

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Prayers, Readings, Reflection.

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.” Rev Jonny



*Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you,
before you and within you.*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All **Amen.**

The Lord be with you

All **And also with you**

My brothers and sisters,
as we prepare to celebrate the presence of Christ
in word and sacrament,
let us call to mind and confess our sins.

Remember, Lord, your compassion and love,
for they are everlasting.

Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions,
but think on me in your goodness, O Lord,
according to your steadfast love.

Christ, have mercy.

All **Christ, have mercy.**

O keep my soul and deliver me;
let me not be put to shame, for I have put my trust in you.

Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon *you*,
pardon and deliver *you* from all *your* sins,
confirm and strengthen *you* in all goodness,
and keep *you* in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Collect for the day

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
All Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Exodus 16.2–4,9–15

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.'

Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, "Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining." ' And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God." ' '

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in

the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.'

Gospel Reading, from John 6.24–35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
All Praise to you, O Christ

Reflection

Over the summer months the readings we are given by our lectionary to share together in church all take on a particular flavour. Our gospel readings come from John's Gospel and focus on the teachings of Jesus in Chapter 6 where he speaks at great length about 'the bread of life'. We will hear passages from John 6 each Sunday. And our Old Testament readings are chosen to complement each of these – this week from Exodus, then Kings and Proverbs over the coming fortnight.

So this is a good opportunity for us to reflect on 'the bread of life' – the bread we take, bless, break and share each week. The centre of our worshiping life together is not the hymns or the prayers, the Creed or the Collect; it is the eucharist that defines us – the centre of our gravity is the meal Jesus commanded us to share perpetually in remembrance of him.

This week, I want to ask what the Eucharist means to us as a community. How it creates and curates our relational life together.

The theologian Richard Beck insists that, "Participation in the Lord's Supper is an inherently moral act. In the first century church, and in our own time, people who would never have associated with each other in the larger society sit as equals around the Table of the Lord...The Eucharist, therefore, ... becomes a profoundly subversive political event in the lives of the participants. The sacrament brings real people—divided in the larger world—into a sweaty, intimate, flesh-and-blood embrace where there shall be no difference between them and the rest."

Now I don't know about 'a sweaty, flesh-and-blood embrace' – but we have to admit that there is something intimate about the eucharist. I once saw a black and white postcard of our Queen's Coronation and the image showed Queen Elizabeth

and Prince Philip kneeling for communion. After all the pomp and pageantry; Queen and Prince knelt at the altar rail to receive the bread and wine, just as any of us would do. The whole imperial hierarchy was – for a moment – dissolved.

When the Hebrews wondered in the desert having escaped the clutches of the Pharaoh, it was not long before the community turned against itself. Arguments over leadership, provision, dashed expectations all reached boiling point. God responded by raining down Mana from Heaven. Not according to merit or privilege, but for everyone, everywhere, equally. It was the generosity of the gesture that allowed the community to heal and reform, ready for the journey ahead.

The Eucharist - the sign given by Christ of the new covenant – went further still. Not only is it a great social leveller – it often asks us to break down physical taboos as well.

When we have been able to share the common cup – that is a an incredibly audacious act of solidarity. Where else would. You share a drink from the same cup with a neighbour, let alone a stranger. But we do. Jesus commanded it.

Ironically, in the interests of public health, we have suspended the chalice in the time of COVID, but actually the common cup served the very function of breaking down the purity barriers that divided society. ‘I won’t share with them, because they are unclean!’ is an attitude that the communion cup seeks to negate. We all share, however clean or unclean we may be.

Some voices have been saying in recent months that we should consider using individual plastic cups of wine for communion - but how would you feel about that if I told you that the practice of individual cups developed during segregation in the Southern USA, when white folk refused to share a cup with people of colour....?

The broken bread and the common cup unite and unify us as the body of Christ. The power of the symbolism is just as important as the meal itself.

As I said last week – a shared meal creates community. This meal – the Eucharist of the Bread of Life – forms us as equals and beckons us across the lines that so often divide us.

We break bread to share in the body of Christ. Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Pray for one another – those in our church community

Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World

Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed

Pray for the dying, and those who mourn

Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs

Lord in your mercy

All **Hear our prayer**

The Intercessions may end as follows

Merciful Father

All **Accept these prayers**

for the sake of your son,

our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

The Peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.

Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.

Peace from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.

The peace of the triune God be always with you

All **and also with you.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

All **Our Father**

who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory

For ever and ever. Amen.

The Blessing.

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,

defend you on every side,

and guide you in truth and peace;

and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All **In the name of Christ. Amen.**