

Worship at home

October 3, 2021

19th Sunday after Pentecost

World Communion Sunday

<https://pccweb.ca/moorepc/>



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairn#/media/File:Rock_Cairn.jpg

God calls us to worship:

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.¹

We bring our praise and confessions:

Eternal God,
as we come to your table today,
we recognize that, here, heaven and earth join hands.
Around this holy table,
we join with your church which stretches around the world,
and across many generations,
to meet you in our midst.
As we remember Jesus this day,
unite us to those who have served you over the centuries,
and to all who serve you in so many different situations today.
We praise you for your amazing love
which embraces this countless congregation
and invites us into a future you are creating for us all.
Around your table, O God, let us join hands with heaven and earth
to celebrate your holy name
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ever present God,

¹ Psalm 89:1, 2

When you invite us to your table,
you ask us to come with clean hands and clean hearts.
You ask us to come in peace,
seeking reconciliation with you and with each other.
We confess that the church has not always sought reconciliation
within or beyond its walls.
In this silence, we hand over to you the broken relationships,
disagreements and disappointments that keep us from living in your peace.
(A time of silence is kept)

Free us from the burdens we carry,
so that we may be a source of peace in this troubled world
in the name of Christ who is our peace.

God assures us of his forgiveness:

From now on, St. Paul declared, we regard no one from a human point of view.
If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.
Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!
Know that you are forgiven and have the courage to forgive one another.

**In response to the gospel,
we confess our faith and offer our lives and resources:**

*Please remember to prayerfully make your offerings to the congregation of which you
are most associated. If you're a member/adherent of Knox-Moore or St. Andrew's,
Mooretown, please send your offering to Howard McKellar or Judy Armstrong.*

Hymn: #651 "Guide me, O thou great Redeemer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j48TLIRb4Q>

God speaks to us through his Word:

God of wisdom, you have taught us that we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from you. Send us your Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to receive your Word, speaking through the scriptures. Strengthen us to live that Word as our daily bread. Amen.

What do these stones mean?

Last week we started talking about symbols. About what they mean for the devotees and about what message they may convey to others. We talked about the ark of the covenant and our particular Christian symbols such as the cross, the pulpit, the communion table, the baptismal font, even the church building.

Today we'll continue that reflection as we join Israel on the *western* bank of the Jordan River.

After the ritualized river crossing in which the priests carrying the ark stood in the middle of the river and the LORD God stopped its flow so that the Israelites could cross on dry ground, the entire Israelite nation (except for the women, children, and livestock of the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) have crossed the river.

READ JOSHUA 4.

1. Once everyone had crossed the river, the LORD instructed Joshua to have 12 men carry stones from the center of the river to be built into an altar at Gilgal on the edge of the plains of Jericho. Each stone representing one of the tribes of Israel. There's some suggestion that Joshua built a similar memorial himself in the middle of the river as well.

The point is that this 12-stone cairn was erected to be a memorial of this event. It was to be a symbol by which the Israelites could focus their prayers on Yahweh. And it was to be a teaching aid. A tool to pass on to future generations the stories of the faith. The stories of God's faithfulness. And the stories of how this particular people group ended up living in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

When your children ask their parents in time to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.’ For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you ... so that all the people of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, and so that you may fear the Lord your God forever.²

The symbol inspires questions. The questions open the ground to encourage the faithful and teach the inquisitive.

To say that the *hand of the Lord is mighty* is to say that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who created all that exists and whom we know in Jesus of Nazareth, is real and is able to do work. He is able to intervene in human lives. He is able to accomplish His purposes of redemption. The hand of the Lord is mighty.

To *fear the Lord our God forever* is to be regularly and perpetually encouraged in your head, heart, hand love of the Lord your God.

The symbol inspires questions. The questions open the ground to encourage the faithful and teach the inquisitive.

When your children ask their parents in time to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know. ... So that the people of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, and so that you may fear the LORD your God forever.

2. Today is World Communion Sunday. And those of us who are able to gather in person will be celebrating the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper together with our sisters and brothers around the world for the first time in over 2 years. (If you’re unable to gather with us and would like to share the sacrament, please let me or your own pastor know and arrangements can be made to do so. I won’t invite you to share the sacrament through this video because it is an embodied sacrament. It is shared in real time and in real, flesh and blood presence. So, let me know, or let your own pastor know, and we can make arrangements to share the sacrament with you in a responsible and COVID-safe way.)

