

Good morning and a very warm welcome to our Communion service today, whether you are here in person or online, or indeed a visitor, we hope you will feel at home with us.

Our service this morning is being led by John Briggs, who is well known to us all, a long standing church member here and of course Editor of 'Open to God, Open to All', the 150th Anniversary history book on Tyndale. Thank you, John, for taking our worship today, and we look forward to sharing this time together with you and Communion.

This coming week as usual, we have our Tuesday coffee shop taking place from 10am until 12 noon here in the sanctuary. Do come along and enjoy this time of refreshments and conversation.

On Wednesday night at time@tyndale, the evening is titled, 'Poetry for Springtime'. We would encourage all those coming to look out their favourite springtime poem and share it during the evening. Or just come along and enjoy an evening of poetry, with refreshments starting to be served at 7.30pm and the poetry starting at 8pm.

A notice about Time@tyndale the week after, the 11th May. We have a speaker from Unseen UK coming to talk about their work. During the evening Jo Eades will give an overview of what slavery is, where it happens, how exploiters recruit and control their victims, and what Unseen UK does and what the public can do in the fight against slavery. It will no doubt be a very interesting and informative evening, where we are told, 'It is not always a cheery subject, but there is hope'. Do put the date in your diary, to come along and find out about the work of Unseen UK.

On Thursday we have our online coffee shop, which starts at 11am. The details of how to join this time of informal chat are on our website.

On the 10th May our monthly church meeting we will be including our annual general meeting. Along with the reports on activities taking place at present, we will also have an election and be voting for the post of Treasurer. We have one nomination, which is that of our present Treasurer, Julian West.

Thank you.

As we prepare for worship we affirm our faith in the presence of our Risen Lord:

BPW 3 'As we are gathered'

Gathered in Christ's name we remember all that Jesus did for our salvation in Charles Wesley's hymn

BPW 220 'All you that pass by'

Prayers: Petition

Risen Lord Jesus,	<i>You walked with friends on their journey</i>
And explained to them the scriptures,	<i>Warm our heart with your Living Word.</i>
Risen Lord Jesus,	<i>you sat down at table in their home</i>
In this fellowship	<i>Be our guest and transform our lives by your living presence</i>
Risen Lord Jesus	<i>You took bread and gave thanks,</i>
broke it and gave it to them	<i>Then the disciples recognised who you were</i>
So Lord Jesus be known to us in the breaking of bread,	
<i>Feed us with your living bread that we may ever be witnesses to your risen life. AMEN</i>	

Confession

**As we gather at your table, Lord,
We confess that we have failed to be the people you intended us to be
That we have not lived the lives we ought to have lived**

Father, forgive

**Too often we have tried to live on the wrong side of Easter,
Living with faithless doubt and uncertainty,**

Father, forgive

Show us again the empty grave that we may know that Jesus is alive

And that we may find new hope and life in him. AMEN

Assurance of Forgiveness

Now listen, Here is good news

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner,

to forgive you in your failure, to accept you just as you are,

to set you free from evil's power and make you what you were meant to be.

Listen to him for through him his Father says to all who come to him

as you have come to him

'You are accepted, You are forgiven, I have set you free.

Thank you, Lord.

And now, as those whose sins have been forgiven, we join together in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Hymn BPW 437 '**I come with joy**' Tune Dove of Peace CG 57

We hear the Word of God:

our OT scripture is Isaiah's prophecy concerning his Suffering Servant [Isaiah 53 v2 -9](#)

And from the New Testament :[Luke24 v 13-35](#)

Spurgeon's Communion hymn 'Among us our beloved stands' BPW 427

Sermon

The celebration of communion by different Christian churches varies widely. Varied names signify diverse emphases – Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, the Breaking of Bread, the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, the Mass. None of these titles excludes any of the others – for example the word 'Eucharist' simply means 'thanksgiving', whilst the word Mass, which sounds very catholic, simply refers to the dismissal of the congregation at the end of the service to witness in the world.

The frequency of celebration also varies very considerably with those churches which have their early history in monasticism often celebrating daily, whereas the Church of Scotland used to have only an annual celebration. But this was one of great significance with preparatory services beginning on the previous Thursday, with the main celebration on the Sunday, and a service of thanksgiving for the sacrament on the Monday following. A friend of mine who was in parish ministry for all his career tells me he had hardly been to a communion service before he was confirmed when the normal Sunday service in so many parish churches was matins and sermon. His own practice only changed with the spread of the parish communion movement in the 1960s.

