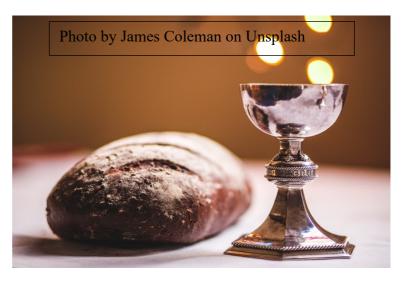
Some entry points into the Eucharist

Mark 14.22-25: 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. 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.'



Dietrich Bonhoeffer¹: Ever since Jesus Christ sat at table with his disciples, the table fellowship of his community has been blessed by his presence. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him" (Luke 24:30-31)

. . .

To know Jesus Christ in the presence of these gifts—what does this mean?

It means, first, to know him as the giver of all gifts, as the Lord and Creator of this our world, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Second, the fellowship acknowledges that all earthly gifts are given to it only for Christ's sake, as this whole world is sustained only for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Word and his message. He is the true bread of life. He is not only the giver but the gift itself, for whose sake all earthly gifts exist.

Third, the congregation of Jesus believes that its Lord wills to be present when it prays for his presence. Every mealtime fills Christians with gratitude for the living, presence Lord and God, Jesus Christ.

The fellowship of the table has a festive quality. It is a constantly recurring reminder in the midst of our everyday work of God's resting after His work, of the Sabbath as the meaning and goal of the week and its toil. Our life is not only travail and labour, it is also refreshment and joy in the goodness of God. We labour, but God nourished and sustains us. And this is reason for celebrating.

The table fellowship of Christians implies obligation. It is our daily bread that we eat, not my own. We share our bread.

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer "The Fellowship of the Table" Excerpts from Life Together, p. 66-69



Peter Rollins²: Communion thus reflects a profound type of Pledge, Turn, and Prestige, First there is the presentation of the sacred as an object in the bread and wine. Then there is the disappearance of this sacred-object in the consumption. Finally there is the return of the sacred through a realization that we are the body that we consumed. It thus offers us a snapshot of Christianity in its most radical, non-religious and non-confessional form.

Sam Wells:³ How can we become a people who can hear God speak in the Scriptures? Jesus was the moment in time when God opened his heart to us and our human life was for once completely open to God. How is that moment accessible to us 2000 years later? On the night before he died Jesus said, "This is how." He took bread and wine and showed us how to remember and be reformed in all that he was and did. Everything we do at the Eucharist is about allowing our life to be shaped around Jesus life.

we bring forward God's gifts and lay them on the altar. Deuteronomy chapter 26 instructs the children of Israel to bring the first fruits in a basket and give them to the priest and then tell the story of salvation. In just the same way we bring our money, the harvest of our work, the bread and wine, which at this stage represent the ordinary food of life and the extraordinary drink of eternal life; ... In every way in creed, prayers, offering and song, we are saying, "This is our best understanding of how to respond to your gospel: take it and transform it into food that gives us eternal life."

And now we come to the fourth, and crucial, question at the heart of the Eucharist and the heart of our faith: "What does it mean to be God's companions?" This is the question answered by the long prayer of thanksgiving and the distribution of the bread and wine. A companion literally means one with whom you share bread.

We have seen, we have touched, we have heard, we have tasted the Lord our God. The Eucharist is a whole body experience of truthful living in a new society as God's companions together forever. In our recessional hymn the choir and ministers set out to begin the week to come, taking the sacred actions and words and seeking to speak and hear and practice and receive them in every moment of every day. I have a golden retriever called Connie and I often throw a tennis ball for her to fetch. At this moment the pastor is like a person who throws a tennis ball out of the church into the world beyond, inviting the eager members of the congregation in their different ways to locate and discern and cherish the place where it lands, and at the next service to bring back the wisdom and wonder of where it landed and of how they met God there. For the next act of worship begins the moment this one ends.

² https://peterrollins.com/meaning-of-magic-trick

³ Teaching Eucharist Five addresses offered in Duke University Chapel on September 20, 2009 by the Revd Dr Sam Wells