

**Remember How....**

Corpus Christi 2020

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Kelowna

*Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16; Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58*

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It has been so wonderful to be able to do some pastoral visits again even at 6-feet, to walk around the Farmers' Market even at 6 feet and start to feel just a bit of 'what was' returning to what is. In one of my visits this week, we had a long conversation about how they remembered life before Covid and all that had been lost or changed (and how these losses found their expression in a new evening ritual of wine, chips and watching Dr. Bonnie!). It struck me that what we choose to remember of our pre-Covid life will really impact how we return to our post Covid world (be it when Phase 3 gets here, after the next wave in the fall or after a vaccine is found). What we are remembering right now is shaping not only who we are today but who we will be and what our world will become.

This morning we are celebrating Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) which is a day to mark the gift and mystery of the Eucharist. We do celebrate the gift of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday but that service does not remain celebratory for long. You will remember how the sanctuary and altar are stripped of all adornments and we are ushered into darkness to be with Jesus in Gethsemane. So, on a Thursday after the season of Easter, the feast of Corpus Christi may be observed so that we can celebrate the gift and mystery of the Eucharist fully and joyfully. Most churches transfer it to a Sunday like we have. It may seem like an odd thing to celebrate Corpus Christi when we cannot gather for the Eucharist but this is *the* time for us to be talking about the Eucharist, who we are as participants in it and how we go forward. The internet is flooded with articles of varying opinions about celebrating the Eucharist 'online' and with slight trepidation I have accepted the invitation of Faith Worship and Ministry (a committee of our National Church) to be 1 of 12 writers from the Ecclesiastical Province of BC writing on Sacramental Theology in the time of Pandemic. I'm looking forward to our holy discussion on Zoom.

Our reading from the Book of Deuteronomy invites us into Moses' final words to the people of Israel as they ready to enter the land of Canaan (the promised land). Deuteronomy means 'second law' and we remember that the book is not just a repeating of the Law but a reinterpretation of it in contemporary terms so that the demands and promises of God's covenant will make deep sense to the people at this juncture. The excerpt we have this morning is a warning against pride and self-sufficiency, the remedy for which is memory: "Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness....remember how you hungered and how the Lord fed you with manna you'd never known before... remember .....do not forget....". It is the memory of God's absolute faithfulness in bringing them from slavery to freedom, feeding them in the wilderness and bringing water from the rock, that the Israelites must hang on to or they will lose who they are even though they live in the land God has promised them. They must remember.

And so must we. The Eucharistic prayer we offer every time we gather for Eucharist is made up of different parts and one of those parts is called the *anamnesis* which is Greek for 'remembering'. We remember God's faithfulness throughout history specifically in the life death and resurrection of Jesus. This is not passive storytelling but an active remembering that re-members us as members of the body of Christ. At the heart of this anamnesis are the words of institution: "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is

given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Our Anglican tradition has a range of Eucharistic theologies and yet we believe that Christ is really present. We believe that somehow, in bread and wine – the food of everyday- Christ is really present and nourishes us with his Risen life. A life, that as Jesus is trying to explain in the Gospel of John, incorporates us into his own relationship with God the Father. Abiding in his life, which has conquered death, brings us into eternal life. The Eucharist is an action in which we participate, a Divine self-giving and receiving we enter as baptized people together, and in it we are re-membered as the Body of Christ to serve the world.

In a time when we can't safely receive the sacrament of Christ's body, we can ask with renewed focus: how we are being Christ's Body in the world? How are we agents of God's Kingdom? And to take it one step further: how do our memories of church affect how we are being disciples right now? Do the things we remember about church help us yearn for God and God's kingdom even more? And if they don't, then how will we return to church (when we do) in a way that lets us be more rooted and grounded in Jesus? So remember....

Remember how we gathered at the Table,  
all equal, beloved,  
remember your open, empty hands,  
and those of your neighbour,  
into which God gave nothing less than his very self  
Risen  
in bread and wine.

Remember the days when we drank from the same cup,  
remember our unity has a taste.

Remember when we could kneel, shoulder to shoulder,  
with little ones poking through the rails.  
When we all learned by eating and drinking;  
when children learned by eating, drinking and watching  
the Risen Christ  
drawing us further into the Divine life.

