

# Sermon Series

## Christian Worship and the Eucharist



### Week 3 - The Re-presentation of Christ<sup>1</sup>

Year B 2021, Pentecost 12, John 6:35, 41-51



I remember the day, as a university student, in a class on the Eucharist, our teacher Chris Mostert ask the question ‘If there was one word to describe what happens in Christian worship, what would it be?’ I remember at that point the room feel silent. You could have heard a pin drop. Until, calmly, and with a broad smile, Chris said simply, ‘Presence. The word you are looking for, is presence.’

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<sup>1</sup> With acknowledgement to Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Today we look at the meaning of Remembrance. When Jesus says, ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ what did he mean?

Jesus did not mean, as we moderns do, that in the act of remembrance, we do not have to do with merely bringing to mind a past event which, being past, is absent from we who are alive today. No. A Jew, deeply rooted within Jewish tradition, especially in connection with the Passover meal, meant the remembrance of a past event, in a way that has lasting reality.

So that, in Jewish, and now Christian worldview, the word re-member, means to re-present. To make the past event, present. To make the past event of God’s salvation, present. At the Passover meal, recalling the past event of salvation, the night of the Passover of God, the Jewish people would do so, saying, ‘This is the night’. At the Lord’s Supper, the Christian people do so saying, ‘This is my body.’ The past event of salvation, the Passion of Christ, for the reconciliation of the world to God, is made present to the hearer. ‘Take, eat; this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

The early church understood, too, that in Christian worship, there is the re-presenting, the becoming present once more, of the Passion of Christ, the once for all act of God, to reconcile the world to himself. The representation of the paschal mystery of the death of Jesus. The Presence of Christ, in his Passion. With all he has done for us and all creation, in his saving death.

In Christian worship, in the act of remembrance, Christ gives himself, in his Passion. Not as a repeat of, but as a making present once more, that once for all act of God in Christ to reconcile the world to himself. So that, here at the altar, priest and congregation are one, as in believing recollection, Jesus Christ is himself present to his people in the bread and in the wine, according to his promise.

Linked to this is also a foretaste of his coming again, of the completion of the kingdom of God, of the completion of the world, ourselves included. So that Eucharistic remembrance is not only a re-presentation, but also an anticipation. Of the future springtime, of the world. Beyond the present wintertime, of our discontent.

In remembrance, we do not have to do with an act of human remembering of which we are the subjects. In remembrance, we have to do with an act of Jesus himself, re-presenting himself, with all that then happened to him and through him, by his Spirit.

In Christian worship, we are lifted up, outside of ourselves, into Jesus Christ himself, as we recall our Lord's Passion. Only as we are all, priest and people, celebrant and congregation, outside ourselves with Christ, in the act of remembrance, is Jesus Christ, the one whom we remember, present to us, in the bread and wine, according to his promise.

Remembrance is ‘the place’ of Christ’s real presence in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

And the key that unlocks the proper understanding, and therefore the proper administration, of the Lord’s Supper, by priest and people alike, in every local celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

At the Last Supper, Jesus promised continued table fellowship with himself in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. ‘Take, eat: this is my body...Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood.’ A promise he himself fulfils, by his Spirit. In the bread and the wine. He is here. The Son of God. Very God. The I AM.

And he is here, in his Passion. The revelation of God himself in this world. The burning bush. That never goes out.

‘Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’  
And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

American poet Irene Zimmerman,

‘I went to the desert one morning

and walked with Moses in the sand  
to where the bush was burning.  
That it did not turn to ash  
was no surprise to me  
for so I'd seen it burning  
throughout my childhood days.

But suddenly a voice called out to me  
from that bush!

Moses left.

*Take off your shoes, I heard,  
for the life on which you stand is holy.*

*I am the ONE WHO IS*

*And THIS IS HOW I HOLD YOU.*

I stood barefoot on the ground  
of my life history,  
burning through and through  
with that mystery.'