

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2012

The Bread of Heaven, The Cup of Salvation

Tonight is the anniversary of the last supper that Jesus shared with his apostles before his crucifixion. They had shared many meals together as they travelled around the countryside, and this one was the final one.

Many of the stories we know about Jesus involve food, either people eating together or as a metaphor.

Jesus multiplied the 5 loaves and two fish to feed 5000 men, plus women and children

Jesus ate with a Pharisee and a woman came in during the meal to anoint his feet.

Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding feast where he turned water into wine.

Once, a gentile woman asked him to heal her daughter, and he said "It is not right to take the children's food and give it to the dogs." Her answer was, "Yes, but even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." Metaphor answered metaphor and Jesus healed the little girl.

Food. People back then, just as people do now, ate together, enjoying the social time of fellowship.

Food is powerful in creating bonds between people. Eating together establishes relationships, a level of trust and caring, as we share this universal human experience.

The last supper was no different. It was intimate, with these 13 men sharing the bread and the cup in a moment that held power. It was both familiar and yet different from all the other meals they had shared. This time there was a certain foreshadowing. Jesus referred to it----“this is my body, broken for you” as he tore the bread into pieces and shared it with them. “This is my blood, poured out for you” as they passed the cup.

Do this as often as you drink it----with every meal, remember that Jesus came and taught and healed and prayed and saved us all.

After Christ rose from the dead, somehow he was hard to recognize. He was still himself, but something was very different. The disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him until he broke bread.

They had seen him many times speaking and walking and being with people, but something about breaking bread was the most powerful memory, the most familiar action, and it triggered something in them. Suddenly they KNEW who he was.

Breaking the bread, sharing the cup. In these everyday actions, in meeting our most basic needs, those of food and drink, we know Christ. Christ does not always come to us in spectacular, once in a lifetime ways.

He often comes to us in ordinary, everyday, familiar actions such as sharing a meal together.

He comes to us to share in many ways that sometimes we don't recognize unless we pay attention.

Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life. The cup he shares with us is the Cup of Salvation. Whenever we eat and drink we should remember that he is among us and within us.

In the generosity of a stranger. In the love of a friend.

The Bread of Life is given to us with love and grace and forgiveness, offered to us from the hand of Christ, who shares everything with us. He took on our pain and suffering because of his great love for us.

He took on human form so that we might share eternal life with him. Christ, the bread of life, is the source of our strength and our hope. Without bread, we starve.

Without Christ, we are empty. The Bread of Life fills us to overflowing with hope and joy and the promise of eternal life in the place he has prepared for us.

After sharing the bread with the apostles, Jesus also shared the cup. Everyone there drank from the same cup, the same wine, symbolic of the human blood that we all share. The blood that keeps us alive. When we lose that blood, when we lose what we have in common, we are dead.

Jesus Christ had no blood before he came to earth. Only when he took on human form did he have blood as we do. Only when he took on human form was it possible for him to feel pain, to bleed and to die.

When we drink the cup, we remember that emptying of himself, that sacrifice of taking on the limitations of human form. He could have remained in his divine form, the form that he had had since before the beginning, but instead Jesus Christ became human to save us.

The cup reminds us of this great sacrifice. It holds the wine which is symbolic of the blood that the human body of Christ held. We are saved by the sacrifice of Christ, which was for us and for the whole world.

The cup of Salvation is on the table.

The Bread of Life is on the table.

These elements are not literally the body and blood of Christ, but as we eat and drink, we remember that Christ gave himself up for us, for our salvation, so that we would have eternal life. In the realization of the love of Christ for us, there is power.

As we come to the Lord's Table, we come closer to the presence of Christ. We spend time with him, just as we do when we share a meal with anyone. But in this presence, in this communion with our risen Lord, we open our hearts to the sacrifice and the love of Christ for us.

Tonight is not our last supper with him. This small bit of bread and taste of juice are only a small hint, a tiny clue of what it will be like to eat at the table that Christ is preparing for us in God's Kingdom, where we will feast and live forever together in the presence of the One who saves us.



Christ, the Bread of Life, broken on a cross because of love.

Christ, the Cup of Salvation, shared with the whole world so that we may all be drawn closer to him and every knee will bow and everyone will recognize that

Jesus Christ is our risen Lord, the Savior of the World.

Amen.