



Sharing Communion

Session 14 – 25th November 2018

Bible Readings

Luke 14:12–23; John 6:44-52; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 6:53-58

Sermon Notes

In every Christian tradition someone, at some point, says, “Remember.” Remember how God became one of us; ate and drank with us; laughed and cried with us; suffered for us; gave his life for the world.

And in communion we remember together not alone. When we sit down together and break bread - we see Jesus in each other’s eyes. As we come closer to Christ, in the breaking of the bread, so we come closer to each other. Opening our hands to receive is a public surrender - “the game is up - I’m not in control here.”

The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven descends into our open hands, the Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation, slips in, through my parted lips. So grace gets through and we exhale our thanksgiving.

If you are worried you don’t have enough faith or you don’t fully understand it - N. T Wright says: “*When Jesus wanted to explain what his forthcoming death was all about he didn’t give a theory....He gave them a meal.*” Sometimes you just have to taste and see.

If you are worried you don't deserve it - look at our reading from Luke – this is what God's kingdom is like: a bunch of outcast outsiders gathered at a table – and there is always room for you.

And our responsibility as a gathering saved by grace is to throw open the doors and shout "Welcome!"

The word "companion" is derived from the Latin 'com' (with) and 'panis' (bread). A companion is someone with whom we share our bread. Jesus' chosen dinner companions were the tax collectors and sinners, the poor, the despised, the sick. That's the sort of behaviour that got him killed.

Don't forget wine, at the time of Jesus, was not a luxury. Water was scarce and often contaminated – so wine was essential for cooking, nourishment, and hospitality, representing God's blessing on a community. At the wedding at Cana – Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine tells us that God is in the business of transforming ordinary things into holy things, including you and me!

In the end *"People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God"* LUKE 13:29.

Key Quotes

"Food is a language of care, the thing we do when traditional language fails." SHAUNA NIEQUIST

"When Jesus wanted fully to explain what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give a theory. He didn't even give us a set of scriptural texts. He gave us a meal." N. T. WRIGHT

“If we did nothing else, even if nothing was placed in our hands, by opening our hands to receive, we would have done two-thirds of what needed to be done. Which is to admit that we simply do not have all the answers; we simply do not have all the power. It is, as the saying goes, ‘out of our hands.’ - NORA GALLAGHER

“You are loved, someone said. Take that and eat it.” - MARY KARR

“No one has been ‘worthy’ to receive communion, no one has been prepared for it. At this point all merits, all righteousness, all devotions disappear and dissolve. Life comes again to us as Gift, a free and divine gift . . . Everything is free, nothing is due and yet all is given. And, therefore, the greatest humility and obedience is to accept the gift, to say yes—in joy and gratitude.” - ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN

Discussion Questions

Read Shauna Niequist’s quote. Describe a time when sharing food has been of benefit in a relationship or situation? Why do you think eating together helped?

Read Nora Gallagher’s quote: How does it feel to you when you open your hands to receive the bread and the wine? Do you feel like you are relinquishing control to God in some way? Does that come easily to you? Why or why not?

Read Luke 14:12–23: How do you feel about Jesus’ seemingly lax attitude to social convention and scripture? How would it make you feel to invite ‘whoever you find’ to your dinner party or even to your daughter’s wedding? How does Jesus’ parable speak into the current trend of abuse of various groups on social media?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: What does receiving communion mean to you? How do you understand its significance? What do you think is happening as you eat the bread and drink the wine? In what way is it Christ's body and blood? Why is it important to gather for communion?

Prayer

Take time to thank God for his sacrifice, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Remember the last supper and the crucifixion. Surrender afresh to God. Confess your sins. Ask for forgiveness and receive that forgiveness with thanks.

Pray and ask for the ability to walk in his ways from now on – the 'Way of Life,' and pray for unity in the gathering of the congregations for communion.

Personal Reflection

The next time you have an opportunity to receive at St Mary's will you come to the table just as you are? And then will you make that 180° turn – showing your back to all those things that spoil or destroy your relationship with God?

Will you surrender to God when opening your hands? Will you ask Him to heal you, to forgive you? Will you look out for your 'Companions' on The Way – your fellow disciples - your brothers and sisters?

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