

A Reflection from Revd Jane for Trinity 15

A lot of what I want to share comes from the book, 'The Power of Communion'¹ written by Beni Johnson, wife of Bill Johnson. This book was recommended to me some years ago and I have since read it several times and I would recommend it to you too. This obviously only scratches the surface on how powerful sharing in the Lord's Supper is but I do pray that for those who can come to the service, the Lord will minister to us as we do that very thing, so let us pray:

Lord we thank you for your love for us in giving us this symbol of the new covenant that was ushered in by your own blood. As we look into this more deeply we ask that you would come by your Spirit and join our hearts with yours that we may have a greater understanding of the power that you have given us through communion. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

Sometimes the words we say in the communion service can become so well known we almost say them by rote without really thinking about what we are doing. And it is good to remind ourselves that it was in the midst of Jesus' betrayal and impending death that he gathered his disciples round him, gave thanks and then through this simple act gave all believers a way to remember the New Covenant that was about to be made on the cross.

As believers in the New Covenant, we can celebrate all that Jesus has done and made available for the whole of humanity; we can also apply his blood to our families and communities, as well as ourselves. For myself I have found that communion can be an important part in praying for people and situations. For instance, several times when I have been praying with others we have taken communion to places the Lord has called us to go to and pray over because there is power in communion. We can remind ourselves that the devil has been defeated, and although there is a battle going on, the cross has the final say.

I remember one place the Lord sent us to - a high place - we prayed and sang and then one time we felt to share communion together and things really changed in that place. Instead of seeing the things that had been seen there before, people saw angels there, and it had and has a different feel to it. I have heard many similar testimonies from those who believe in the power of communion to change things.

An important part of taking the body and blood of Jesus is reminding ourselves of whose we are and all that he has done for us. As we partake in it we can take hold of all that it means for us - forgiveness, wholeness, strength, health, sufficiency. It realigns us with Christ and proclaims the reality of heaven over every area of our lives...I'm a daughter, a son, of the King, I'm strong in him, the promises of God have all been fulfilled in Jesus my Saviour. When we partake we need to let the reality of the New Covenant wash over us, changing us - changing our mindsets and belief systems.

As a Methodist I believe, as John Wesley did, of the grace that is present in communion. It's a place of encounter. It isn't about the piece of bread and the red juice but about the power of the Living God - the power of covenant and that Jesus gave himself in the ultimate covenant. The body and blood of Jesus shed for us - for you and me - think about that for a moment...The power in the blood of Jesus hasn't lessened in 2,000 years - it is still as powerful today!

I have spoken before of cutting covenant and of how blood covenant is a covenant of connection, protection and provision. Blood carries and sustains life and so a blood covenant offers a promise that enhances life, and yet, at the same time, with the potential cost of life. Jesus shed his own blood to cut a new covenant with his creation - to bridge the divide of sin that put a chasm between

humanity and God which nothing else could bridge. As we read Genesis 15 we see this new covenant both echoes and fulfills the promises made to Abraham.

Instead of coming to earth in smoke and fire, God sent his son as a human being to walk with us. Instead of a sacrificial animal, God offered his own Son whose body would be broken as the greatest and perfect sacrifice. It's interesting that Jesus went to the Temple in the week before he was arrested. The lambs that were to be sacrificed were brought to the Temple to be inspected to make sure they were perfect, unblemished. Jesus the Lamb of God went to the Temple, made himself known, was inspected and was rejected yet was indeed unblemished and was the perfect sacrifice - the Lamb of God!

Through Jesus we have access to God our Father in a way that Abraham - who was called a friend of God - could only dream of. We have become not only heirs of Abraham but co-heirs with Christ. What Jesus did for us on the cross was unconditional - he won't change his mind - but accessing the fullness of the blessing of this covenant is our choice entirely.

When we take communion we are reminding ourselves of his sacrifice and the way the new covenant affects every area of our lives. The blood of Jesus gave us freedom and authority and it paid for everything. We can enter the presence of God without fear and without an intermediary. The blood of Jesus wiped out the power of sin and the judgement that leads to death and brings us back into our identity as sons and daughters of God.

Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life' then he offers that bread, breaking it, saying 'this is my body'. The price for our wholeness has been paid and we have access to the transformative power and grace of our Saviour, Jesus. We can take communion in remembrance of all that he has done and look toward the future with hope, but we do it with as much reverence and honour as the reality demands and with a heart full of gratitude and thankfulness.

And so we are going to pray and give thanks to Jesus for all that he has done...

Lord, we want to declare that you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world...that you offered yourself up for the whole world. We are so grateful to you for your grace and your love which took you to the cross... (spend time giving thanks to God in your own words)

We remember Lord that in Exodus 12 the people were saved not by having a lamb in the house, or even by killing the lamb, but by applying the blood of the lamb to the doorposts and lintels of their house. In the same way we have to apply the blood of the Lamb of God, to the doorposts and lintels of our hearts. (If this is something you have never done before then choose today to do so - know that the blood of Jesus was shed for you and know that you are his).

Give thanks for the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus that enables us to be called sons and daughters of God. Amen.

1 The Power of Communion Accessing Miracles through the Body and Blood of Jesus by Beni Johnson