

Remembering & Re-Membering

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Luke 22:14-20 When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*

I recently was at clergy convocation where Professor Mark Heim from ANTS was the keynote and he shared great wisdom, insight and theology about the Jesus' death, the crucifixion and communion. What I learned is while we remember the words "take this bread, take this cup, remember me," few of us think about why Jesus asks us to do this. Yet, if we consider the cross, the torture and death of Jesus, one may understand that Jesus is telling the disciples that whenever you see or feel violence against another, do this –break bread -instead of joining the mob mentality as the crowds did as Jesus was arrested and taken away; whenever you are afraid and want to deny another, as Peter did three times, do "this" – drink from the cup of blessing - instead; whenever you betray someone for your own benefit, as Judas did when he betrayed Jesus and accepted the money, do "this," remember me... remember my mission, my ministry, instead of the abandonment and violence that took my life. Break bread together. Sit and share a meal. This – eating bread and drinking wine together – all coming to the table is the new covenant – A new way of being, of acting, of living – and loving - be resurrected as I was resurrected, so says Jesus the Christ. This table, this sharing offers resurrection; it offers new life and new relationship with one another.

* All biblical texts from NRSV

I can still remember the grief I experienced when receiving communion back in 2001, 2002 when I came back to church in earnest. I would imagine what Jesus must have felt like the night of what we call the Last Supper ~ The fear, the grief, the frustration. Here he had tried for 3 years to change the hearts and minds of people whom he loved and the systems that oppressed his human brothers and sisters, and he knew it was over. He knew that the religious and political leaders would silence him..... his response was a simple one – he asked that his disciples – his students, his followers, his friends, his family that when they ate and drank to remember him – and to remember what mattered to him.

Communion was a form of memorial - a personal experience both sitting in the pews in my home church and between those in the pews in that given time; a church body remembering Jesus for the few moments in which we partake of the bread and drink.

Yet, as the adage says – lots of water has gone under the bridge since then. I still remember the stories that made me sad before, but I have learned to see the beauty, the joy, the hope, the love offered in Communion. Communion is an invitation. It is an invitation of the Holy Spirit to all who are gathered to remember AND also to re-member and be re-membered with Jesus, the Christ, and with one another. It is about an abundant table, where this is enough for everyone, and every one is enough.

Gen 1:11-12,29 Then God Said, Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plans yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. God said, See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.

Communion invites us to remember our unity—our relationship with God, our relationships with one another as a body of Christ, and our relationship, by the very act we are all creations of God, with all God creates.

Communion is an invitation to be grateful. It is a time to remember and re-member with all that we have been given. The food we have to eat, the clean water we have to drink, the abundance of gifts from God we are blessed with. To remember the work of others that we may eat and drink. To re-member with those who till and keep the soil (Gen 2:15). It is an invitation to re-member in caring for God’s all of creation. Laurence Hull Stookey wrote that the elements of bread and wine, “do not occur in creation. God gives grains of wheat and grapes and soil in which they can grow. But someone must nurture stalk and vine, grind flour and knead dough, and press the grapes. Thus what we eat and drink at the Table of the Lord suggests cooperation between Creator and creature as we are called responsibly to tend, prepare, and share with one another.”¹

It is an invitation to re-member with the web of life. Communion is an invitation to receive nourishment. We remember that our bodies require food and drink. When we neglect our

¹ Stookey, Laurence Hull, *Eucharist: Christ’s Feast with the Church*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993, p 17.

bodies we are out of communion with ourselves, one another, and God. Communion invites us to re-member our bodies with our Creator. Partaking in Communion is medicine for our bodies and our souls.

Acts 2:41-46a So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

Communion is an invitation to recognize the value of each of us, the need to be nourished as we care for ourselves, and the value we are to the world and God's need for us to be hands of healing, justice, and mercy. When we are nourished we can experience a sense of wellness and wholeness, our lives, offering it our community, our relationships with God and through God. We are invited to experience joy and offer joy to others.

Communion is an invitation to remember and re-member with those who are hungry and thirsty. We remember and re-member with Christ and our ancestors in faith to be disciples, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and sharing a Christianity rooted in faith, hope, and love. Communion is so much more than remembering a memory. It is *doing* the memory,

sharing an experience – bringing Jesus, those who dined with him, and generations past, into our midst, as we offer ourselves into the future.

1 Cor 11: 17-33 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you! For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

Jesus, during the Passover meal, eating together with friends, breaking bread and drinking wine with them, asked that they remember him. In asking to be remembered he washed the feet of his students, the disciples. He was their servant. And at this Holy meal he shared himself, offering and inviting that we remember that sharing, that humility, that understanding and acceptance that all are worthy, whenever we eat and drink.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians reflects how difficult that can be for us mere humans. This early Christian community clearly lacks understanding of the value of Holy Communion. Some among them did not recognize that in its truest form Communion is an invitation that offers an experience, if even for a few moments, of a peaceable kingdom, a time and in a place where all are equal – all matter –all are loved and beloved and all are invited to partake in the abundance of God's grace, love, and food for both body and soul.

As we eat this bread and drink this juice let us recognize this time for what it is an invitation to. We are invited to a banquet, a feast: A feast of abundance, of medicine, of joy, of sharing. It is a banquet for our bodies and our souls. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the power of our remembering and re-remembering we once were blind, but now see the bounty and beauty that is offered - that there is more than enough for all to partake, more than enough to share all that we have been given, all that we have so all will be fed, all will be nourished in body and soul. This morning, as we 'take and eat' and 'take and drink' may we

remember and re-member – let us take and let us share ...In the name of the one who first served us, may we also serve. Amen.