

Grumpy Old Church

The story was the Israelites grumbling at Moses for leading them out of Egypt and into the wilderness and we were trying to make connections with our contemporary world. David in his usual down to earth style cut through our discussion and told us to open the church doors and take a look outside at a community that has literally been walking in the wilderness through the factory closures of the 80's, the decline of the 90's and into the demolitions of the current decade. We are in the wilderness, we have been faithfully following God for decades so please forgive us if we occasionally sound like grumpy old church. This Eucharist picks us up, reminds us of those who we hold lovingly in our prayers and challenges us to look outside our door and give thanks for the community of which we are part.

We follow you, we take a risk
we've left what felt safe and comfortable
the security and familiarity of order and tradition
we've embraced the chaos
tried new ways of worshipping
different combinations of seats
adopted a more participatory approach.

"Trust in me", you say
we've been trusting you for decades
faithfully keeping on keeping on
we've thrown off the yoke of captivity
to unbending dogma and creed.

And here we are, in the wilderness of faith
not really quite sure where we are going
of why the journey is taking so long
we've tried different paths, some exciting,
some with a bit of trepidation
but each path has led us back to the same place
round in never ending circles
to the here and now.

And yes we are complaining
we're tired and despondent
ready to let go and give up
and maybe if we're honest we're a little angry too
but we've got the message
that the destination,
the promise of the land of milk and honey
is not the only thing that matters
it is the journey of faith that is important
the process of getting there
that enables us to become who we are to become.

So we pause in our journey
as the weeks cycle ever by
to dream of milk and honey always out of reach
the promised land of our imaginings
but to enjoy the here and now of bread
and celebrate by raising our glasses of water
bread and water, sustenance of life

the basics we need to pick up our selves
and place one foot in front of the other yet again.

So forgive us, when we loose faith and grumble
when we question why we are here at all
when we start to demand gourmet French bread
and matured, vintage wine
instead of sharing the white bread from the corner shop
and California wines cheapest bottle of plonk.

Remind us gently of the people we hold in our prayers
of the shapes cut lovingly into the loaf
of people whose journeys
are much harder and more painful than ours
who cannot even begin to dream of the destination
but struggle from day to day.

And so we look at the shapes our prayers have taken
carved into the bread of existence
and think of those whose homes
have been flooded and contaminated
or for whom the rains haven't come
and provided the longed for harvest.

We think of those from other faiths and nationalities
who have had, by choice or circumstance
to make a new life in our community
we remember those who are ill or addicted or getting older
and who struggle to make it through each day.

And we celebrate in the small wonders we encounter on he way
the beauty of the natural world breaking through our concrete jungle
allotments tended and fresh produce growing in backyards and alleys
children returning to school in newly ironed school uniforms
a celebration of Italian opera to say farewell
to a maestro of stage and stadium.

For on the night when Jesus pleaded with God
to take a different path
to keep journeying
rather than confront the finality and the silence of the cross
when the promised land seemed to fade
to nothing more than a rambling delusion
Jesus gathered his closest followers around him
knowing their insecurities, their gripes and their grumbles
and gave them, not a great banquet
but broken unleaven bead
bread of the Passover
manna of the wilderness
and poured out water and wine
water of life that gushed from the rock
wine saved for celebration.

Together they shared the necessities of life

eating their story and their disappointment.

Together they shared the wine of celebration
drinking their hopes and their dreams.

So we take these prayers
as a sign of the community
we are continually in the process of becoming
and shape us, as we eat this bread, into your faithful people.

So we take this water
as a sign of your promise
to walk with us as we journey together to the here and now
to shape us, as we drink it, into your faithful people.

[share bread and wine]

Together we have shared the necessities of life
eating our story and our disappointment.

Together we have shared the wine of celebration
drinking our hopes and our dreams.

Together we will journey with you and with each other
through the wilderness of the here and now.

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