

# Renewing our Covenant with God

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Today we're looking at the covenant that we renew with God. And I wrestled with this term a little bit. Because actually when we do communion, this is not about, it's not actually fundamentally about what we do.

It's about what's been done. And it's about receiving. And I think so often our Christian walk can be full of doing and not doing enough.

And actually the communion reminds us actually what the most significant thing that has been done for us. Was done for us. And that was the cross.

But there is more to it than that, right? There is more to it. I want to tell you a story. Because I think that Jesus does something quite interesting in our passage today that we read earlier.

He does something quite interesting with a very old tradition. And I had a similar mindset when I was a younger youth worker. Way back when.

[ 1 : 0 0 ] Where I decided that I would try and help young people understand communion in a way they'd get. And so I thought, how do I make bread and wine? Things that young people only really are forced to eat bread.

Or when there's nothing else that's easy, they make some toast. That's their understanding of bread. And wine is something that they're not meant to have. But a bunch of them, you know, they know a little bit about wine.

How do I pick where the majority of them will get what this is about? And I thought, they like Coke. Young people like Coke. And they like dairy milk chocolate.

And so I thought, this is brilliant. This is a genius idea. Here, I'm going to show them how communion works using Coke and dairy milk. And so I laid out the table.

Got my dairy milk. Broke it. Got the Coke. I don't know how to make that holy. But there's the Coca-Cola. Actually, it was hilarious.

[ 2 : 0 1 ] A bunch of young people loved it. Like, yeah, Coke and chocolate. But, yeah, we get this. A couple of them, you know, the more theologically trained young people, had a few gripes.

And I said, away from me, you clever people. Stop thinking. Right? There's something genius here. And we did it. We did communion.

I was in a Baptist church at this point. So if you are, like me now, a starboard Anglican, then don't worry. I wasn't at that point. So it's okay that I was naive. I still love my Baptistness.

And we did communion. And I went home quite pleased with myself. For a start, all of it was taken, you know. All of it went. That's always a good sign in communion, you know. It all went.

And I went home and I sat down. I was quite pleased with myself. And it was like it hit me. It went, what did you actually just teach them? I was like, well, I think I might have just taught them that you can find Jesus in Coke and dairy milk.

[ 3 : 0 8 ] And I realized that that's probably not what I wanted to do. It wasn't quite the plan. And I actually realized I probably just confused them more than I wanted to.

I think when Jesus does the Passover with the disciples in our passage, he does something similar. He messes with the Passover. He does it better, but he definitely messes with the Passover. We're going to ask these questions, really.

What was Jesus doing when he did that? And what are we doing when we do communion today? This is really quite high. I might just commit. Sorry.

So initially, when we look at the passage, there's nothing that stands out. The disciples wouldn't have been fazed by anything. When we read it, we can see that they were eating together, which is a sign of fellowship and solidarity.

[ 4 : 11 ] We can see that each part of the meal had a symbolism for them. You know, these guys were well-versed in Passover. They did it every year. And every part of the Passover meal had a significance. And it pointed back to them, to Egypt and to the exile.

It reminded them of their time in slavery and how they were freed. You can read the story in Exodus if you don't know what I'm saying. It's just a regular ritual that they did.

They knew it. It was just a pattern, a habit. But then Jesus, he messes with it. He picks up the bread. And for the disciples especially, over time, this bread that he picked up has actually started to represent Messiah.

The hope of the Messiah. And he breaks this bread. And he says, take and eat. This is my body. Take and eat. These are imperatives, commands.

Jesus the Lord declares his status. This bread is symbolic of me. Jesus is that long-awaited Messiah.

[ 5 : 20 ] I kind of want to read into the passage a little bit and try and gauge the faces of the disciples as they heard that. We've been waiting for the Messiah. We kind of thought he was. He's all in.

This is me. Take and eat. And he takes the cup. Probably the third cup of the meal. The cup of blessing. And commands again, drink from it.

