

The Intimacy of Communion

Goldstone Church – 26-Jun-16 10:30am

Matthew 26:26-30

Introduction

What is it about Communion that draws us closer and nearer to Jesus Christ?
We find some insights in the Bible: Matthew 26:26-30

1. Communion provides a **PHYSICAL INTIMACY** (v.26-27)

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you.’” (Matthew 26:26-27)

When we celebrate Communion, we eat and drink, i.e. we engage in a physical activity during communion. Jesus didn’t say, “Have some *theoretical* bread”, or, “Have some *imaginative* wine”. Jesus instructs his disciples to literally eat, and to literally drink.

When we come and worship Jesus Christ at the Communion table, our physical senses are actively involved. We see the bread and wine. We *touch* the bread and wine. We *taste* the flavours of the bread and wine. We physically worship Jesus.

Many people are a cautious about getting physically involved in worship. However, this was never a problem in the Old Testament. 2 Samuel 6:14 says that King David was “*dancing before the Lord with all his might*”. That’s physical worship.

Jesus used meal times to be up-close-and-personal with those that He loved. There was a physical aspect to when Jesus met with people.

This time around the Communion table is an intimate time; through the elements of the bread and wine, we are physically linked with Jesus Christ. He gives us bread to eat, and wine to drink.

2. Communion provides an **INTELLECTUAL INTIMACY** (v.26)

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’” (Matthew 26:26)

Jesus gave the bread and wine to his disciples. In other words, much thought had gone into the process. It was a mental and intellectual activity.

In the Old Testament, wisdom and intellect were greatly valued and sought after. For example, the book of Proverbs was for “*attaining wisdom and discipline*”. 1 Kings 10:24 says that “*All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.*”

Jesus instructed his disciples to “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” (Matthew 22:37)

This time around the Communion table is an intimate time; through the elements of the bread and wine, we are intellectually stimulated and mentally linked with Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus Christ is the source of all wisdom.

3. Communion provides an **EMOTIONAL INTIMACY** (v.29)

“I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matthew 26:29)

This phrase seems a slightly unusual way for Jesus to end the Last Supper. Only Matthew’s gospel records this emotive sentence: Jesus predicting his upcoming death.

This was not the only time that Jesus predicted his death. In Matthew 16:21, Jesus predicts his death, resulting in Peter having a massive argument with Jesus. Perhaps Matthew includes this sentence in the Last Supper, as a reference to the previous event.

Jesus was fully human, so he expressed every emotion. For example:

- Jesus felt and expressed **Compassion** (Mark 8:2)
- Jesus felt and expressed **Anger** (Mark 3:5)
- Jesus felt and expressed **Grief** (John 11:36)
- Jesus felt and expressed **Joy** (Luke 10:21)
- Jesus felt and expressed **Love** (Mark 10:21)

Jesus Christ is the Almighty Son of God, the Maker and Creator of the Universe. And Jesus Christ is also human, full of emotion. He feels what we feel.

This time around the Communion table is an intimate time; through the elements of the bread and wine, we are emotionally linked with Jesus Christ. He expresses His love to us – which raises us to respond and express our love for Him.

4. Communion provides a **SPIRITUAL INTIMACY** (v.30)

“When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Matthew 26:30)

At the end of the Last Supper, Jesus and the disciples sang together. Which raises the question, what song/s did they sing?

The answer is found in the traditions of the Jewish Passover meal. What is known as the “Egyptian Hallel Psalms” is sung at Passover. This is Psalm 113 to Psalm 118. Before the Passover meal is eaten, the first half of the “Hallel” is sung (Psalm 113 and 114). After the meal, the second half of the “Hallel” is sung (Psalm 115 to 118).

The last 4 verses of Psalm 118 would have been the last few verses that Jesus and his disciples would have sung, possibly on their way to the Mount of Olives.

Psalm 118:26-29:

*²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
From the house of the Lord we bless you.*

*²⁷ The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.*

²⁸ *You are my God, and I will give thanks;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

²⁹ *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures for ever.*

These are wonderfully uplifting verses -

- As Jesus is making His way into the darkest valley of His earthly life, the disciples are singing, "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*". (v.26)
- As they walk around the Garden of Gethsemane, in the blackest of midnight hours, they sing, "*The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us.*" (v.27)
- With Jesus only hours away from the screams for Him to be crucified, the disciples sang about Palm Sunday, "*With boughs [and branches] in hand, join in the festal procession, up to the horns of the altar*". Jesus: the sacrifice of praise & honour. (v.27)
- As Jesus is about to start the day when He expresses His ultimate act of love for each one of us on the cross, the disciples sing, "*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever*". (v.29)

What a wonderful declaration of truth and love.

The singing at the Last Supper was not a random collection of music. These were authentic worshippers, worshipping their Saviour in spirit and in truth.

This time around the Communion table is an intimate time; through the elements of the bread and wine, we are spiritually linked with Jesus Christ. We come in worship of the One who's love endures for ever.

CONCLUSION

In Anglican churches, the 'Prayer of Humble Access' is often said before receiving the bread and the wine; the text is based on Matthew 8:8 and Mark 7:28. The vocabulary of the prayer might be old-fashioned, but the meaning is still relevant and powerful.

Let us pray:

We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.

We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.

But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.

Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body,
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,

and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.

Amen

When we celebrate Communion, we draw close to our ever-loving Saviour, Jesus Christ. There is a ...

- **Physical Intimacy.** Our body worships Jesus
- **Intellectual Intimacy.** Our mind worships Jesus.
- **Emotional Intimacy.** Our feelings worship Jesus.
- **Spiritual Intimacy.** Our heart and soul worship Jesus.

Let us celebrate together. Jesus is here.

Amen