



One Bread, One Body

What is Eucharist? Where is it taking us?

The Rev. Robert Frushwith | St. Matthew's Episcopal Church | Sept. 2023

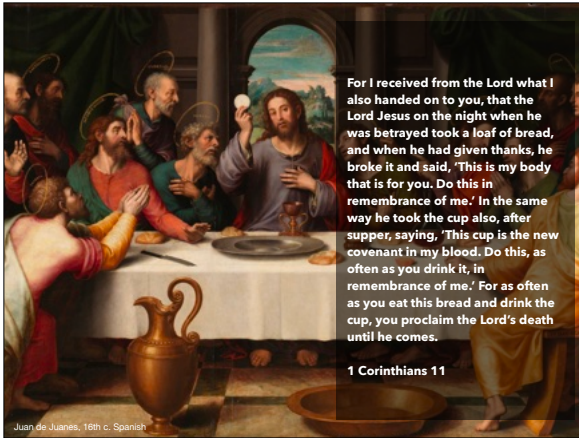
1

1. Welcome this Forum Series, Title
2. The aim of this and the next Sunday Forum is to explore the Holy Eucharist as a revelation of TRUTH About God and God's Desire for us, and as the Creation of that Truth for and with us
 1. God's truth- who God is, what God desires for us, what God is up to in this world.
 2. Our truth - Eucharist as a paradigm that expresses the pattern and nature of Christian life
3. MOTIVATION FOR THIS FORUM SERIES: WHY WOULD WE DO THIS?
 1. The Eucharist is our standard Sunday Worship experience. It is what we most commonly do together.
 2. It is also one of the most theological significant things we do together.
 3. it is something you do only in church, it thus makes coming to church unique and different
 4. So it makes sense we would want to understand it more so as to enter into more fully, and more aware of its meaning, what it is saying to us.



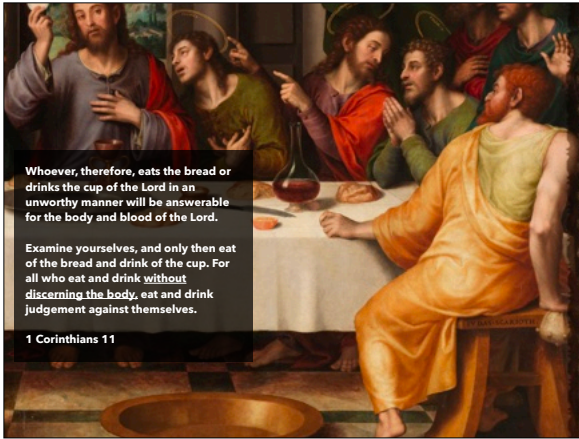
2

1. Another reason to study it: the Eucharist Heart is at the our Anglican way of being Christian
 - a. Sunday worship standard across Communion
 - b. and there is an idea, classical to Anglicans, that we are formed by how we worship (experiential learning)
2. And there is a reason we do this every Sunday and why it is our standard for formation and worship in our communion: it goes back to Jesus and the earliest disciples, and Jesus told us to do it!



3

1. Earliest account of Jesus institution of the Eucharist is from St. Paul, 1 Cor. 11, around 65 AD
2. Confirmed and made central by Mark, Matthew and Luke
3. **The basic Idea:** Jesus said that when we gather we are to do this in memory of him, as communion with him, **being** fed by him, his sacrifice, his offering love. This is is the whole basis of our being together
4. And from where Paul goes next in the passage, it seems to be that entering Eucharist without understanding or in opposition to the life of Jesus has bad consequences....



4

1. Judas Iscariot in the painting (words by painter, sack of coins)
2. Paul's Quote: Partaking of Eucharist while living in opposition to the meaning of the Eucharist:
 - a. not discerning the body, our mutual belonging to each other
 - b. not being pliant to the kind of community God is trying to create; resisting God's working
3. In that case are doing the most holy thing we can do, closest to Jesus as possible, but in opposition to His meaning,
 - a. Example: stripping gears on bike
 - b. Danger of Hypocrisy
 - i. Loss of missional credibility
 - ii. growth of cynicism
4. The point is that the Eucharist is not neutral. It is not something that takes all its meaning from what we bring to it. God is doing something and our role is to allow ourselves to be shaped by it. Thus understanding what God is doing is absolutely critical.



5

4. Final Motivation for studying the Eucharist: The Eucharist provides us a unique way of viewing even the most difficult parts of our history and challenges us to imagine a new kind of community based in the death and resurrection of Jesus, where our earthly history is taken up into God's great story of love and redemption and the making of Beloved Community.

Plan for Today

1. Prelude: Getting the Big Picture in which Eucharist Happens
2. Go through each section of Eucharist to listen to what it is saying to us.

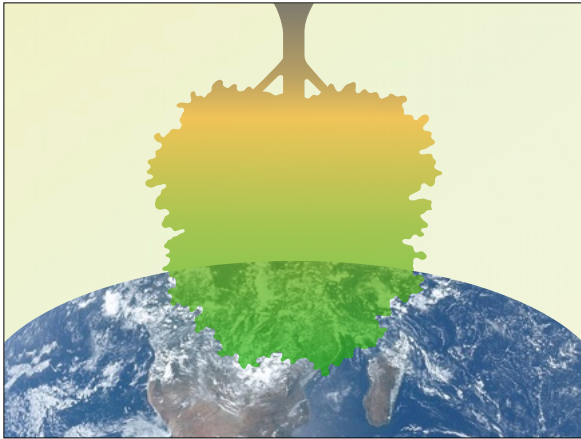
the prelude

6

- You don't get to live in a cosmos without God
- You don't get to live in a non-fallen world
- ... or in a world where God hasn't shown up and isn't perpetually active
- You don't get to live in a world where God is not exerting a continuous creative impulse to make a Beloved Community
- This Beloved Community was realized uniquely in Jesus and can be in us in our sharing in Jesus by His Spirit.
- Church and Eucharist are an anticipation of the Future and thus are being driven towards Beloved Community.

1. The Prelude

- a. You don't get to live in a cosmos without God
- b. You don't get to live in a non-fallen world
- c. ... or in a world where God hasn't already shown up and isn't perpetually active
- d. You don't get to live in a world where God is not exerting a continuous creative impulse to make a Beloved Community
- e. This Beloved Community was realized uniquely in Jesus and can be in us in our sharing in Jesus by His Spirit.
- f. Church and Eucharist are an anticipation of the Future.



7

“Christians are trees planted in the future with leaves (and fruits) in the present” — Vladimir Lossy



EUCHARIST

Step One: God Gathers

8

I. STEP ONE: GOD GATHERS

The first thing God does for the creation of Beloved Community, the human future, in a fallen world, is God gathers a community of people together to learn about God's dream, God's desire, and to gradually form them into a people capable of bearing the Spirit of Jesus, and being the Body of Jesus, in this world.

1. Christianity is inherently corporate. It is not a solitary affair, but happens in a community with other people — it has to be, because:
 - a. it is about making a Beloved **Community**, not Saved Individuals (or consoled, or inspired, or just or moral individuals)
 - b. essential to the entire Christian Gospel and our new humanity is the transcendence of all that normally divides humans under the Lordship of Jesus
 - c. practically, we only grow when we are challenged and supported in community of people unlike ourselves
2. Thus the gathered community is as important a material element as the bread and wine for Celebrating Eucharist — can't celebrate it alone
3. Thus the Sunday Eucharist is a gathering of as inclusive a group of Christians as possible
 - a. The scandal of a divided Christianity and the wound of racism in this country.
 - b. Eucharistic community also transcends time: can we imagine Duncan Cameron and Harriet come to our Eucharist? We will, because that is what heaven will be about
 - c. Our community is a connection to the Church Universal — The Bishop is our chief presider, and Lisa are stand-ins in his place
 - i. The meaning of vestments - a representation of the church universal, all space and time.

EUCHARIST

Step Two:
GØD speaks

(The Readings)



9

II. STEP TWO: GOD SPEAKS

The second thing God does with his gathered community is that God speaks to it. God speaks to us in readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Epistles, and the Gospels. These scriptures were written by human beings, under the influence of God's spirit, and reflect the history of human beings responding to God's desire and action for making Beloved Community in a world opposed to it.

1. These scriptures are the sacred writings that 'contain all things necessary to our salvation.' This means they contain what we need to direct and reform and inspire our lives to be harmonized with our unavoidable future in the Beloved Community that God is making.
2. Being Christian demands a tacit, foundational acceptance that we do not know or understand God completely. We come to Eucharist owning our ignorance and even our wrongness about what God is doing in this moment. God is Strange. God is a Free and Holy Mystery and we put ourselves at the disposal of this Freedom. Scripture is God speaking to us what we could not have known beforehand.
3. This Speaking is NEW every single week, every single day. [Example of *Lectio Divina* in groups of people]. There is indeed a baseline of basic knowledge of what the text is about historically, but how it touches lives is always, totally new. We listen not to get information but to be touched by God now, in our lives.
4. The Sermon is a space to wonder about this connection now; the Creed gives us lenses for seeing and interpretation.
5. The Christian life is NOT the dull execution of what we already know we should be doing. It is the bracing, terrible, joyous, encounter with a Holy Love and Freedom that addresses us in ways perpetually new and strange. Annie Dillard: we should be issued crash helmets and seat belts when coming into church.



EUCHARIST

Step Three:
God embraces
the world's
wrong and hurt
through us

**(The Prayers of
the People)**

10

III. STEP THREE: GOD EMBRACES THE WORLD IN ITS SUFFERING THROUGH US (THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE)

The third thing God does is to make us painfully aware of the gap between God's desire for us and our world and how things are now and to cause us to pray for the world.

1. The fact is that we do NOT experience Beloved Community. Hearing about it makes us seeing more clearly its absence. Feeling the pain of this gap is essential to Christian life.
 - a. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us to feel actual pain about how things are, to mind the gap between God's desire and how the world is.
 - i. It could be about your own personal life, your family, your work. It could be about a friend, a community, the world.
 - ii. Saint Paul: *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies...Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."* - Romans 8"
2. In the prayers of the people we are sharing in the passion of Jesus, as he embraces the whole world, a world that is living and acting in opposition to him, that rejects him, and has condemned, rejected, and mocked, God's desire for Beloved Community realized in him.
 - a. intercessory prayer is our dying with Jesus in open honesty about our world
 - b. it is a recognition of our powerlessness, either in our personal lives, or in the life of the world
 - c. it leads naturally into Confession.

EUCCHARIST

Step Four:
God affirms us
in peace

**(Confession
and Peace)**



11

IV. THE PEACE

The fourth thing God does is, after that moment of painful recognition and confession, is to regather us and reassure us deeply that in spite of our distance from Beloved Community, we are on the way towards it, and that the achievement of Beloved Community is INEVITABLE. We realize this in the passing of the Peace

1. Essential to the Communion Rite. You can't have communion without it.
2. Might be aspirational: we don't yet feel at peace, but we want to, and want God to help us get there.
3. Note Bene: The Inevitable Community of the Beloved that God is making might come about through the destruction of all that we wrongly have held to be dear and important and who we think we are, but it is inevitable. [St. Paul and the fire testing each of our works, but all surviving]. We can rest and relax in this. All that is not of love will be undone.



