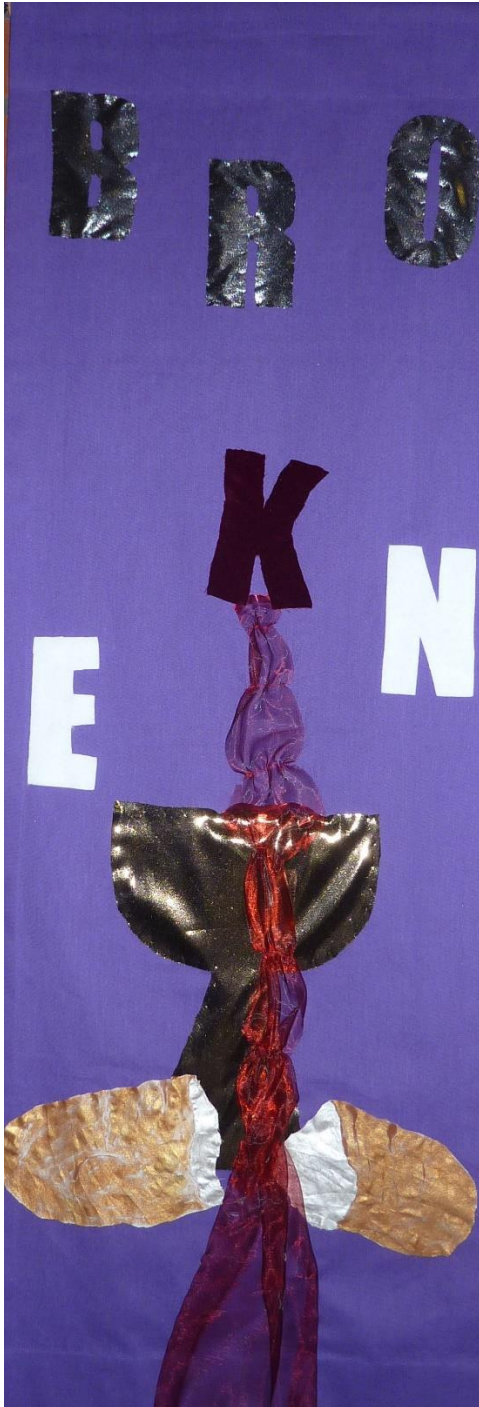


Lent 2021 – I Wonder....

Week 3 – “Broken”



Luke 22:13-20

New International Version

^{13 b} So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”^[a]

The Gospels record the events of the Last Supper in different ways. Below is the same account from the Book of Mark 14:22-26

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ "This is my blood of the ^[a]covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The reflection for this week has been written by Laurence

1. A Personal Story

One of the most precious memories of my Christian faith so far took place during Communion. It was in 2014, and I was a student at theological college. Without going into the details here, this was probably the hardest year of my life. I was anxious about the present and the future, but mostly I was deeply tired – in my mind, my body, and my soul.

One afternoon, a tutor at the college decided to hold a short Communion service in the chapel for any who wanted to attend. Around a dozen of us came. I can't recall anything about the service other than the sunlight that came through the windows. I simply remember the moment that this tutor placed a small piece of bread in my hands, and told me:

"The body of Christ was broken for you."

At that moment, as I stood there with my eyes closed, I felt the warmth of a face close to mine and a gentle kiss on my cheek. I opened my eyes suddenly in surprise, expecting to see someone there...and found that I was stood alone. The tutor had moved on well down the line of people, and those next to me had already returned to their seats. I am convinced that in this moment, Jesus himself met with me in the breaking of bread. At a time when I felt at my most broken, a simple gesture of love – a kiss – told me that God had not forgotten me, and helped me to trust that all would be ok.

Question 1: I wonder...have you ever experienced a profound moment of connection with Jesus when sharing Communion? How did it make you feel? Why do you think Christ revealed himself to you in this moment?



The chapel at Ridley Hall Theological College, Cambridge

The sharing of Communion will be something very familiar to most of us. It is practiced weekly in every parish up and down the country. Each time it is done, we say a Eucharistic Prayer. These prayers not only remind us of the story of salvation and what happened at the first Communion, but are an open invitation for us to join with the Disciples at the table of Jesus. Not just a memory of a meal, but a present and actual sharing with Christ in the gifts of his broken body and spilled blood.

Before we look at the story of the Last Supper, take a moment to consider what sort of relationship you have with Holy Communion. Perhaps it is something that has been especially important to you on your Christian journey, or perhaps less so. Acknowledge what your gut reaction to the idea of Communion is, and ponder why this might be the case.

2. Meeting with Jesus

The narrative of the Last Supper is rich with hidden meaning – it can be easy to get overwhelmed by the symbolism! Let's not burden ourselves with more than is helpful.

The Last Supper takes place the day before Jesus is crucified. It is the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Jews traditionally sacrifice the Passover lamb. It is a time when God's people remember the beginning of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, when the Lord brought judgement by killing the firstborn in every Egyptian house but "passed over" the Israelite houses where the blood of the Passover lamb had been applied. This meal was very familiar to all those who were present – it was a part of their heritage, their living faith, and an act of hope for the future.