Baptist practice has changed too – when I was young we had communion twice a month, once in the morning and once in the evening, but most often the service was a sort of add-on to the preaching service – with a first benediction separating the two, and some of the congregation leaving at that point. There was one church I used to preach at, in Burslem, not a Baptist church I hasten to say, when I was happily invited to preach at the worship service, but asked to leave before the church members only took communion.

An interesting question to pose is to ask when the Lord's Supper as a sustaining meal was reduced to the symbolic communion rite with which we are familiar, the ceremonial cube of bread and thimble of grape juice we often have set before us. Apparently it was very early, as suggested in I Corinthians 11 – a passage often taken as an authority for describing how the primitive apostolic church celebrated the Lord's Supper, for the context for that record was dangerous divisions within the Corinthian church – for it has been suggested that what Paul is referring to here is the refusal of a few rich members to sit down next to the poor, some of whom may have been their own slaves. Be that as it may be, Paul makes it clear that a vital precondition for the celebration of the Lord's Supper is love of one another, due mutual respect, without hierarchy of class or wealth or intelligence. Indeed this meal which brought the church together was properly originally called a love feast. The intention was that it should have been a wonderful example of sharing - all bringing what they could and in perfect fellowship eating to the common good. In the event the rich members over- consumed whilst the poorest remained hungry. So the church's koinonia – that remarkable Greek word which means both sharing and fellowship, communion and community, stewardship and partnership – far from being manifested was revealed as non-existent – for an unredeemed selfishness was seen still to pervade the life of the church spoiling both its inner relationships and its outward witness. Because there was no community there was no sharing, no partnership, no fellowship, and Holy Communion became an unholy display of selfhood. Since this is what the love feast has descended to, Paul tells the Corinthians it is better that church members should satisfy their appetites at home before coming to the Lord's table where all must be equal.

At the Reformation, fundamental differences in theology between Catholics and Reformers emerged. At a vital meeting in 1641, however, much agreement was secured except on the communion service where the two sides took two different texts to be all-important. Whilst for protestants the vital text was 'Do this in memory of me', for the catholics it was the key affirmation, 'This is my body', which became the basis for what became known as 'transubstantiation', namely the teaching that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ.

A good way of summarising what we as Baptists believe about Holy Communion, or 'The Lord's Supper' is to think about it in terms of its three tenses. And the first is the HISTORICAL, that which relates to the *past*, the things that we are to recall when we meet at Christ's table, and here Paul is particularly helpful for he recalls how 'the Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread and after giving thanks to God, broke it and said, 'This is my body

which is broken for you; do this as a memorial of me. In the same way, he took the cup after supper and said, 'This is the new covenant sealed in my blood'. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' So above all when we meet around the table we are to *remember*, to recall his sacrifice, not so much any physical change in the elements but what is signified by the action taken – his body broken, his blood poured-out for the sins of the world. Thus when the bread is broken and when the wine is poured out, we evoke his giving of himself, body and blood, on Calvary, the immeasurable cost of our salvation.

But of course we also remember that on the third day he rose from the dead and triumphed over the grave, appearing to the disciples, breaking bread with them – thus every time we break bread we celebrate his death, but also rejoice in his resurrection, for cross and empty tomb belong together as the centre of our faith.

But there is a second tense to this celebration and that I would call the SACRAMENTAL and that concerns the *present*, for when we meet to celebrate we meet around His table at His invitation and once again we dare to believe that, as at Emmaus, and as on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he will make himself known as bread is broken, prayer is offered and wine drunk. For is that not what communion is all about, - communion with the Risen Christ, and, in Him, with one another? And that is why I would take issue with those more extreme protestants who talk of communion as a 'mere memorial', and negatively deny Christ's presence at the table as if to suggest a 'real absence' rather than a 'real presence'. By contrast, I like to think about this service as a time of *Holy Rendezvous*, that here, in some special way, difficult to define, but none the less real, we meet with our Risen Lord and receive his blessing. You see there is all the difference in the world between *the Last Supper*, the Passover meal which Jesus ate with his disciples all those many years ago, and *the Lord's Supper*, the meal where Jesus still meets with his followers and friends, for we worship not a dead leader but a risen Lord, who has conquered death and now campaigns for life. All this was embraced in the language with which Baptists have traditionally made the invitation, with some such language as 'The Lord Jesus invites all those who love him and desire to be his true disciples to meet with him around his table' – the table a place of *holy rendezvous*, where in broken bread and poured out wine we recognise the presence of the Risen Lord.

