

Connecting with one another – Sunday 28th June

*This morning's Service liturgy contains readings, prayer, worship songs (to either listen to if you are able to access YouTube or simply to read and reflect upon) and a reflection. This morning will also include **Communion** so please do have some bread and juice/wine ready.*

Obviously during this time, when we are unable to physically gather for worship, however, if you are able to, please do try and engage with this liturgy at 10.30am so there is a sense that we are still 'meeting together'. We will also be doing an online version if you would like to join in with that, but if you would prefer to do in your own household or by yourself that that is of course fine. (We will meet via Zoom at 10:30 AM <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86358564846> Meeting ID: 863 5856 4846 (no password required) Please feel free to use this material however you would like to, pausing if you need to or adapting/enlarging if you feel so led.

If you are able, you might find it helpful to have a candle that you could light, maybe a bible to hand and then also a quiet place (and of course you can also have coffee and biscuits in sharing in fellowship time afterwards!!).

10.30: [Take a couple minutes just to be quiet and welcome the presence of the Lord.]

Lighting the candle:

We light this candle as a symbol of your presence here with us Lord.

We light it recognising that you are light that illuminates the darkness in our lives

We light it recognising that you are fire that purges and purifies our lives

We light it recognising that you are heat that stirs us and fills our lives with passion to see a better world around us

Come Lord Jesus, burn brightly in our time together today we pray

Amen

[Light the Candle]

Intro This morning as we gather together – whether that be in our Zoom gathering, or in our households or even simply just by ourselves, we do so as the body of Christ.

We come and recognise Jesus as the head of this body and as we share together, we look to him to lead and to direct us in his way.

But we recognise that his way is not always the way that we want to go or to be.

Jesus said:

'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.' (Mark 8:34-38)

The way of the cross is not natural for us. Indeed, as Sals reflected last week much of our attention, or the attention of those around us, is about the *saving* of our lives rather than surrendering them to our Lord Jesus. And this often creates a struggle for us as we wrestle with the culture and values around us yet seeking to follow him. However, this is the way that those who would call themselves his disciples are called to follow. As we seek to be 'little Christs', we follow the lead of our head – Jesus, and we seek too to follow the path that he took, and we trust in his promise that as we do, then we truly find life and life in all of its fullness.

This morning, we are going to be reflecting upon this, focussing our time together around the act of communion. We will be reflecting upon the sacrifice of King Jesus, for our sakes and for our sin, and reflecting upon what it means to follow him.

As we approach then this act of remembrance in sharing of bread and juice or wine, let us first listen to a song of invitation to us all, and following that Psalm 22

Sing: *Remembrance (The Communion Song)*

(to watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNgsO53aITs>)

Oh how could it be
That my God would welcome me
Into this mystery
Say take this bread take this wine
Now the simple made divine
For any to receive

By Your mercy we come to Your table
By Your grace You are making us faithful

Chorus

Lord we remember You
And remembrance leads us to worship
And as we worship You
Our worship leads to communion
We respond to Your invitation
(We respond to Your invitation)
We remember You

See His body His blood
Know that He has overcome
Ev'ry trial we will face
And none too lost to be saved
None too broken or ashamed
All are welcome in this place

Dying You destroyed our death
Rising You restored our life
Lord Jesus come in glory
Lord Jesus come in glory
Lord Jesus come in glory
Lord Jesus come in glory

CCLI Song # 5484616 Matt Maher | Matt Redman

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Let us now listen to or read the words from Psalm 22. This is not only prophetic of the death of Jesus upon the cross of course, but also gives us language that articulates some of the anguish, anxiety and tension that many of us feel in trying to be obedient to Christ in a world that thinks and operates very differently.

Read: **Psalms 22**

For the director of music. To the tune of 'The Doe of the Morning'. A psalm of David.

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.

³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.

⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

⁸ 'He trusts in the Lord,' they say,
'let the Lord rescue him.'

Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him.'

⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.

¹⁰ From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

¹³ Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.

My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.

¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

¹⁹ But you, Lord, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

²⁰ Deliver me from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.

²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

- ²² I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.
- ²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honour him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
- ²⁴ For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.
- ²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you I will fulfil my vows.
- ²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the Lord will praise him –
may your hearts live for ever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,
- ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him –
those who cannot keep themselves alive.
- ³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.
- ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!

Reflection:

In a few moments we are going to share bread and juice or wine together. And as we do so we are going to be using the words from 1Corinthians 11. These verses are the most frequently used when sharing communion, and they will probably be heard in different gatherings in worship up and down the country today. The likelihood is of course is that you have heard them before, and if you have grown up in church, possibly even hundreds or thousands of times before, but I wonder if you have ever really thought about what it says?

You see it begins with the words *'The Lord Jesus, on the night Jesus was betrayed, took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it...'* (1Cor 11:23,24) and I wonder if you have ever thought why the apostle Paul began his introduction to this profound sacrament with the words 'on the night he was betrayed'? It seems like quite a strange line to start with doesn't it? I mean, I think that if I was going to write it I would have said, something like, 'on the night that Jesus washed his disciples feet' or, 'on the night that Jesus prayed for all to be one' or even, 'on the night before Jesus gave his life in order to save the whole world', but no, Paul writes, 'on the night he was betrayed' and I find a strange beginning.

Of course, as I'm sure I don't need to remind you, Paul is referring to the night before Jesus's crucifixion, where, one of his chosen disciples, Judas Iscariot, would betray him to the authorities. Judas has been with Jesus three years. He has learnt all that Jesus had to teach him, and we have no reason not to assume that he was also a full participant in sharing the good news of the kingdom and also performing miracles in this time of discipleship. Indeed it appears that he wasn't even suspected of being one who would betray Jesus as none of the disciples seemed able to guess who it would be (John 13:22) We know though that Judas held and looked after the money bag for the disciples, and that this was a source of temptation and weakness for him, even helping himself to the money. We read this in John 12, where we see that it was

Judas who was the one moaning about the 'waste of money' when perfume was extravagantly poured over Jesus' feet, and that his motives were not as pure as they may have appeared to those around him. And, perhaps because of his love of money, we read that Judas went to the chief priests and agreed with them, for the price of thirty pieces of silver, to hand Jesus over to them. In John's gospel, we see that Judas is still included right up until the end; Jesus washes his feet along with all the rest and indeed he himself is included in that Passover meal – the last supper with Jesus. And it is sometime during this meal (the meal that we now remember and celebrate in communion), that Judas left the table and went out to get the authorities to hand Jesus over. Later in the story we read of Judas bringing the arresting party to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, and it is here that Judas identifies Jesus by kissing him, before Jesus is arrested and the countdown to his execution begins. Soon after this Judas realises just what he has done and after giving the money back to the chief priests and the elders, he then, out of his guilt and utter despair, goes and takes his own life. And this is what Paul starts with as he instructs those who are to enact and celebrate this act of remembrance. He is reminding them that in the context of Jesus dying for our sins, for us being reconciled to the Father, for us being invited to the now new way possible for us to live – it is in the context of a betrayal.

And I think that by now the reason for this is becoming obvious.

When we come to share communion together, we must do so with the recognition that as we come to share in the death of Jesus, that we come only by his grace.

For we have all fallen short of the glory of God, and the reality is that all of us in various ways have, and continue to, betray Jesus. The Greek word here translated as 'betrayed' means to 'give over to' or to 'give up to'. In other words, we put Jesus to one side as we put our faith and trust in something or someone else. We push Jesus out from being Lord and make our own self 'lord' in his place – making our judgements, our desires, our pleasures the most important thing for us. And this is exactly what Paul is saying to the church in Corinth. They are gathering for this meal, but in doing so some are feasting out of selfishness that leaves others without any food at all. This is not the way of Jesus, and Paul starts with betrayal to remind them that all are sinners, yet, all are invited into this grace and forgiveness.

