

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

What a very strange thought that is.

When you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death.

There are not many meals that bear a weight like this, are there?

I use breakfast to bribe my children out of bed.

Lunch gives me the energy to work through the afternoon without a headache.

Supper sustains us through the evening and the night hours.

Most of our meals are undertaken entirely in their own right, for their own sake.

We need calories and nutrients for our bodies to function, and so we eat.

But this meal proclaims.

And we recognize that others do as well.

Pull out your grandmother's silver and your mother's china,
cook a tenderloin of beef and serve old wine and you are proclaiming something,
be it honoring your guests or demonstrating your affluence.

Or, serve your mother-in-law leftover pizza, and you are proclaiming something else.

But there is little enough of that in most of our lives.

We enjoy meals and the fellowship and family feelings they entail.

And yet fairly little is proclaimed by them.

The church came by this weird way of proclaiming honestly, as we have heard.

The people Israel had long used a meal, the Passover,

to share what they had learned about God,

to proclaim God's mercy to them,

in bringing them out of the house of bondage and into a land of freedom and responsibility.

It was a such a proclaiming Passover meal that Jesus spoke new truth into,

as he said this bread and this wine would bear its eaters into this presence

and he into their presence, forever.

He did that on the night before he died.

And Paul looked back and saw this meal as a proclamation of that saving death.

Tomorrow I have to preach about the death of Jesus, because it is Good Friday.

Already did that once, this week, since Palm Sunday requires a dwelling on his saving death.

There are libraries of books about what the death of Jesus has meant,

rival theologies, endless explanations.

I hear them yelled through bullhorns outside football games in the fall,

and on street corners in tourist towns.

And certainly the death of Jesus needs to be preached.

But as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death.

By eating, by drinking.

We have to tell children (and the occasional adult) that it is not good to talk with food in your mouth.

It is unattractive, and you could choke. Don't talk with your mouth full.

But here is a meal that does that.

You are free here to eat, drink, and proclaim at the same time.

Does a proclaiming meal speak, in most wonderful terms, to the mercy and grace that flows from the cross?

You don't even have to say it, to proclaim it.

Just take, eat, and drink.

And with your mouth full, you know and proclaim the saving death of the Lord.

That is really weird and wonderfully beautiful.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

That is really weird and wonderfully beautiful; it must be of God.