

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Trinity 12

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my sermon.

Jeremiah 15:15-21 Ps 26:1-8 Romans 12:9-end **Matthew:
16:21-end**

In writing and reading, speaking and listening, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Many years ago my former spiritual director made a comment about the meaning of the Eucharist which at the time I didn't fully appreciate. He said that the deepest meaning of any Eucharist we celebrate is rooted in the daily life of which is a part. The Eucharist is not a rarefied spiritual act regardless of the conditions in which we live, but a spiritual act born of all that we live and experience as human beings in the world. There is a connection between what we are living and what we celebrate at the altar. It is a way of breaking open that experience for the revelation of God's transforming presence within it.

His words have come alive for me as I reflect on celebrating the Eucharist as we are doing today in church and the worship we are sharing at home, right in the midst of everyday life.

All the practical things that we are aware of do not have to be a distraction from its spiritual core. Rather: perhaps as we sit at a distance from one another we bring all the times we have to keep physical distance from others into this sphere of worship. If we are praying at home then this distancing is an even deeper experience of discerning our connection with others whilst not being near them. As we spend time praying together with our faces covered, we bring all the other times we put a mask on into our prayer. As we sanitise our hands here, we bring for blessing every act of cleansing we are being careful to observe, and as we adjust to recognising the fullness of communion while sharing it in one kind we the solidarity we share in all the life-adjustments being made by so many people across the world. Here we make

real the connection between all that we are living and what we celebrate at the altar. This act of worship becomes a way of breaking open all that we have experienced this week for the revelation of God's transforming presence within it. And the spiritual communion we share makes the connection real too.

It's a vivid reminder that being a Christian is not about living a rarefied spiritual life detached from physical realities, but a life in which we find God's presence in everything, as Jesus makes very clear in his reaction to Peter in today's gospel.

Last week we heard Peter affirm that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the living God. What might he imagine that means: a great hero who will bring about God's triumphant reign?

Today Jesus is quick to challenge that kind of image by immediately turning to show his disciples that his journey to Jerusalem is a journey into opposition and death, before the resurrection to come. The Son of the living God, who reveals God's self as a human being to bring salvation to creation, reveals God from the depths of human existence, in the reality of our physical existence; not as some rarefied Adonis, but as a man who is fully broken by the worst of human opposition to love. His life is itself a breaking open of human existence for the revelation of God's transforming presence within it. This is a great mystery, the pattern of living, dying and resurrection that Jesus calls those who follow him to share as they "take up their cross and follow".

Jesus gave us this act of the Eucharist to help us enter into that pattern every time we celebrate: in bread and wine and prayer we make this physical act of offering representing our whole life. We hand it over to God, just as Jesus allowed himself to be handed over. The bread and wine are broken and poured out and as we receive communion it opens us, in all the fullness of our lives to an encounter with the transformative presence of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

By returning to this act again and again, we learn to discover his pattern of life death and resurrection on our own lives and to embrace it. When we are not able to come to church we are still

able to find this pattern of the Eucharist in our own lives and make those moments of recognition our worship.

It is not an easy pattern – it is no wonder that Peter is horrified at the thought of it – but when we remember that Christianity not about mind over matter but about taking up our cross and following Jesus into his pattern of life death and resurrection we begin to see that our whole life can be a Eucharist. We don't have to look very far for a cross to take up: I suspect that each one of us can identify the things in our lives which, if we are honest, we wish a saving hero would come and take away.

Today's gospel suggests that the Son of the living God calls us to take up these those things and follow him into the pattern of living, dying and rising again in which our lives are broken open to reveal God's transforming presence within them.

Our world finds itself confronted by something it would like a saving hero to come and take away. We have a response to offer, mysterious as it may seem: to take up the grief and anger of this time, to take up the restrictions and the disruption and to hand it over as our worship: that in some way this time to be broken open for the revelation of God's transforming presence within it.

May the Eucharist celebrated today and the communion we share help is to be signs of God's presence and transforming love for all around us. Amen