

PSALMS OF HOPE

@UnitedChurchFerndown

United Church Ferndown's 2023 Lent Programme

Friday 2nd March

Reflection #9

CHRIST'S UNUSUAL TABLES!



Pray:

Lord, let everything I do in this season of Lent come from You, be inspired by You. I long to be closer to You. I long to receive the hope that You offer. Help me to remember that nothing is more important than You in my life. Help me to rely on You for help. I want to walk in your footsteps, Jesus. I confess that I have often felt I knew better and ignored Your presence. Heal me, Lord, and help me to find You in the darkness of my life. Let me reach out and feel your hand and love there to guide me. Speak to me in this moment, Lord God. **Amen.**

Introduction:

In my home, there is a running joke that if something needs to be broken so that it can be shared it comes to me, as I often professionally break bread for sharing! If I had got my children to write down what they thought I did when they were younger I'm sure it would have been a funny read!

I was reflecting on Communion the other day. I have broken bread on many different churches' communion tables – modern ones, simple ones, carved historic tables, and even a plastic one! But some of the most precious communion tables that I have used have been in less formal settings. They have been in more intimate settings where just 2, 3 or 5 are gathered – a hospital bed, a side table, a coffee table, a chair, a wooden box, the floor and even a pile of books! Here in this moment the simple meal of broken bread and grapes crushed to drink means so much. It is a symbol of love, of victory, of hope, it is a feast for our faith and it gives a real sense of God's presence among us because in those moments this eclectic list of furniture became Christ's tables...

**Read:****Psalm 116:12-19 (MSG)**

What can I give back to God
for the blessings he's poured out on me?
I'll lift high the cup of salvation—a toast to God!
I'll pray in the name of God;
I'll complete what I promised God I'd do,
and I'll do it together with his people.
When they arrive at the gates of death,
God welcomes those who love him.
Oh, God, here I am, your servant,
your faithful servant: set me free for your service!
I'm ready to offer the thanksgiving sacrifice
and pray in the name of God.
I'll complete what I promised God I'd do,
and I'll do it in company with his people,
In the place of worship, in God's house,
in Jerusalem, God's city.
Hallelujah!

Consider:

You'll have to forgive me, but when I hear 'cup of salvation' I can't help but think about a good cup of tea, after thinking about a communion cup first, of course! But contextually, the psalmist is not speaking of a cup that he will drink from. The psalmist is most probably here speaking of the drink offering, which was lifted up only to be poured out before the Lord. How tragic! I can't even fathom pouring out a hot cup of tea before the Lord! It just seems so wasteful . . . well, actually I'm not really as worried about the wastefulness of it as I am about the experiential loss that I will incur as a result if I pour out my tea, rather than drinking it.

In Israel, when the drink offering was poured out before the Lord, it was a sign that Israel was dependent upon God, not upon the fruit of the vine. The psalmist said that after having lifted up (and poured out) the cup of salvation, he would then commence to call upon the name of the Lord. And this is the nature of any sacrifice that we make before God. Once I give it, I must call upon the name of the Lord, because I've given something that cost.

Pray:

Today as we practise this meditation, let us be conscious of that which we have sacrificed before the Lord. Let us lift it up, and let us call on the name of the Lord.

Try it out:

What is the cup of salvation that you will lift up (and pour out) before the Lord today?