



Flourishing 2024

I don't always know what thought or idea will capture my attention and imagination - but usually it has to do with my effort for deeper meaning and understanding - such as the following.

The Common Cup

I grew up in a tradition that celebrated what they called "The Lord's Supper" occasionally, like on the 5th Sundays. For the past decade plus, however, I've become part of a tradition that celebrates "communion" "The Lord's Supper" every Sunday as a central part of the worship experience. (Some traditions refer to this as the "Holy Eucharist.")

In some Christian traditions, there are conflict stories over whether or not to use the common cup... a single chalice for dispensing the wine or juice. During the COVID pandemic many church traditions struggled with using individual packaged elements of juice and wafer as part of the effort to continue the ritual of communion and protect the participants from transfer of the virus. Where I currently attend worship, there are options to choose the common cup or the individual packaged elements of communion. I find myself choosing the common cup option through the intinction method (dip the wafer in the juice) of sanitary use.

Now, with that intro, I want to reflect with you what I think is a more profound and theological view of common cup... This for me is more about the symbolism that is represented in the "common cup" approach. I'm happy to be part of church tradition whose logo is the communion chalice. Not to be exclusive or finicky... but to affirm a universal view of shared Christianity. Or, to quote a little Bible "one faith, one baptism, and one Lord of all." Further, to honor and celebrate the great metaphor of "the shared table." That "one table" around which all are invited, all are welcome, and all are equal.

There is not just symbolism at stake here, it is the deep meaning taken from the narrative in Matthew's gospel of the "Last Supper" - Jesus staggered by the reality of crucifixion and compelled by the cosmic mission of redemption. This "common cup" that we sometimes so routinely take spiritual nourishment from is also the shared cup of sacrifice.

It occurs to me that our current global humanity has chosen to not drink from a common cup at all, but to slur and shame the cup of shared suffering and redemption into a mockery of individualism and one-against-the-other-ism.

One of my web searches turned up the following reference to the "common cup." by an Anglican writer.

"The cup is also important. Jesus took one cup and gave it to all of his disciples to drink. Perhaps it was the cup of Elijah from the Passover ritual as some people say, but it was certainly a single cup. He did not merely pour wine into the disciples' individual cups and tell them to take a drink. There is a powerful challenge in this one. We are reminded of the agonizing decision that faced Jesus when he was praying before the crucifixion: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matthew 26:39). We are also

reminded by the one cup that we cannot drink it alone. We drink from a common cup as a strong symbol of unity and our willingness to accept each other. We share our love and lives as we share the cup. The implications for this for fellowship and support in the local church, for relationships between rich and poor in communities and nations, and for justice between North and South and first world and world countries are enormous. The cup of love and unity is unavoidably a cup of sacrifice". [2]

1. "Communion" by Donald Gray in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy & Worship*. Edited by Paul Bradshaw. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. p. 123. See also "Communion in both kinds" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Edited by F.L. Cross. 3rd edition edited by E.A. Livingstone. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. p. 386-387.2. *The Eucharistic Way*. John Baycroft. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1981. p. 33-34.

Join with me in celebrating our heritage and our vision as "People of the Chalice."
LOVE GOD! LOVE PEOPLE!

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