

LIVING AGAIN

Today is World Communion Sunday.  
Christians around the world will partaking in this peculiar ceremony.  
For some it is a sacrament or a sacred ritual, for others it's merely an act of duty or a rite of remembrance.  
Ambiguity often permeates communion.  
Many churches have communion every Sunday; we tend to do it quarterly, at best.  
It is a fascinatingly peculiar ceremony.  
Indeed,... the early Christians were accused, by the Romans, of engaging in cannibalism.

To gain better insight, it may help to try to peer back and imagine the context of the beginning, the initiation of this practice--the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples.

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Three intense, sometimes frustrating and sometimes fulfilling years together with his disciples were drawing to an end.  
Jesus' unorthodox, confrontational ministry was unraveling. The authorities were closing in, and the masses didn't want to journey to redemption--they wanted instant salvation.  
Jesus sensed / knew the end was coming soon, and more than likely, the disciples felt the uneasiness, too. Yet, as usual, they were Not as in tuned as Jesus.

It was time for Good-byes. Jesus knew it. The disciples did Not.

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Good-byes can be awkward, even painful, and it's worse when the other person or persons do not grasp the gravity of the occasion.

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There is little evidence that the disciples were catching on.  
They were ignoring or denying the significance of the closing moments with Jesus.  
Even after, their final meal together, and following deep from the heart petitions from Jesus to be with him, to stay awake and pray with him in the garden of Gethsemane, they abandoned Jesus with their sleep.

They were Not "getting it."

Jesus doesn't say these exact words, but he was projecting them:  
"You're going to miss me when I'm gone."

There is a pop song, known by another name; however, the chorus is "You're going to miss me when I'm gone", and Katherine graciously agreed to sing it.  
[song with Katherine]

There are situations when everyone is aware of the reverence of final words of good-bye being shared. And, those are holy moments.

Deathbed sharing is but one example.

There are other times when both parties, drop their fears of intimacy and vulnerability, and let their hearts openly speak out.

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The closing scene from the movie "Dances with Wolves" presents such a holy moment.

Dunbar, known by the Sioux as Dances with Wolves, is leaving the winter camp because his presence will bring the soldiers there and put his adopted Sioux family in danger.

As he leaves, high up on a cliff overlooking the trail out of camp, is a lone man on a horse. He makes sure all know how important this good-bye is, by saying the following. The words echo through the valley.

**"Dances with Wolves  
I am Wind In His Hair.  
Do you see that I am your friend?  
Can you see that you will always be my friend?  
You will always be my friend."**

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That was a fine way to say good-bye.

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In contrast, it is sad when we miss those opportunities / when we don't rise to the occasion....or.... fail to appreciate what is happening.

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Sometimes, the holy moments come later, when we realize what unfolded while we were **not** so attentive.

This is the case with communion; it's why we still do communion.

**Now** we know the holiness in the farewell, and we know more.... we understand the message.

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During the Passover meal, Jesus used common food items to invite the disciples to remember. And, the bread and the wine were more than symbols to prompt the memories. They were and are tools to help understand what it means to live on.

Notice, that Jesus didn't say, "Think of me when you eat the bread".

Jesus said, "This **IS** my body."

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To be sure, they were eating bread and not pieces of flesh, just as we will today.

But, it was the action of taking it in / consuming the representation of Christ that is meant to jolt us to life.

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To put it a different way:  
Good-bye need not be the end. It need not have a terminal affect.

No matter how depressing it is to say good-bye to a child going off to university, the relationship does not end / the good-bye is not terminal. We keep in contact; we nurture the relationship in different ways,..... until the child returns.  
In essence, we chose to live on / to see and engage another day.

The same can be true when we experience painful and unfortunate closers, such as death or divorce.

After the agonizing grief and emptiness, living can resume.

This does not suggest that we ignore the loss or even try to replace it.  
For example with divorce: we can take what was good and build on that, and we can build on what is learned from the past, and make better choices--a new life.

In other words, we can take the past relationship all in. We need Not deny it and NOR let it destroy us, but rather allow new life to emerge from the loss, like a seed planted in the ground.

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Similarly, we can do the same when a loved one dies.

Children can honour their deceased parents by carry on / by practicing the good lessons, such as attending and investing in church.  
The legacy of parents lives on through the children,...when the children "own it" / "take it in".

In addition, we need not let the loss of a partner be paralyzing.  
The person's life is in vain if the death destroys the living.

After the grief, growth can happen / something new can happen, like a seed reaching for the sun on a warm Spring day.

Moreover, new life erupts when we take what is good and noble, and breathe our own passions into them.

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This dynamic of living on and allowing past lives to live on is even more profound and dynamic when it is imbued / saturated with love,... which always includes God's Spirit.

We must feed the love and grow the love,..... and that is why we do communion.

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To his disciples, Jesus was in essence saying,  
"Since you're not aware that I'm going away / since you're not getting that it's "good-bye" time, remember.... Remember this message with the bread and the wine.

The bread is my body / my life on earth.  
The wine is my blood / my passion."  
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Communion is an invitation to take in Christ, and allow Christ to live again, through each of us.

When we eat communion bread and drink from the cup, we are declaring, Christ is alive in each of us.

We are stating, "I will take in Jesus' life of service.  
I will take in Jesus' passion for justice and peace,.....no matter the consequences.  
I will take in God's love that Jesus possessed."  
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Partaking of communion is a very serious affair, and that is why we insist a person must be baptized. Baptism reveals an earlier dedication and commitment made to God to be a follower of Christ. Thus, communion should be understood.

In addition, it is prudent to prepare oneself with confession.

After all, we are declaring, Again, that the way of Christ will be our way, and clutter and distraction could make folly of that declaration.  
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This morning, with Christians around the world, all those who have been baptized are invited to renew your vows to God / to take in Christ.  
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We will sing a hymn, then a prayer of confession, which will be followed by the sharing of peace with one another.  
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Before us is the bread and the cup..... and we know what they stand for.

Let us remember and let us receive this invitation.