

Eucharist Communion

Reverent Intimacy

Maundy & The Last Supper

Relentless Series: Maundy Thursday

Holy Week - April 14th, 2022

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Leviticus 24:1-9

Psalm 78:1-32

Isaiah 55

John 6:26-71

Luke 22:7-30; 24:25-32

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

Eucharist means *Thanks Giving*. It is the art and act of giving thanks. Communion is the experience of sharing space, time, attention, and presence. It is the way that we show our thanks.

We often think of this particular holiday as intimate because Yeshua shared with us the teaching of taking Communion. He broke bread with his brothers in ministry and shared the teachings that they didn't yet understand about how his body would be broken for them and his blood would be poured out for them. When we hear the teachings of the Eucharist they make sense because of the context of the cross. But when he first shared those words his body and his spirit had not yet been broken. His fellowship had no way of understanding the depths of what it was that he was offering them.

We often forget that the whole scene, the whole speech, is foreshadowing the terrors that came in just hours. But also, the whole scene of the last supper reveals to us the most intimate moment and teaching that Yeshua offered us through his fellowship. It's not just about the sacrifice that he was yet to make, it's also about how important sharing that space and every moment as though it was your last really was.

That's essentially what he was doing. A few of his closest came with him to Gethsemane for his time in prayer, but for the rest of them, the other nine, this was their last moment with him. It was his last meal and he shared it how he wanted it.

We can only imagine the charge of energy in that room. They gathered to share the Passover meal. An ancient ritual reenactment of the sacrificial lamb which provided the blood that marked God's people.

When God performed the Exodus on the heels of the plagues and conquered the Ennead of 9 Egyptian gods, He provided the rite of the Passover lamb whose blood marked the doorways and paid the toll of death for the firstborns. Yeshua was also a firstborn. The firstborn of Mary and also God's firstborn incarnate son. I think we forget that the Passover meal before Good Friday wasn't just the last supper of a dying man, it also marks that God was willing to play by His own rules and also offered His firstborn son just like He had always asked of His own people. Always remember that God doesn't ask you to do anything He wouldn't do Himself.

God doesn't just work within His own commands,
He also paid the price of His own curses.

There's so much nuance that escapes us when we look at things from the perspective of post-resurrection. But in these days before the rejoice of an empty tomb, we should spend the season being more present to the different stages of the journey.

The observance of the Passover meal is usually a fairly solemn event. Keeping in mind the original context: the Hebrews in Egypt didn't know if they were going to be surviving tonight. They were trusting God. And so, when you are in the presence of that reverent occasion there is a heaviness to it as you observe the rite. Not only was there fear for the firstborns but they were packed up and ready to flee the next morning, leaving behind everything they had ever known for a trek through the desert. This was their last home-cooked meal (for 40 years). It wasn't just Yeshua's last supper, it was so for *all* of the Hebrews.

We often picture it as a rambunctious meal between a bunch of friends, and maybe it was, but during the feast itself and the festival, these people were very present to an

ancient pain and Yeshua was showing up, still trying to save the people and lead them out of slavery.

There was always an intimacy about him and his teachings. Not only did he have his inner group who followed him and got to witness him, got to share space with him and commune with him in proper prayer, but also they got to experience the revelations of the deeper meanings of his teachings. Some of which have been preserved in the gospel writings and even then we still don't understand them when they're laid out before us clear as day.

On the solemn night just before his betrayal, Yeshua got to share some of his most intimate moments with his people and he gave us two of the most intimate practices that we can participate in. Unfortunately, performing a rite so far removed from its origin has left many of us with a lack of understanding as to the true gravity of the teaching.

Although Eucharist means Thanksgiving, in the Christian tradition we rarely recollect that. The focus seems to be on the sacrifice rather than on the gratitude for which it was named. Alternatively, it is called Communion, although our empty practice of it seems to forget what that intimacy feels like.

I don't know how many people have a true understanding of what taking that bread inside your body and imbibing that wine inside your body really means. It is often performed as an empty ritual that lacks the depth of understanding. But how different would that sacred practice be if we weren't lining up in droves to quickly receive a clump of bread, a sip of wine, and a half-empty recitation?

The next time you eat, whether it's a Eucharist or just a snack, be fully present to what it is that you are taking in. Imagine receiving it as though you were starved to death's door, and this tiny morsel of food is the only thing that is going to keep you alive. This offering, this sacrifice willingly made, a pound of flesh divvied up, is all that stands between you and the abyss.

This ounce of blood was shed not by a prick of the finger but by lash upon lash across his back. The blood dripping from the puncture wound of the thorny crown collected in a vile to be delivered right into your hands. Try and remember the gravity of what it took to collect those morsels and get those teachings into your hands.

