

In the movie Dr. Strange, Benedict Cumberbatch plays a brilliant neurosurgeon who knows he is brilliant. An over-sized ego, you might say. Soon into the story the doctor has a tragic car accident and his hands are severely damaged. He wonders if he can ever be a surgeon again. He searches the world to find a way to heal his hands and in his epic search he meets a character known as the “Ancient One.” Soon he becomes one of her students, learning martial arts and mystical arts. As a practitioner of the mystical he can even cast a spell on people and, in time, he dons a cape to asset him in supernatural powers. Dr. Strange is a kind of superhero like Wonder Woman or Batman.

There’s a terrific scene in the movie where Dr. Strange banter with the Ancient One while being trained by her. At first she is reluctant to help him because of his arrogance and observes that this is the very thing that prevents him from mastering the art of the mystical. She says to him, “Arrogance and fear still keep you from learning the simplest and most significant lesson of all.” Strange replies, “Which is?” And without skipping a beat she tells him: “It’s not about you.”

It’s not about you. Why is that such a tough lesson to learn?

For years the burger franchise made it big by appealing to the notion that it’s all about you: “You deserve a break today at McDonalds” and at “Have it your way at Burger King.” If you’re travelling, take heart: VISA promises that it is everywhere you want to be. I once met a gentleman who said he wanted a recording of the song made famous by Frank Sinatra’s played at his funeral, “I did it my way.”

In the scriptures before us today we discover, once again, a radical word from God and in the passage from Isaiah there is a promise from God for you. The Bible is chock-full of such promises. How is it different or distinct?

Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;  
and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come; buy wine and milk without money and without price ...

The offer is one of free food for the hungry and thirsty who have no resources. You that are in want, come and feast at the hand of a generous God.

How do you hear the invitation to you? Is it you and you alone or do you sense something bigger going on here?

God’s promises are addressed not to an individual but to a people. God’s people are in exile, cut off from their home in Israel and are at the mercy of the empire in Babylon.

God says “Come back to me. I will establish with you an everlasting covenant, an enduring relationship with me and with one another. Know the free gift of salvation and love and so live freely – put your trust in me and let that be your identity.” And there’s more: “Nations that do not know you shall run to you.” In feasting on the food that endures the free people become witnesses to God’s reign of love in the world of the neighbor. While feasting on the food that endures, not the junk food of the empire, they become a sign of God’s faithfulness for all the world. God offers us life and freedom and the gift of relationship with God and, by the way, God’s says “It’s not about you.”

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?”

We live in a culture of consumerism where we are taught to buy and purchase happiness and I think, implicit in the message, is that it is indeed all about you, but dear people of God, God calls us again and again to God’s self and to the food that endures.

Every Sunday we feast on the food that endures. Bread is broken. Wine is poured. Free food. And it is for you: “The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you.”

And how do you hear these words of given and shed *for you*?

Ensnared in consumerism it is easy to hear you as you and you alone, but listen again. The *you* is cast much in the same way the promise issued from Isaiah.

These words spoken by Jesus in the New Testament, in their original Greek, mean a lot more than you alone. It’s a kind of plural “you.” It is more the way my friend in North Carolina says “you.” He says “Y’all”.

Given for y’all ...

You see, you are joined to Christ, and being joined to Christ you are joined to one another. Given and shed for you is more than you alone. You includes the people kneeling or standing next to you when the Supper is served. You includes Christians feasting at similar tables down the street or across the city or across the world. You includes the rich tapestry of ancestors in the faith who have preceded us.

It’s not about you alone. When Christ bids us to come to the table to share bread and cup, we come as sharers, companions, those who share in Christ’s gifts of body and blood. You means “y’all”.

More than once, Pastor Van Kley and I have been asked questions around why we use the common cup at the Holy Communion. These are good questions, particularly if that has not been our experience, and I like to say that the *you* isn't about you alone but includes the entire community gathered for worship.

So we share bread from a common loaf. We share wine from a common cup because we are inextricably bound to one another through Christ.

As you are aware, you may dip the bread into the cup or you may drink from cup. I would encourage you to consider drinking from the cup if you have not done so. It is quite all right. It may not seem tidy, but it is a way God gives us to be bound to one another and to experience in a most physical way the presence of Christ. We are sisters and brothers eating from the same loaf, drinking from the same cup.

I believe it is part of the mystery that makes the Christian community not just any community but the community of Jesus' companions and Jesus' disciples. Yes, Christians are odd and a little out of sync in a day to day world that prizes the autonomous individual – the glorious “you” - above all else. But God calls us to a different kind of kingdom where we are loved as persons in community, where faith is personal but never private. We are fed by the hand of God for the sake of the world.

Jesus' compassion compelled him to feed the multitudes even though two pieces of fish and five loaves of bread seemed meager. Jesus then proceeded to do what Jesus did when he was hosted a meal ...

He blessed the bread

He broke it

He gave it for all to share

The disciples knew this sacred action well and this time Jesus included 5,000-plus people to let his closest followers know that it isn't just about you!

Fed by God's gracious hand, we are free to share God's abundance with our neighbors.

How appropriate that below this table is the PRLC Food bank, the place where food is stored and given to hungry neighbors. Fed by Christ we are set free to feed others.

My wife, Britt, pastors St. Luke Episcopal Church in Ballard. They've been feeding our homeless friends for over thirty years. It all started when a group of faithful women met

together to pray and heard God's call to feed the hungry. What began as lunch once a week has expanded to breakfast five days a week. Make no mistake. This is quite consistent for a cadre of faithful women who were fed by Jesus at the Eucharist each Sunday.

In her book, *Take and Eat*, Sarah Miles recounts her journey of conversion. She said her first experience at Holy Communion changed everything:

“Eating Jesus, as I did that day to my great astonishment, led me against all my expectations to a faith I never imagined. The mysterious sacrament turned out to be not a symbolic wafer, but actual food – indeed, the bread of life. In that shocking moment of communion, filled with a deep desire to reach for and become part of a body, I realized what I'd been doing with my life all along was what I was meant to do: feed people ... [She continued] hungering and thirsting for more body, blood, bread, wine poured out freely, shared by all. I discovered a religion rooted in the most ordinary yet subversive practice: a dinner table where everyone is welcome, where the poor, the despised and the outcasts are honored.”

She went on to establish a parish food pantry and continues to advocate for the things of justice.

Friends in Christ, in these actions around Word and Table, God enacts God's just kingdom. We see and hear and taste Jesus broken for us and poured out for us and so shaped and formed by God's hand we are broken and poured out for others.

So, once again, Jesus calls you to the table. Come, you who are hungry and thirsty. Why spend your food on that which does not satisfy? Feast on the food that endures. Given and shed for you and for the life of the world. Amen.