

## Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

**Date of Sermon:** 18 September 2016

**Speaker:** Mike Levy

**Title:** Encounter: Communion

**Read:** Luke 22 vs 14-23, 1 Corinthians 11 vs 23-33

### **Introduction:**

If we want to come to a meeting that is well chaired, where we stick to an agenda and we come away with a list of action points for everyone for the next meeting then we should go to a meeting of the South Gloucestershire Town and Country Planning team. If we want to go to a place where things get a little crazy and dangerous, where we move in the prophetic and minister to each other in the power of the Spirit, a place where we meet with each other but also with an awesome God and his son Jesus in a transformational way, then a gathering of Church is the place to go. This is what our "Encounter" series is about

### **Review:**

In 2014 Pope Francis said this to a group of young people:

*"The most important thing that can happen to a person is to encounter Jesus, who loves us, who saved us, and who gave his life for us"*

If we think about these words and we think about Communion we can see that Communion is a place to encounter this Jesus. Communion means sharing, common unity, spending time in the presence of God and each other in a deep way. It is relational and relationships are about encounters. It is intentional.

As humans we are whole beings, body, mind and spirit. In Communion we involve our body (stand, sit, eat, drink and so on), our mind (think, reflect, meditate), and our spirit (pray, listen to God's voice, commune with him).

The difficulty is that although Communion is something we take part in as the body of Christ it is also individual and so we may encounter God in different ways. It is not a case of do XYZ and ABC will happen. Here are some of the ways that people in TBC encounter God in communion.

**Friendship encounter:** In some way the gap between God and humanity is closed at Communion and we can encounter Jesus as our friend, sitting around that table, welcomed by him, eating a meal with him - intimate. Yet at the same time we can encounter a bigger God as we are part of a long chain that stretches from that room into the future with countless others who have shared Communion.

**Challenging encounter:** We are called to "examine ourselves" and so we can be challenged in our **attitudes** - at the last supper the attitude of Jesus was one of thanksgiving, our **actions** - at the last supper the action about to be taken by Judas was betrayal and our **affections** - at the last supper Jesus said he "eagerly desired" to share the meal.

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**Emotional encounter:** For some the encounter at Communion is emotional, as we think of the physical, mental and spiritual agony of Jesus on the cross and realise that he did it for us, as individuals, the reflection can cause an emotional response in us

**Hope-filled encounter:** Communion reminds us that we are a people of hope, hope because the cross was not the end and hope that Jesus will come again and hope because we are a people with a future.

**Body filled encounter:** The bread and wine reminds us of the physical body and blood of Jesus but it is also true that Communion is shared experience with fellow believers, as the Anglican liturgy says "we are one body because we all share the one bread (Jesus)". Communion is a place where we serve each other, pray for each other, minister to each other.

**Reflect and Respond:**

1. How do you feel about the thought that a gathering of Church should be a little crazy, dangerous and transformational? What do we mean by that?
2. In what way is the gap between God and Humanity shrunk at Communion?
3. Share how you encounter God at Communion.
4. What do we mean by "examine yourself" and how ready are you to be challenged in this way?
5. How open are you to an emotional encounter and what do you think we should be aware of in such an encounter?
6. How do you find hope in following Jesus and at Communion?
7. On your frontline- how do you respond to those that say that Christianity is dead, or that Jesus is a myth or just a good person/teacher who died many years ago?
8. How would you describe Communion and what we do at Communion to someone who had never experienced it or even seen it before?

**Pray:** Let your prayers be led by what comes out of your reflection.