All of you. This drink of blessing is for everyone. It is a blessing of forgiveness from sin. It's symbolic of the sacrifices of Exodus 24 where blood is shed for the sins of the world.

I love the intimacy of this concept. We're not going to get into ontological change and what actually happens in communion today. But what is interesting is that in the Exodus passage, blood is sprinkled.

It's basically just sprinkled around. It's a bit like when Clive gets the water gun out. Just everybody seems to get covered. It's the same thing here with the passage. In Exodus 24, the priest would sprinkle the sacrificial blood over the people to say that actually this is for you.

[ 6 : 26 ] But Jesus takes this a step further. It's not just a covering. Take, drink it. This is to become you. To become part of who you are.

It's no longer temporary. It has to be done to be saved. It is something that you remember as permanent. It's something really intimate about drinking that wine and remembering that inner symbolism.

And through the bread, Jesus shows them that he's the Messiah, their salvation. Through the cup, he's their blessing and their forgiveness. In this traditional meal, the disciples have reimagined Passover.

Whereby the wait is over. The Messiah has come and they will soon learn the cost of that redemption. It's not just symbolic acts. It's not just like the sacrifices of old and their symbolism and their representation.

Now is the time. The real body and blood of Jesus on that cross. God makes a new covenant with his created beings. A new collective being is made in this sacramental act.

[ 7 : 38 ] Through the sharing of the cup, Jesus creates a new people. It's not just about their individual status. They're saved and forgiven. Though this, for this act, he takes Israel's story to the next chapter.

The new covenant. No longer is this about a covering. This is about a proclamation. A status. A permanent change in the people of God.

They become the first people of this new covenant. In taking the bread and taking the wine. And they will soon learn that this new people have a mission.

In bringing in this new creation. For Israel, the story of Passover teaches them who their God is. Who they were and who they are now. In Jesus reinventing the Passover.

Around himself, he does the same. The believers were lost. They're now found. We're slaves. Now free. Because their God has come again and delivered them.

[ 8 : 39 ] This meal would become the way in which the people of God would know Jesus and each other. Something so significant in the symbolism. And sometimes we worry about talking about it like that.

We worry that we might be getting a bit more, a bit too mystical. And oh, what's happening in it? But there is something significant about it. If you remember in Luke 24, on the road to Emmaus.

When the disciples are walking and they're a bit miserable. And Jesus rocks up and starts walking with them. And they're saying it's all over. And he starts to show them the passages. And how what's happened was meant to happen.

And they still don't quite get it. And then they sit down. And Jesus breaks the bread. And they realize they're with Jesus. And they say, weren't our hearts burning the whole time?

This act that Jesus gives us as a command to take and eat. There's power in it. Not magic. And I'm not trying to get all mystical.

[ 9 : 42 ] But there is power in it. Weren't our hearts burning? Jesus was with us. In an intimate way. So that's what Jesus was doing.

So what are we doing then when we recreate this event? I think we're doing three things. The Baptist roots coming back in there. Remembering.

Declaring. And we're committing. We are remembering. We are remembering that Jesus is the Messiah. And that he is the salvation. I wonder how good your memory is.

I'm going to test mine now. Alexander the Great knew every name of his soldiers in his army. 30,000 people they reckon with in his army.

It's pretty amazing. Mozart could hear a song once. A bit like my brother here. And be able to play every note. And write it down. Winston Churchill knew pretty much all the works of Shakespeare off by heart.

[ 10 : 51 ] And Bill Gates can remember predominantly all the code he wrote slash invented. That's incredible memory, right? I look at these people and I think, that's genius.

In fact, they think that our brain, actually the capacity for memory is limitless. Wow. That's amazing. But maybe, like me, that's not quite you.

Maybe you're more like my family. Maybe you're more like my family. Maybe you're more like my family. Where Zachary Niblett, no matter how many times I tell him to put on his shoes, seems to forget that I've told him to put on his shoes.

