

DEVOTED TO COMMUNION

Series: Devoted to...
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Edgar King
Communion, Discipleship
Acts 2: 41-46, Luke 22:14-20

When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. I tell you now that I won’t eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.”

Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves. I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.”

He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

After supper, he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

Luke 22:14-20

Those were Jesus words at what has the last supper. And this has been practised by disciples all across the world since that time.

And when the church was first born, they did this every chance they got. Look at this

The community continually committed themselves to learn what the apostles taught them, gathering for fellowship, breaking bread, and praying. Everyone felt a sense of awe because the apostles were doing many signs and wonders among them. There was an intense sense of togetherness among all who believed; they shared all their material possessions in trust. They sold any possessions and goods that did not benefit the community and used the money to help everyone in need. They were unified as they worshipped at the temple day after day. In homes, they broke bread and shared meals with glad and generous hearts. The new disciples praised God, and they enjoyed the goodwill of all the people of the city. Day after day the Lord added to their number everyone who was experiencing liberation.

Acts 2

At the homes, they broke bread and shared meals with glad and generous hearts.

That breaking bread is referring to communion. And this was not a new practice. This was the usual Passover festival that Jews asked to remember God passing them over during a destructive plague in Egypt. There was a slaughtered lamb whose blood marked them for protection.

When Jesus comes to the scene, he shows that Passover will have a different meaning moving forward. Blood will be poured out again, but this time it was his. Flesh will be torn and body broken but this time it was his. And all who believe will be again be in God's covering.

And the biggest difference is this was the best deal. This was the one sacrifice that was going to finally set things right. That as going to finally upset the Kingdom of the Age and bring down the Kingdom of God.

And here is why we have often encouraged you to just use anything you have in your house, just make sure it is edible. Jesus did not reinvent this. He just redeemed it. God has a knack for communicating with us in ways we understand. It's called the incarnation.

He is always moving towards us. This is what it means for the Kingdom of God to be within reach. Even now, if you look around you, God is reaching out to you just where you are. It is in a familiar language, people you know, things you have been through; both the painful and the joyous.

And Jesus does this with communion. They were gonna have Passover anyway. God was meeting them at their table, at a meal that was planned for. Making the normal new, the natural supernatural.

And the context was a whole meal. And I think the beauty of this season is that for those who want to, in those small groups we gather or with family, we can have communion properly. Because we have planned meals anyway.

You see, it was never a piece of bread and sip of wine. It was a party, celebrating Jesus. As churches grew because of logistics, hygiene and costs and the need for people with the job I do to be in control, it shrunk to a sip of wine and piece of bread that only a person like me can give.

Sadly the church even forgot how to throw a good party. I think if there are people who should be renowned for good parties, for always hosting people, it should be believers. And as we share meals and break bread, God can meet us at the table.

A sip and nip were never it. They were sitting at a dinner table, a party and within the larger sharing, they shared wine and bread specifically to remember the last supper. And the church devoted itself to this. They did everything they could make sure they shared this.

It was such a spread that Paul, one of the Apostles had to write to one of the churches about this. He says some people were dishonouring communion with taking it unworthily. They would go to get drunk. That does not sound like a sip? They would eat like gluttons. That does not sound like a nip. This they committed themselves too.

How could you and your family devote yourselves to this? It could be that you join us every Sunday as you have breakfast together, that meals are crowned with the cup and bread of communion.

It could be your Friday night dinner as you begin resting at the weekend. Whatever it is, could you and your family devote yourselves to sharing communion?

And the grand story I have been telling us is if we are going to change the world in these generation shaping moments we will have to intentionally devote ourselves to certain things as disciples of Jesus that nothing in our culture will naturally encourage.

It is already hard enough for some families to have dinner together, let alone one of those dinners being when they specifically remind themselves of the sacrifice Jesus made. It's way easier to relegate that to the church. Let them give us communion.

Humanity has always had a habit of wanting to pay someone else to go between them and God. The best picture is once in the story of Israel, God wants to meet them and they are told to get ready. On that day the glory of God scares them. The smoke, the thunder. They tell Moses, their leader, "Do this, you meet with God then tell us what he says."