For those who have fasted over the holiday season, especially over holy week, then you may be counting the days until your practice ends. For those of you who have not, I would suggest fasting from heavy foods as though you were going camping and had to carry it all with you and make it on the trail (provided it is medically appropriate to do so) from your Passover meal Thursday evening until Easter Monday break-fast. He never got to eat again, and I find a reverent intimacy in sharing that practice with him. He didn't break his fast until after the resurrection where he did it all again sharing fish with his fishers of men.

There's something beautiful about slipping into the perspective of the ones who got to share in those moments. To try and imagine what it had been like to sit with him at dinner, or be one of the favoured who were invited to the garden for his final prayers. His petitions.

Before supper, he shared a really important teaching. When dining with old friends he insisted on washing his companion's feet. He taught them that the rest of you is clean but as you walk about the world you must wash your feet in order to be cleansed of what you pick up along the way. Maundy, which is the Washing of the Feet, or Pedelavium, is a religious rite of cleansing and purification before sharing in Communion.

The act of washing his disciple's feet changed the tables. The second layer of the teachings that eve was about servant leadership. That was a new concept in direct contrast to how things were done in the Roman empire.

Yeshua showed us that in order to lead people we must do it as a shepherd does. They walk with their sheep and in some places they walk behind - leading from behind by guiding the way. Or by walking in front and trusting that they will follow. And in different ways, he did both. He taught us that we must show care to those we are responsible for and not chase the pulpit so that we are seen. We must be the embodiment and example of that genuine care for one another.

Layer after layer, opportunity after opportunity, he kept trying to teach us about intimacy - about communion.

The Eucharist is often called Communion because it is a gathering together. But in the taking in of the bread and the wine we are taking him into us. To commune with his spirit within our body. Our spirit and his entangled within our very vessel which he is capable of because he gave up his own.

Yet, one of his most powerful teachings was yet to be delivered that night. Taking the inner group to the Garden of Gethsemane (*gat shemanim*) for prayer, he simply asked them to stay with him moments longer to take advantage of the opportunity and to be present to the experience with him. 'Watch here while I pray.' They simply could not.

You see *gat shemanim* means pressed oil and that is what was being done in the moment. The grove was an olive garden and men were being wrung out of every last drop of their will. Yeshua was pressed out and the anointing that he was for the world was distilling in that prayer of Gethsemane. A holy anointing oil was rendered and surrendered.

Those last moments with him were squandered. Can you imagine how you would've felt the next day knowing that you could've had those last hours present with him in prayer sharing in those moments? Except you couldn't or else you would have. 'The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak' pretty much sums up the entirety of the human experience.

How many times do we make resolutions and dedications for ourselves and then fall short of the embodiment of it? How many times have you made claims about how you're going to live differently and yet not followed through? We have those moments of inspiration when we declare what we want our new life and our new personal expression to look like and yet sustaining it and living it out seems to be an entirely different story.

How many moments of true intimacy were missed because we weren't paying attention, we weren't present enough, we didn't follow through on our word?

Yeshua was a man of his word. He followed through with every promise that he made including the terrible ones that cost him. He led the way and embodied the example for us to show us that a human body is in fact capable of living up to its promises. It is capable of being dedicated and devout. It is capable of surrendering to the spirit's will. It is capable of communing with the Divine.

So wash your feet and face and hands clean of the traces of our world. The proof of your transient soul. Take rest from the journey and sojourn in the garden surrendered in prayer.

That prayer was probably the most selfish thing he's ever said. He pleaded with God to remove the suffering from the pathway, and yet ended everything with a qualifier: 'Your will be done'. The translation of those four words in ancient Hebrew is the word **Amen**.

When we say *amen* we are saying 'God willing'. It is one of the practices that I appreciate about the Muslim faith. They still say *amen* in every qualifier or promise that they make. 'Would you like to meet tomorrow?' 'Yes, at 1 o'clock, God willing.' It is an admittance as to where we really stand in the orchestration of our own reality. We can make all the plans and promises we want but it is ultimately always up to whether it is in alignment with a divine plan for our lives.

If there was any one thing that Yeshua was trying to show us, it's how to be the embodiment of that in the flow and supported by that divine intervention.

Can we remember to be fully present in every moment
and fully aware of God's presence in every moment?
Can we truly remember what it is to commune with that spirit of His?
Can we learn to let go of the ego enough that He can slip in
and we can experience Him?
Do you think you can let your guard down just a sliver,
just a crack,
willingly to let God slide into your heart?

That is all He ever asked:
for you to allow Him to reside in your heart
and animate you
and inspire through you?

I don't think God asks for too much,
He only asks for everything.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Selah