And Laura Niblett wonders why she married me. Just because something is important doesn't mean we remember it. When we take communion, we are invited to remember the most significant reality of our life.

That we are saved by grace and are loved and forgiven. Life can be full of things that make us doubt that. So we must partake.

[ 12 : 03 ] And remember that Jesus is the Messiah. And he is the salvation. And second, we declare. We are declaring that we are the people made into one body.

The body of Christ. We say in some liturgical services, we say, though we are many, we are one body because we share in the one bread.

My question is, when you take communion, are you aware the others around you? Tim Keller said, you can't have communion with God without first having communion with each other.

When Jesus offered the bread and cup, he had no intention of making this act an individual one. Yes, we all receive God's grace as individuals. But we are made into a one holy body.

When we take communion, we declare that it is no longer I, but we. And we are responsible for each other. And we belong to each other.

[ 13 : 03 ] God did not just save you. He saved us. And yet, how well do you know the others around you? Do you know who's suffering right now in this community?

Do you know who's celebrating? Do you care? When you take communion, you acknowledge us as a family. When you take communion, you claim to be family.

Are you willing to be family? And our third point. We are committing, when we take communion, we are committing to be the mission.

We are committing to the mission. To be the people of God in the world, living as light and life in dark places. Through the Eucharist, heaven touches earth.

The word Eucharist is a Greek word. And it means to give thanks. And that's why, especially in the Anglican liturgy, there's an emphasis on that.

[ 14 : 09 ] That this is something really significant. That Jesus gave thanks. The Eucharist was established. That this thing is an edict. It's a thin place.

I'm a bit wary of that phrase sometimes. Because we can get a bit mystical again. But it's a thin place. Where something about who God is pushes us out.

To do. To the mission. I was thinking about how Jesus at the end of this says, He will not drink the fruit.

And from now until the day, I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And I think there's two ways to look at that. Firstly, there's to look at that. And to think, well that's on about the end, right? That's right at the end. You know, when we're all in the glory. And we're in the kingdom of Jesus. And new creation has happened. And we celebrate.

[15:07] And I think that's true. That is definitely the end game. But there's also that reality. That Jesus, when he resurrected. He went to be with the Father.

And he's with the Father now in that place. That permanence. That heaven. And when we take communion. We tap into that promise.

That he will be with us. There's something about it. That's really powerful. We share the cup and the bread with the resurrected King. He's championing us.

But as we know, when we do that. When Jesus meets with us. He never meets with us to leave us where we are. He takes us somewhere else. He puts us on a track. He realigns us.

He challenges us. He grows us. He sends us out. And so when we do this. When we take communion. A part of what we're doing is we are committing to that mission.

[16:06] We partake. And we commit ourselves to the mission. Remembering that what he has done for us. Declaring that we are his people. Are committed now.

To share this grace. And this good news. With the world. Through communion. We renew our covenant with God. We receive.

We remember. We declare. We have received. God's goodness. And we are now his new creation. His new people.

His new covenantal body. And we then commit to be the people of God. We don't just say it. We commit to be it. And we get involved in God's mission.

The Missio Dei. The mission of God. To see the world renewed. Restored. To see Revelation 21. A reality where there is no more injustice. No more suffering. No more sin.

[17:07] The old order is passed away. And we are part of making that happen. We are the messengers of the good news. Part of me would like to have done this before.

We took communion. But that was hindsight. When you take communion next. I want to challenge you. You could be like the disciples.

And it could be a ritual. You have no idea what's about to happen. Or you could be. People. Who receive.

This goodness. Receive it. And remember. What it means. Receive. This goodness. And declare. That you are acknowledging.

You are the people of God. And receive. And commit. And commit. To be the people of God in the world. And maybe. Just maybe. As you come to communion like that.

[18:05] You may have a moment. A significant moment. God can do it in anything. But there is something significant. About communion. Maybe we could challenge ourselves.

A little bit. Say God meet with me in this. Let this not just be a ritual. Grow me through this. Take a deep breath. Let this not see you next time. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.