And we have carried that habit into this century where we want to box God to just the church building and hope he does not show up in our schools and our politics and finally, we want him out of our homes too. We want to believe right, we just do not want to follow right.

The invitation Jesus kept making was followed me. Not just believe these things. In fact, it seems to me, that it is following Jesus that births true faith in us. Otherwise what we will have is a religion, a philosophy that is easily shaken, easily interchangeable and cannot stand the test of time.

This is what these devotions are about. It is committing to actually follow Jesus by word and deed. Doing everything we can. That is how we change the world in a generation shaping season. Devotion to being together, every tongue tribe and nation. Devotion to God's word, devotion prayer, devotion to generosity, devotion to making telling about Jesus, devotion to doing the things he did and devotion to communion together.

But what's the deal with communion? Paul says that every time we share in communion we are declaring the death of Jesus until his return.

This is one way we pray 'God your Kingdom come'. We physically take part in God's Kingdom come on earth. The Judgement, the mercy, the power of resurrection and forgiveness. The power of healing and restoration. This is what communion embodies and symbolises.

Jesus says, "Do this to remember me." And it is more than just recalling to memory what He did but the exact opposite of dismembering.

His body was broken yet when we share in communion our dismembered bodies and hearts are re-membered again.

Sin tore us from God but every time we share in communion we are re-membered to him again.

We are the body of Christ so every time we share in communion we are joined to him, we are re-membered again.

The church is the body of Christ and every time we share in communion, though we are scattered, we are joined to each other, we are re-membered again.

And sometimes even in the family or communities of faith relationships are strained and in this, we are joined again, we are re-membered again.

A church that is healed and being healed. A church that is united and being united. A church that is forgiven and forgiving a church that is joined to Jesus; remembered to him, will change the world in this generation. Will you do everything it takes to make this part of your families devotion?

Let's get ready to share in communion. If you are with family, why don't you gather them? If you have never done it together before and it may feel awkward, tell them it was my idea.

And when Jesus first shared it with his disciples he talked about longing for it. It's a big deal when God says he is longing for something. I mean I know what it is to long for something. How much deeper must it feel for God to long for something?

Then he says Do this often in remembrance of me. This is so spiritual and deeply human at the same time. We all want to be seen, to be remembered. He was saying this, "My friends, do not forget me." Maybe he would have sung, "Don't you forget about me..." "I just wonder, do you ever, think of me anymore"

I like that Jesus just has his heart on his sleeve. He chooses vulnerability and lets his friends know that that dinner means something to him.

I say that because I realise how lonely and hurting this generation often is but few will risk vulnerability even with friends. Yet that's often the risk needed to for people to experience connection.

Actually not too far out of this scene he knows he is about to be arrested and his heart is heavy and he asks his friends to just stay up with him. Here was God saying, "You are my friends and right now I need you?"

How unafraid is God to open his heart to people? He who knows the human heart better than anyone and knows the kind of betrayal that sometimes lurks in there?

I guess what Jesus also knew is the capacity of love, healing, joy and connection that God has put in the hearts of human beings and that he can fan those flames? After all, we were made to be like Him.

For a lot of people, these have been very difficult times for emotional and mental health. Separation from loved ones. The real fear of hard economic times. We lack the distraction of crowds that often pacified us. I personally do. I pray that you will be re-membered and made whole. And we would love to pray with you.

The fear of infection for oneself or that of loved ones. Some have lost people they love. Or just other illness. As we share in the bread and the cup, I pray you are re-membered again.

What if at this table of communion, we do not just rush through it? What if it is not to be yet another practice or ritual? It is, but it is deeper than that.

Here we meet God again being vulnerable saying, “Hey, I have longed for this meal and I cannot wait for when e share it again in my presence?”

And maybe we are also being invited to a bit of vulnerability, not just with God, but Just like God be vulnerable with the people sharing our table. What matters to you? What hurts you today? What gives you a smile? What are you longing for? Where do you need help? What is it that needs to be said from your heart

Let's pray