'the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed...' – selfishness, materialism, hedonism, greed, corruption, thinking more about self than others, betrayal

Sound familiar?

This is all of us. And if we deny it then we are fooling ourselves (1John 1:8)

However.

Paul doesn't actually start with 'betrayal'. Actually, he starts with 'the Lord Jesus...'. You see this meal is a meal that is grace. This meal recognises and celebrates that in the midst of our sin God acts – indeed has acted. He has taken the initiative. He has surrendered himself to death, even death on a cross. And he has made it possible for us all to be set free from all of our guilt and shame. Jesus was betrayed and we should never forget that this is us. But Jesus went to the cross and gave his life for us – body broken and blood shed, that we can be set free.

Have you ever sold Jesus out? Then this meal is for you

Ever put yourself above the King of kings and Lord of lords? Then this meal is for you

Ever done something that, even though appears wonderful (a kiss), is actually driven by motives of selfishness and self-centredness? Then this meal is for you

Ever been more concerned about looking after yourself more than putting God or others first? Then this meal is for you

Are you bearing guilt or pain at how you have hurt others? Then this meal is for you

Are you bearing pain and unforgiveness in how others have hurt you? Then this meal is for you

So before we come to share communion together this morning, let us take a few moments to pause and reflect as to what God may be saying to you today:

Are you putting yourself in Jesus' place?

Are you bearing burdens of guilt and shame?

[Take a few moments to consider this and bring it before the Lord in prayer]

Communion

Let us come to the table

Paul writes:

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Let's pray:

Lord, as we come to partake of the bread and the wine, we come in meekness of heart and humility of spirit, knowing that we cannot approach You in our own righteousness, but only because of Your great goodness and gracious mercy, in sending Your only begotten Son, to die on the cross in our place and to pay the price for our sin.

Thank You that You are a tender-hearted God, and that Your nature is always to show mercy to those who are justly deserving of Your wrath and punishment.

As we partake of the symbols of bread and wine, we eat and drink in remembrance of Him Who died for us and rose again, knowing that He has become to us, both our meat and our drink. Help us to live in newness of life and to walk worthy before You all the days of our lives. This we ask in Jesus' name,
Amen.

"the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me'"

Let us take this bread and in breaking and sharing it together let us do so with thankful and grateful hearts, recognising God's love for us all

[take the bread and eat]

"In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

Let us take this wine/juice and in drinking it together let us do so with thankful and grateful hearts, recognising God's love for us all

[take the cup and share]

Amen

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, what a privilege to be able to come before Your throne of grace and partake of the precious sacraments of bread and wine, in remembrance of Your atoning sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

Thank You for dying for us on the cross and paying the enormous price for our sins, so that we may be forgiven of all of our faults and receive Your indwelling life.

May we never forget the enormous price that was paid on our behalf. May we never forget that we have been bought with a price, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we live for Him from this day on, knowing that Your body was broken and Your blood was spilt for us.

Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Over the last few weeks, we have heard a lot on the news about how we should respond to the historical slave trade. We will close this service with a song written by a slave trader – John Newton. This is not to celebrate his part in this horrific time in our history, but moreover to recognise that he himself came to realise his sins, found forgiveness at the cross of Jesus and went on to campaign against the barbarity of slavery. It was his experience of God's grace that caused him to write this song. Amazing grace.

Sing:

Amazing grace

(to watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4qbmPpfG6s>)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers toils and snares
I have already come
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun

CCLI Song # 4737522 John Newton | John P. Rees | Mark Roach

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If you would like to talk about any of the issues in this liturgy, please do contact me to arrange a time to chat and to pray.

Benediction

*Almighty and ever-living God,
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
And now, Father, send us out
to do the work you have given us to do,
to love and serve you
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen*