

Luke 22:14-28 and Philippians 2:1-13
24 March 2013, Palm/Passion Sunday

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Broken Bread, United Minds

We know that Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is only a brief respite before his betrayal and arrest. With that in mind I had heard that a police recruit was asked during the entrance exam, 'What would you do if you had to arrest your own mother?' He answered, 'Call for backup.'

Years ago I was traveling in Europe with my sister. We had taken the train to Innsbruck, Austria to meet up with a friend I had met on my first visit to the Continent. Christian arranged to meet us at our hotel and he would drive us up the mountain to his favorite local restaurant. It was a one-level, one-room place with low ceilings and long tables lit by candles in wine bottles. We sat at the end of one table, and as the evening progressed, we found ourselves joined by strangers at the same table. For Christian, this was normal. But for Amy and me it felt a little awkward – a feeling which soon passed as we were served fantastic food and literally broke bread with people we had just met.

Sitting at a table over a meal has a way of removing barriers. Whether we are with someone we know intimately or a complete stranger, breaking bread allows us be face to face, to hear what the other has to say, to build or maybe even create a relationship. When we allow that to happen, we not only nourish our bodies, we nourish our souls.

Now, we find ourselves at Jesus' table in that "upper room." I imagine it to be a little like that restaurant in the alps – oil lamps, low ceilings, one large table with floor cushions, and family-style food. Once everyone was settled, Jesus turns to them and said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

By this time, the pageantry of the palm parade had died down. Jesus knew his time was short. After many months building his relationship with his disciples, Jesus was taking this moment. He sat with his friends, looked them in the eye. And he shared with them one of the most profound symbolic actions that we carry out in our time – the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup.

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you..." Jesus longs to share this intimate meal with those who have gone through everything with him. Can we imagine what was in Jesus' mind that night? Love for his friends? Disappointment at their lack of understanding? Grief in knowing it was their last meal together?

Jesus broke the bread – "This is my body which is given for you." They become painful words, when we know that only hours later Jesus' body would indeed be broken. His disciples would be scattered, afraid, and lost. Broken bread told their story, as it tells our stories even today. We, too, get scattered, become afraid, and become lost.

And then, in what is same way Jesus poured himself out for us, Jesus took the cup saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." The bread and the body may be broken, yet we do not have to wander aimlessly. The new covenant unites us, despite our brokenness, maybe even because of it.

“If then there is any encouragement in Christ . . . be of the same mind, having the same love . . . Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus . . .” Paul reminds us that God’s sending of Christ brings us together, heals, nourishes and changes us.

To be of the same mind that was in Christ is to ask ourselves what we know about Jesus, especially in those last days. We know the humility of Jesus: when the disciples began to argue, even on that last night, Jesus firmly told them, “. . . the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves.

²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

We know Jesus “emptied himself, taking the role of a servant.” “True humility meant using his status not for exploitation but for self-sacrificial service to others. Ultimately, Jesus’ humility took him to the cross where he demonstrated the magnitude of his love for others (v. 8).” (Elizabeth Shively, Lecturer in New Testament Studies, University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland)

The crucifixion is what some theologians would call the “cross event”, or the “engendering deed.” The world considers it the “foolishness of the cross”, that one equated with God would not save himself but empty and humble himself, even unto death. We ourselves may have moments when we shake our heads and mumble, “what a waste.” But in the end, we find ourselves trying, like Paul says, to be of the “same mind that was in Christ.” This means to take what others see as foolishness and understand it as wisdom. To be of the same mind that was in Christ is take on that same role of servant. It is to remember that the one who humbled himself and died on a cross is the one whom God has “exalted and given “the name above every name”(2:9).

To be of the same mind as Christ is to welcome an alternative philosophy of life. This countercultural approach to life asks the question, “How does Jesus influence how we go about our daily lives?” Paul’s point is that through Christ we grow in love, knowledge and wisdom. That is, in a world where “Look out for number one” seems to be the norm, we are asked to “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others (v. 4).

This Holy Week, we find ourselves moving from the Hosannas of today, to embracing the Christ’s strength in humility and his obedience to God. We take with us the symbolism of broken bread at the last supper - a sharing, as well as the reality of our own human brokenness made one in Christ. When we find ourselves in the shadow of the cross, we ultimately will need to ask, “How is God at work in you?”