

Communion

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By Alban Smith Adams



I recently finished Phillip Yancey's book *What's So Amazing About Grace*. It has given me a new understanding of the meaning of grace. If you would like to borrow my copy, please do ask. This greater understanding has also helped me realise a little more what Communion means and why we share in it regularly. I hope this musing will allow those of you who feel a little lost at why Christians insist on sharing a tasteless wafer and cup of grape juice once a month on a Sunday, to understand a little more of what Communion truly means.

On the evening of the Passover, Jesus and his disciples gathered in a room, as they were all reclining at the table, Jesus took some bread, broke it, and said: "Take and eat; this is my body." He then took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (c.f. Matthew 26:26-28)

The cup passed around the disciples. It went to Simon, the Zealot; a Jewish nationalist and violent freedom fighter, he could be seen as the equivalent of an IRA fighter in more recent times, and he drank from the cup. It passed to Matthew, a tax collector, a man who voluntarily partnered with the invaders and taxed his fellow Jews, the very opposite of Simon, and he drank from the cup. It passed to the brothers, James and John, nicknamed the "Sons of thunder" for their anger and selfish ambition (See Luke 9:51-56 and Mark 10:35-45), they slept as Jesus pleaded for his life in the Garden of Gethsemane, they rejected Jesus when he most needed them; they drank from the cup. The cup passed to Peter, who promised he would never abandon Jesus but later denied their friendship three times to protect himself, and he drank. It passed to Thomas, called Didymus (a height joke perhaps?), the man who refused to believe Jesus' resurrection until he had pushed his fingers into the holes in Jesus' hands and into the wound in his side, and Thomas drank. And the cup passed to Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and he drank.

As I thought about what they all shared at that table, I realised that they all shared in deep deep sin, and they also all shared in the cup Jesus gave them. This cup was just a hint of what was to come, as the next day Jesus was crucified, his flesh was broken, and his blood was shed. I used to think that to come and take Communion you had to be perfect, free from sin, from shame and even free from hunger. I now realise that, though we should pursue these things, Communion is the opposite of this. It is a time for us not to be joined in Christian moral perfection, but to be aware of our sin and our brokenness, to admit that we are just like the disciples, we are people who struggle with anger, greed, lust, and selfishness. But though we are all of these things, we take Communion as a way of remembering that by the blood of Jesus Christ, that he spilled on that cross, we can one day stand before our Father in heaven and hear him say "well done, my good and faithful servant" (c.f. Luke 19:17).

Communion is the recognition of our brokenness and the marvel at God's infinite love shown by the death of his son on the cross.

For the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, which is often used in Communion, see Matthew 26:17-35 and Luke 22:7-38

The Power of the Cross (Song by Stuart Townend & Keith Getty)

Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day:

Christ on the road to Calvary.

Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten,

then nailed to a cross of wood.

This, the pow'r of the cross: Christ became sin for us.

Took the blame, bore the wrath – we stand forgiven at the cross.

Oh, to see the pain written on Your face,

Bearing the awesome weight of sin.

Every bitter thought, every evil deed

crowning Your bloodstained brow.

Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath

quakes as its Maker bows His head.

Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life;

"Finished!" the victory cry.

*Oh, to see my name written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live,
won through Your selfless love.*

(©2005 Stuart Townend & Keith Getty - YouTube video [here](#))

(Image: *The Last Supper* by Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, from [Wikimedia.org](#))