I Corinthians 11 also provides the third tense – Paul concludes his account of the institution of the feast with the words 'For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he come'. Those last three words point to the third tense of communion – using a long theological word, the ESCHATOLOGICAL, that is the looking forward to the final fulfilment of all that God has promised, and so, to past and present we add *the future tense*, for, 'Everyone who comes to the Lord's Table confesses that they believe that the glorified Lord will come again from heaven.' Having witnessed his humble birth in Bethlehem at his first coming, keeping watch at Calvary, and encountering the Risen Lord on Easter morning, we wait now for his second coming, this time with power and glory, to claim his own.

Another way of expressing this is to say that our meeting around his table is in anticipation of that great banquet in heaven which is the wedding feast of the Lamb. In the synoptic gospels Jesus says to the disciples at the Last Supper that he will never again drink from the fruit of the vine until that day when he will drink it new with them in the kingdom of his Father, another indication of looking forward to God's coming kingdom and the feast that will celebrate its coming. But there is also a sense in which God's kingdom is already here – do we not pray for it every time we use the Lord's Prayer, praying 'Your kingdom come'? The kingdom is coming as God works in our lives to do his will, but will always be incomplete until Christ's return. And until that day comes we come time and again to his table to receive not just our daily bread but also the spiritual food of the kingdom as we recall the grace of our Incarnate Lord, born to bring us the good news of the kingdom, dying to restore us to the love of our heavenly Father, and rising so that by the power of His Spirit we may be His Body in the world today.

So the three tenses of our communion celebration:

We look back with thankfulness – and it is that thankfulness which is spelt out for Christians of other traditions in the word, Eucharist.

Secondly, we meet with our Risen Lord in joyful fellowship at this place of *Holy Rendezvous*.

And then, thirdly, we look forward in eager anticipation to that perfect future he has prepared for us who know so much about the imperfections of this present world, with our constant prayer, 'Come Lord Jesus, come. Amen.'

OFFERING AND GRACE

Song 'Broken for me'

Janet Lunt

INSTITUTION

So let us hear how St Paul describes the origins of this sacred meal – 'On the night of his arrest the Lord Jesus took bread and after giving thanks to God he broke it and said 'This is my body broken for you; do this in memory of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper and said, 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood which was shed for you. Whenever you drink this, do this in memory of me.' For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'.

INVITATION

We come to this table not because we must but because we may, come not to make a statement about your own virtue but rather as testimony to your love of the Lord Jesus and desire to be his true disciple,

come not because you are strong but because you are weak, not because you have any claim upon heaven's rewards but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven's mercy and help.

And now that the supper of the Lord is spread before you lift up your minds and hearts above all faithless fears and cares and let this broken bread and poured-out wine be to you the witnesses and signs of the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and at this table consecrate your lives afresh to the coming of God's kingdom and for the strength so to act.

And so as we meet around this table

We remember in broken bread and poured out wine

The life and death of Jesus, our Saviour and our Lord

Here we remember

The hands that touched the untouchable, healed those who were hurting, and rejected all acts of violence,

The feet that got dirty on city streets and on the lakeside shore,

The arms that welcomed the stranger and embraced the outcast,

The eyes that blazed fiercely against all injustice,

But could cry over a city's failure to remain true to its calling

God's only Son who gave his life for sinners,

Who was betrayed, abandoned and denied by those who were his disciples

The Christ whom no grave could contain

Who on the third day rose from the dead

And who meets us today around this, his table.

Hallelujah, Christ is Risen indeed

BROKEN BREAD

As Jesus did we break bread remembering that Jesus freely gave his life for a broken world that all those who come to this table may be made whole again.

We eat and celebrate and as the bread is brought to us

POURED OUT WINE

The wine poured out represents Christ's blood shed for us, his life given that we may receive the new life of the kingdom. We retain the cup that we may drink together, one body in Christ

The wine of the new covenant spilt for the forgiveness of sin – drink all of it

Prayer.

For the bread that we have eaten, For the wine that we have tasted,
For the life that you have given,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, We will praise you.

For the life of Christ within us, Turning all our fears to freedom,
Helping us to live for others,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, We will praise you.

For the strength of Christ to lead us In our living and our dying,
In the end with all your people,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, We will praise you.

INTERCESSIONS

Sent forth by God's blessing BPW 448

Grant O Lord that what we have shared together with our lips we may believe in our hearts and what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and always. AMEN