

“For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Pharisee - tax collector - connection

The Pharisee comes to pray; confident in his own perceived holiness, and confident in the unholiness and unworthiness of others.

The tax collector comes without judgement on others, not feeling worthy to be in that place or even to lift up his eyes to God.

No sense of being connected to others, no sense of his understanding of his need to be connected to others as part of God's people.

Two extremes - but where are we?

How do we approach God?

How are we coming to this place today?

Perhaps we feel in a high place in our Christian life, or perhaps we come with questions, doubts, a sense of failure?

How we come to God in worship speaks not only of who we are as an individual, but also to our identity as the people of God, in this place at this time.

At the heart of Christian worship in the Church of England is communion, also known as the eucharist.

It is part of our life here as it was for the early Christians.

Acts 2:42 says: They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers.

How we share communion together speaks to who we are as the people of God in this place at this time.

Again, that is not a new thing. When Paul writes his first letter to the church in Corinth he answers a series of questions they have about how to be as Church.

Speak to the development of communion in the early church - school visits setting a meal.

In 1 Cor 10: 16 Paul says “Is not the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ.”

He goes on to explain how their worship, and at its heart, the sharing of the bread and the wine, speaks of who they are as the people of God, and of how they are receiving the gift of Christ in their midst.

Here at Hope, since returning to meeting together after the Covid pandemic we have been receiving the bread dipped by the priest into the wine.

In a time of global pandemic there was a sensible reason to stop sharing the common cup.

But we are no longer in that place. And to better reflect who we are as the people of God in this new stage, as well as to follow the guidance of the Church of England we are going to be returning to receiving the bread, and then (if you would like to) receiving the wine (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) from a common cup.

Why does it matter to have the option of receiving the wine from a common cup?

A symbol of belonging to one another

The shared cup emphasizes that Holy Communion is not a private devotion but a corporate act of the "Body of Christ." The common cup is the most powerful visible sign of this interconnectedness.

We Belong to One Another: When communicants drink from the same cup, they are making a non-verbal and physical declaration that they "truly belong to one another." It's a visible proclamation of unity that transcends all human divisions.

An Act of Radical Equality: In a world deeply divided by wealth, status, race, politics, and health, the common cup is a radical equalizer. The same cup is offered to everyone, without distinction. The person kneeling next to you—whether a stranger, a friend, or even someone with whom you profoundly disagree—shares this one cup with you. It is a tangible expression of fellowship and a willingness to accept each other as equals at the Lord's Table.

A statement of unity: The "One Cup" as the "One Body": The act directly mirrors the scriptural teaching of "one bread," which signifies the "one body" of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The shared cup

functions in the same way, symbolizing that this diverse group of individuals is made one through their shared participation in Christ.

Note also that Paul says that Christ said "for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup..." (1 Cor 11:26)

The Pharisee has no understanding that he needs to be connected, to be in relationship as part of the people of God. He chose to dismiss others with arrogance, rather than reach out with humility.

A symbol of responsibility of care for one another

This is the more challenging aspect of the cup's symbolism. It links the communicant not only to Christ's sacrifice but also to the lives and burdens of the other people in the congregation.

Sharing in the "Cup of Sacrifice" & caring for one another

The Liturgical Commission states that the cup is "Christ's cup of self-sacrificial love." To share it is to symbolically accept a share in that sacrifice.

This symbolic "responsibility" isn't abstract. It implies a concrete willingness to support one another and "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2). You are drinking from the same cup as those who are poor, sick, grieving, or struggling.

The act of sharing the chalice becomes a silent pledge of solidarity—a commitment to be responsible *for* the community you *belong to*.

I want to be clear that you can receive just the bread and still fully receive the full grace of God present in communion. This is not a magic trick in two halves.

Receiving just the bread, what is commonly called, receiving in one kind, does not diminish our entering into the sacrament of communion.

But offering a common cup as we share the bread and the wine together speaks to who we are and, I believe, who God is calling us to be as the people of God in this place at this time. It speaks to the identity of being Church:

Followers of Christ who chose to belong to one another, and who chose to care for one another. Who have embraced radical unity, leaving behind the divisions of the world and choosing to share together in the joy and cost of following Christ.

Hope: So, as from November we change the way we receive the bread and the wine, and offer wine from the common cup, we make a new statement of our unity, of our belonging to one another and of our willingness to care for each other.

St Mary's: When we shortly receive communion and share the common cup together do so recommitting yourself to walk in connection with God and others, as part of God's people, Christ's Church in this place.