Question 2: *Why do you think it is important that we regularly celebrate Communion? Or indeed, do you agree that it is important?*

Jesus has been anticipating this Passover with his disciples. He knows that his death is imminent, and so this is the last moment that he spends with his friends before he is betrayed and arrested. They recline at the table, and he begins to speak:

'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.' After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, *'Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'* (vv.15-16)

This would be the last Passover that Jesus would eat until the kingdom of God is established. The next time he will share in such a meal will be at the 'marriage feast of the Lamb' – Revelation 19:9-10). Little did the disciples know that they were about to participate in a sacred meal that would become a new part of their heritage, their living faith, and an act of hope for the future for every Christian until Christ comes again.

He [Jesus] took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.' (vv.19-20)

Jesus used bread and wine to speak of his body and blood. Why? They were certainly convenient, as they were present on the table where he was reclining. They are also effective physical symbols to represent his life on earth. Soon he too would be broken, given, shared, poured out. But they are also remarkable signposts of God's desire to save His people throughout history. You might like to read:

– Genesis 22:1-19 (The Binding of Isaac)

'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'

– Exodus 24:1-8 (The Covenant Confirmed)

'This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you...'

– John 6:25-59 (Jesus the Bread of Life)

'...it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.'

In Luke's Gospel, we have the wonderful story of the road to Emmaus. In it, two believers are walking and talking about all that had happened with the crucifixion and resurrection. As they went on their way Jesus joins them for their journey, although they didn't recognise him. At the end of their road, after urging him to stay with them, they settle down for a meal. Then:

When he [Jesus] was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. (Luke 24:30-31)

Jesus breaks bread in front of them, and suddenly they realise who he is! There is a deliberate connection here between bread broken and Jesus' identity being revealed – the Son of God. Compare this blessing and breaking with what happens at the Last Supper, or even at the Feeding of the 5000.

Question 3: I wonder...how do you think about 'receiving' or 'recognising' Jesus when you take Communion? It is by prayer, through the symbolism, or perhaps by taking the elements of Communion into your body? How can you prepare yourself so that you are ready to encounter Jesus in these times?

3. Meeting with each other

The sharing of Communion is something that has been practiced by Jesus' followers since the very beginning of the Church. Over this past year, we have experienced one of the few times in history where God's people have been unable to regularly observe this special Sacrament together. For some of us, we haven't been able to share Communion for a few months. For others, it is over a year since we broke bread together. When the time comes that we are able to do it again, I anticipate that it will be a hugely significant and symbolic moment for us all.

***Question 4:** I wonder...what do you perceive you have lost as a result of not taking part in Communion over the past months/year? What will you gain when you are able to participate again?*

The sharing of Communion is both a deeply personal act, but also a collective one. Jesus challenges his disciples by telling them that one of them would betray him. In that moment, each one is forced to examine themselves and make peace with their thoughts and actions before sharing in this meal with Jesus. But then they come together to share something beautiful with each other as friends, family, and Church.

We too take these same actions, repenting of our individual sins so that we can come together with Christ to share in his beautiful meal. We always share The Peace with each other beforehand, so we can share in the message of the risen Christ – 'Peace be with you!'

***Question 5:** Let's finish by thinking about peace. How peaceful do you feel today? Take some time in prayer to lift your needs and anxieties to Jesus, and know that he is ready to listen and meet with you.*

A final note: Our God is so much more powerful, wonderful, beautiful and caring than we could ever imagine. Of course there is a huge loss in not being able to physically share Communion with each other at the moment. But I do not believe that this means that we are any further away from His grace or His love. Jesus can and will meet with each one of us wherever we are, if we ask him to join with us in faith. If you would like to talk more about the theology of the Church and Holy Communion, I would be very happy to share my thoughts and look at the Bible together.

Want to go deeper?

At some point this coming week, you might like to practice the meditative techniques outlined in last week's reflection and apply them to the story of the Last Supper in Luke's Gospel. Imaginative contemplation can be a powerful way of encountering Jesus in familiar passages. You can read more about this, and listen to some examples, by visiting:

pray-as-you-go.org/retreat/imaginative-contemplation

Thank you, Laurence, for sharing with us and giving us plenty to think and pray about. I for one, will be finding time to re-read, to be with Jesus, to try and find answers to the questions and deepen my own relationship with Him.



Easter 2015 – Tableau provided by Margaret Lowe

Jesus' body broken for us. As none of us is perfect, we therefore, are all broken to a greater or lesser extent, and for many, the last year of lockdowns and restrictions may well have left us feeling insecure, lost, lonely, fearful for the future and a whole host of other emotions, and, though we might fluctuate between times of hope and despair, we have one constant - Jesus. We may not be able to bring these things to Jesus within a Communion setting, but Jesus is always with us, arms open wide, accepting and loving us, just as we are.

I have chosen the following song of which there are two versions. The first is a word only version. As you listen, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you, through any of the phrases or words contained within it.

I Come Broken – Just as I am by Travis Cottrell

<https://youtu.be/AEUsOXdTLIM>

The second version of the same song contains visual images which for some, may distract from the words and for others will enhance them. May I suggest that our prayers for this week, be centred on those images, taking our prayers away from ourselves and out to the wider world.

<https://youtu.be/wrNfaqZa8PI>

Lord, we come, just as we are.
We come, broken to be mended,
we come wounded to be healed,
we come empty to be filled.
Lord, we simply, come to you.
To run into Your open arms,
to feel your love surrounding us,
Your peace and hope filling
our hearts and minds.
Our longing, Lord,
to meet, once again, with You,
to share Communion
as one family, together.
Lord, just as we are, we come, to You. Amen