² Joshua 4:21-24.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper revolves around three of the most central symbols of the Christian faith: the bread, the wine, and the table.

What do these symbols mean?

What does this bread mean?

What does this wine mean?

What does this table mean?

There is nothing magical about the symbols nor about their accompanying rituals. A cairn is but a pile of stones. The communion elements are but bread and wine. A table is nothing but some boards nailed together.

Any effect which the symbols may provoke is due solely to what and whom they represent.

So, when you come to the table and you ask, or your children ask, or your neighbours ask: "What do these symbols mean?" Which is a good question to ask ourselves after we've been away from the table for so long. What will be your answer?

3. It's very important that it is a table on which we lay the elements and not an altar. An altar enables worshippers to make and present sacrifices.

A sacrifice is offered as a pledge of gratitude and to make atonement for sin.

When Jesus shed his blood and broke his body on the cross, he did so for the forgiveness of sin. Full stop.

By the forgiveness which Jesus has thus secured, there is fellowship with the One who created us and in such fellowship is life that transcends our present circumstances. There is wholeness, restoration, peace.

There are no more sacrifices to make. On the cross, Jesus has accomplished all that is necessary for our healing, peace, joy, and salvation.

So, instead of an altar, there's a table. Instead of sacrifices, Jesus instituted a meal, shared around the table, by which the Holy Spirit dwelling within would encourage our love of God and confirm our union with Him regularly and perpetually.

He instituted a meal of bread and wine symbolizing his own body and blood.

4. So, what do these symbols mean?

They mean that the hand of the Lord is mighty. That the Lord God is able to accomplish that which He resolves to do. That Jesus who is the Christ, has mediated forgiveness of sin. That we are united with him in the bond of the Holy Spirit. That he is able to redeem, renew, and make whole his good creation. They mean that in Jesus there is healing, grace, life, and peace.

For the good of our souls, the health of the nation, and the glory of God. Amen.

Hymn #546 “Here is bread: here is wine”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgysV3EZKas>

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper:

This is the Lord's table.
Our Saviour invites all those who trust him
to share the feast which he has prepared.
O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Let us pray.

Holy God, Creator of heaven and earth,
with joy we give you thanks and praise.

You commanded light to shine out of darkness,
divided the sea and the dry land,
created the vast universe and called it good.
You made us in your image
to live with one another in love.
You gave us the breath of life
and freedom to choose your way.
You set forth your purpose
in commandments through Moses,
and called for justice with righteousness in the cry of the prophets.
Through long generations
you have been patient and kind to all your children.

How wonderful are your ways, almighty God.
How marvelous is your name, O Holy One.
You alone are God.
Therefore,
with apostles and prophets,
and that great cloud of witnesses
who live for you beyond all time and space,
we lift our hearts in joyful praise:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

We praise you, most holy God,
for sending your only Son Jesus to live among us,
full of grace and truth.
Sharing our joy and sorrow,
he heals the sick and is a friend of sinners.

Obeying you,
he took up his cross and died that we might live.
We praise you that he overcame death
and is risen to rule the world.
He is still the friend of sinners.
We trust him to overcome every power that can hurt or divide us,
and believe that when he comes in glory
we will celebrate victory with him.

Therefore, in remembrance of your mighty acts
in Jesus Christ,
we take this bread and this cup
and give you praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.*

Gracious God,
pour out your Holy Spirit upon us,
and upon this bread and wine,
that we, and all who share this feast,
may be one with Christ and he with us.

Here we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to you.
In your mercy,
accept our praise and thanksgiving.
Fill us with the joy of eternal life,
that we may be your faithful people
until we feast with you in glory.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour are yours, almighty God,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hear now the words of institution recorded by the apostle Paul:

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1st Corinthians 11:23-26)

When we break the bread,
it is a sharing in the body of Christ.

When we bless the cup,
it is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.

The Lord's Supper is shared with "This is the body of Christ... This is the blood of Christ..."

Let us pray.
Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery
in which you have given yourself to us.
Grant that we may go into the world
in the strength of your Spirit,
to give ourselves for others
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

God sends us with His blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.