

Sermon for October 3, 2021—“Celebrating Jesus”

World Communion Sunday, Year B—Texts: Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16

If after listening to the gospel reading this morning (the lectionary reading by the way) you're expecting a sermon about divorce and remarriage today, it is my sad duty to inform you that you will not be hearing one. Sorry. Besides being more than a bit off-putting, it really wouldn't fit into what we celebrate today. So, what I offer today is a reflection on this morning's **first** reading, as it speaks to what today is all about.

That—of course—would be World Communion Sunday. We celebrate with Christians from all over the world, among other things, who Jesus is and what he did for us. We also celebrate what, by the power of Holy Spirit, Jesus **still** does.

So today, we're celebrating Jesus.

We celebrate the Jesus that welcomed little children. We celebrate the Jesus that took time to bless everyone, no matter who they were, and no matter, what others thought of them. Jesus, our savior and our Lord. Jesus, the promised, anointed one of God. Jesus, the Son of God, fully divine and yet fully human. Human. A man like us. A man who struggled to be faithful to God. A man who was called to love the unlovable. A man who was tempted as we are. A man who suffered at least as much as we suffer.

The letter to the Hebrews, from which our first reading today came, speaks of Jesus in exalted terms. It names Jesus as the "...appointed heir of all things through whom [God] also created the worlds." It calls him "the reflection of God's glory," the "exact imprint of God's very being," and "much superior to angels." And this is true. Our whole faith speaks of it.

But the letter to the Hebrews also reminds us of something else of which our whole faith speaks. It reminds us that here, on earth, Jesus was made like us; that he was made like us, a little lower than the angels; that Jesus was one with us, born of a woman, to walk through life as we do.

Jesus was one with us: able to sympathize with us, able to identify with us, able to rejoice with us, able to suffer with us, and because of what he suffered—in faithfulness and obedience—he is able to intercede for us before God his Father. God **our** Father. Jesus. Emmanuel. God with us. Jesus our Savior. Jesus our Brother.

The signs, these symbols, before us today—the bread and the cup—they remind us how our brother became our Savior. They remind us of what his love, his faithfulness, his obedience, cost him. Here is the account from Mark's Gospel...

“While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; eat, this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’”

The next day, hours later really, out of love for the world, Jesus died. Scripture tell us that when Jesus died on the cross, he assumed the burden of our sin; that he took upon himself the penalty for sin; doing so that we might live and be one with him and one another before God—before God, the Creator of all things.

I imagine that even if you've never read a comic book in your life, you're familiar with Superman. Much has been written about the character since his origin in 1938; particularly, the similarities between Superman, an alien with special powers, sent to Earth by his father—and Jesus Christ. While not the intention of his creators—two Jewish guys from Cleveland—these similarities have been played up over the years, in his many comic and movie iterations.

Back in 2006, the movie *Superman Returns* was released. There's a scene in it, where Superman is shown floating in space, just hanging there and with his super-hearing he literally listens to the whole world. He hears people in trouble. People crying out for help—for someone to save them. Later, he tells Lois Lane: "I hear everything. Every day I hear people crying for [a savior]."

The world indeed needs a savior and indeed people cry out for one every day. We Christians, however, know we already have one. Unlike Superman, who disguises himself as Clark Kent, a regular guy, Jesus **is** one of us. He lived and breathed. He laughed and cried, in a real place and at a real time. And when he was stretched out on the cross, and then raised up to hang beside two other men, he suffered and died. Just as we suffer and die.

Today, we do what Jesus did the night he died. In his memory we break bread and share a cup. The bread he called his body broken for us. The cup he called his blood shed for us. In doing this we recall how God so loved the world; that he came among us and became one with us, and then suffered and died for us so that sin and death would no longer have any power over us. As he shared in our death, so we share in his resurrection. The resurrection granted to him because of his love and faithfulness.

So often we talk about how we need to believe in this God of love; but what we celebrate today reminds us of a different fact; that even when we don't believe in **God**, God believes in **us**. I'm sure most of you have seen Waterford Crystal. If not—here's an example. This was a wedding gift that Jane and I received. It's beautiful to look at. It's kind of heavy. If I were to drop it, it'd shatter into a lot of tiny pieces, and no matter how hard you tried to glue the broken pieces back together, it'd never look as beautiful as it did before being dropped.

I imagine that sometimes we get the idea that as human beings, we're like leaded crystal. That is, that we're beautiful, until we make a mistake or until something bad happens—either to us or to someone we love. We've all had those experiences. We will likely have more. And when we do, life shatters into lots of tiny pieces. Sometimes the hurt is so deep we think we could never be put back together like we were before.

I've met many who have felt that way at one time or another. I'll tell you what I told them—and that is that it simply isn't so. It may seem like it—but it isn't. There's no hurt that God cannot heal. There's no brokenness that God cannot mend. I mean—if anything—we're more like Silly Putty than leaded crystal. Like Silly Putty, we can be pulled apart, rolled into little balls, flung against the wall, or smashed flat.

And like Silly Putty, we can always be scraped back together again. We can be forgiven, re-worked, re-molded, and re-shaped into someone that's even more beautiful than before. God can do that. In fact, that's how God has created us. God believes in us. God believes that we're not beyond saving.

What's more, and here, brothers and sisters, is the thing: God has heard the world's cries for a savior and in the person of Jesus, has come and, through the Holy Spirit, remains with us; to forgive us, to heal us; to scrape us back together again and mold us into something even better than before.

It's this presence with us—right here, right now—that we celebrate today; and it's because of this presence that we're able to be who and what God's created us to be and it's why we give thanks.

God has made us family. God's family. A family that stretches around the world. A family that's been called to love as we've been loved; to know as we've been known; to forgive as we've been forgiven; to give as we have received. As we share our family meal today, let's give thanks to God, knowing that we're not alone, that we have both each other and brothers and sisters around the world, who also gather today at the Lord's table.

We're a family that gathers knowing that what binds us is the Spirit of Christ among us; the Spirit of him who was, who is, and who shall ever be one **with** us, one **over** us, and one **in** us—one who truly loves us and died for us.

I think that's worth celebrating—don't you?

Thanks be to God. Amen and amen.