EUCCHARIST

**Step Five:
The Spirit
Causes us to
offer ourselves
to God.**

(The Offertory)

12

IV: God Offers us to God: The OFFERTORY

So we have already been through a lot. Responding to God's desire for Beloved Community, we have allowed ourselves to be gathered with people unlike ourselves. We have gathered in the presence of the whole church, past and present, and across the world. We have heard God speak to us in a way that touches our lives in new and strange ways and nudges us towards Beloved Community. We have let the Spirit move us into pained identity with Christ on the Cross, offering up to God all the ways in which the world is now rejecting God's desire, still crucifying Jesus, or is suffering as a result this rejection of God. We have made confession of how this failing is true in our lives. We have been forgiven and God takes us up in the Peace and reassured us in our handshakes and words of Peace that we are on the way to Beloved Community.

1. A natural result of all this — hearing the word, minding the painful gap, and receiving a new reassurance — is the Offertory, offering up our lives to God as God sees fit.
 - a. What is offered: the bread, the wine, the financial gifts in the plate offering
 - b. This is the movement of God's spirit in us, and it symbolizes the surrender of our lives to God's purposes as God sees fit
 - c. Liturgical renewal movement in the 1970s sought to make this more pronounced.
 - d. In the Offertory, we are letting God carry us — and thus this is a deeply contemplative part of our Sunday liturgy. We are ceding control, we are ceding authority, we are ceding even what we want for ourselves. We are letting ourselves be available to God.

EUCHARIST

Step Six:
God
Communes

(The Prayer of
Consecration)



13

STEP SIX: THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION AND BLESSING

What does God do once we have put ourselves in God's hands, offered up our lives to him?

1. God goes back to the beginning and through the words of the prayer of consecration, God tells us the big story: Creation. Fall. Calling Israel. Sending of Prophets.
 - a. Again, this is about one thing: how God has chosen to respond to a fallen world with a working to make a community that would model Beloved Community in that world, the **INEVITABLE FUTURE** of creation.
 - b. The fancy word for this is *anamnesis*: remembering the BIG STORY, and it is an invitation to see our personal and parish stories INSIDE and as A PART of that cosmic story, to be defined by it and shaped by it.
2. And then something else happens: God sends the Holy Spirit onto the gathered community, the bread and the wine, that we might in the moment become together the Body of Jesus, indwell by his Spirit.
 - a. This is a revelation of the future Beloved Community
 - i. Jesus at the Center,
 - (a) his death making it possible — St. Paul: it is a celebration of his *death*. That is, his love remaining unbroken in spite of our hostility to him.
 - (b) his resurrection establishing is total Lordship over us and all time and space
 - (c) his Spirit animating us into new life
 - ii. We eat the bread that is his body, and drink his blood, we have communion with God, with each other
3. This is the sacred moment in our lives, overcoming all the present sin, revealing the future we are going to

Next week: We will wonder what it is like to have Duncan Cameron there with us at that moment of communion, and Mary enslaved by Cameron, and Harriet, enslaved by the Smiths, What does this mean? The Eucharist IS OUR FUTURE. HOW MIGHT OUR LIVES BE BROUGHT INTO RESONANCE WITH IT? What is asked of us? What are we given? What do we have to renounce to be true to it?



EUCCHARIST

Step Seven:
God send us
out.

(The Dismissal)

14

VII. The last moment in our Eucharistic Rite, the last thing God does with us, is to send us out into the world, “Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.” This is called the Dismissal.

1. Joyful release into life as God’s people who have tasted some of the future reality of this world, made possible by Jesus death, our surrender to His Spirit, being drawn through that death into new life.
2. Intended echo, for something sacred to linger with us as we leave.
3. Summarizing Eucharist:
 - a. God **gathers** us into a people, across time and space
 - b. God **speaks** to us and shares God’s desire for us and how God is moving now
 - c. God **inspires** us to offer up to God all that needs God’s care in the world, including ourselves and our sin
 - d. God **establishes** forgiveness and peace
 - e. God **inspires** us to offer ourselves to God’s care and direction
 - f. God **consecrates** us by involving us in God’s entire story of creation and salvation
 - g. God **makes communion** with us in the death and resurrection of Jesus
 - h. God **sends** us out.
4. Where else in the world does this happen?



15