

# THE GOSPEL OF MARK: WEEK 11

Jerusalem: "The Resurrection of Jesus" Mark 16:1-8

## Commentary: "One Bread, One Body, One Lord of all...."

There are four accounts of the institution of the Eucharist – or the ritual of the "Last Supper", which we commonly call; Communion. The earliest is that of Paul (1 Cor 11; 23-26) – but Paul's version was based upon oral traditions first heard, then shared, by the apostles. The other accounts are found in the synoptic Gospels: Mark 14: 22-24; Matthew 26: 26-30; and Luke 22:14-23 – the oldest, and simplest, of these being the Mark account. Not surprisingly, the Mark and Matthew accounts are very close – as Matthew's is based on Mark's.

The Paul and Luke accounts, while similar to the Mark version, share the same language likely due to the alignment between the author of Luke and Paul.

The Mark account, broken in to two parts – the preparation of the meal, and the meal itself. "While they were eating" (v22) resumes the meal with the disciples seated after the warning of the betrayal of Jesus by one of His disciples sharing His table (v17-21). Without ceremony, Jesus "took bread", "blessed", "broke", "gave" – using the same actions and the very same words as in both of Mark's version of the 'feeding stories' (6:41; 8:6). Interestingly, then the disciples "did not understand about the loaves", (6:52; see 14:17-21) but now, the mystery is being revealed. Jesus is the "one loaf/bread" – not just for Jews, but also for the Gentiles because, as He tells them, his body is being given and his blood poured out for "all", Jew and Gentile alike, "for many" – a Jewish saying, meaning: "all". (v23-24).

"This is my body": Paul adds (1Cor11: 22) "which is for you" – "you" as an inclusive pronoun meaning "all", but this is already firmly implied in Mark both through the repeated references to Jesus' death since the beginning of the passion narrative and the explicit statement in the cup saying: "This is my blood of the covenant". In this line we

hear echoes of Exodus 24:8: "See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you." Reminding the disciples that, by the sprinkling of sacrificial blood, the all of the People of Israel shared in the blessings of the covenant given at Sinai. Likewise, this "blood of the covenant" – the "cup" shared by Jesus – will be poured out "for many" – "for all". By saying this, Jesus informs the disciples that His death will form/establish a new community – the Body of Christ; the Church. Understood this way, the "Last Supper" helps us to understand the meaning of Jesus' death on the Cross and His resurrection.

Mark's simple, direct, "Supper" narrative is likely based on the liturgical practice/tradition of Mark's community made up of non-Jewish believers who likely met in secret. While less explicit and wordy than the version attributed to Paul (1Cor11:23-26), it has the same meaning. In both, the blood seals a new covenant. In both, the Eucharistic – "thanksgiving", "ritual" – meal anticipates the final, promised, banquet in the kingdom of heaven. In both, the loaf/bread is shared "for all". And, even if the Mark version does not have Paul's "Do this in remembrance of me", every time the Communion liturgy was – and is – said by the Church was the living fulfilment of that imperative. A mandate that Mark's community modeled – just as his Gospel did.

For me, one of the surprising – and welcomed – aspects of the Gospel of Mark had to be the numerous examples of people on, or beyond, the margins of traditional/acceptable Jewish religious culture and law who proclaimed their faith in Jesus as the Messiah through their actions and words. In Him they found connection and belonging – they found forgiveness, love, and most importantly – hope. The father of convulsing child spoke for them/us all: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Mark's Jesus made it clear – at least to those hungry, lonely, desperate, lost enough to hear His words speak to them directly – that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" – for all! (Mark 10:45) This is where the power of Mark's Gospel comes from; and this is Good News for you and me! Thanks be to God for our "One bread, one body, one Lord of all!" (Hymn 540)

### "For many": The Communion of Mark

*"While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; 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." (Mark 14:22-24)*