting figure within the machine of our human making who stands on the shore watching us throwing our neatly constructed nets over our finely crafted boats to gather more than we need and know what to do with. And he's wondering why it's not enough for everyone cause he of all people knows the earth produces enough for everyone. It's human machinations that lead to hungry people and overstuffed people, to poor people and absurdly rich people, that's not the earth's doing which is this beautifully organic living system of reciprocity and exchange and flow, the exact opposite of our machines of extraction and control and stoppage. Gandhi was quoted as saying..."the earth produces enough to satisfy everyone's need, just not everyone's greed." Machines are what is needed for the greed and the undoing of every regulation on them.

And there's Jesus standing on the beach in his crucified and risen body calling us to "come, have breakfast." Simply that, break the fast of the night together with me in simplicity and love. Where are you going with all your industry, he wonders... stop, come have breakfast with me. It's often Jesus' solution: "let's eat". You hate this man who collects taxes against you for Rome? You are disgusted by this woman who is a prostitute. Come, let's sit down and eat together... and when you eat with me there's no one at the head of the table or the foot of the table, no servants from the poor class serving the lords of the upper class, no first and last, no machines of industry, just all of us together in a commonwealth eating.

And that's an image that will save us. That's the Ghost in the machinery of our ever-more-thoroughly human-constructed world, a Holy Ghost of compassion and love and forgiveness on one hand and of justice and threat and confrontation of all our entrenched idolatries and compulsions and greediness on the other.

Progress according to Jesus Christ is towards the Kingdom, the Kin-dom of God or it's nothing. And what does that look like? He hardly could have been clearer in what he taught and did and how he died and how he came back. And he gave us a meal to mark it all in one clear fell swoop, a meal of grace and connection and welcome and equity and he said progress here to this table with me where everyone can eat. The earth has been created for it, for this kind of meal, not for meals made with your killing and reaping machine, but for the organic life of communion.

Come, eat with me he said I will give you nourishment and quench your thirst like nothing you've known.

Slow down.

Take a breath.

Turn off the machines.

Bless and do not curse the earth as it only seeks to bless you.

Come, eat with me.