

Exclusive Eucharist

Sometimes irony can be a dangerous tool! If the congregation took the words of this Eucharistic prayer literally, no one would be present to celebrate the Lord's Supper... But in the week that The Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Reading called upon the church to shed its "Marks and Spencer image" perhaps there is a message for us.

We come now to the high point of our worship this morning: the Eucharist. Here, Heaven meets Earth. Perfection meets Imperfection. Life meets Death. Here we glimpse into the Holy of Holies.

3 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.

All who are not Church Members should leave now - for Church Membership is the expression of our commitment to Christ.

All who are not members of *this* Church should leave now - for God is revealed in this place and time . We cannot be sure that God is present in other faiths or denominations - or even other Baptist Churches.

All who have not been baptised should leave now - for Baptism is the sacrament by which we express our faith in Christ.

All who have not been baptised as adult believers should leave now - for infant Baptism is not true baptism and you have not really been baptised.

All who have not received instruction in how to take communion should leave now - for Paul commands us to examine ourselves - and we need to know how to do this correctly.

All who are under sixteen should leave now - for you are not old enough to make a carefully-thought-out profession of faith.

All who have learning difficulties should leave now - for you can never understand the creeds and dogmas of our faith.

All who have degrees in theology should leave now - for you take pride in your human intellect and reason. This destroys true faith.

All whose first language is not English should leave now - for you will not understand what is being said and may fall unconsciously into sin.

All whose skin is dark should leave now. We know that God loves you, but you don't really fit in. You'd be better in your own church.

If you have a criminal record, you should leave now. God forgives your sins, but we have a lovely silver chalice and we don't want to lose it.

All who don't know how to behave in church should leave now. This is the house of God.

And while you're at it, if you are dirty or smelly, you clearly don't respect God. You too should leave now.

And it goes without saying that if you are Muslim, or Hindu, or Jewish you are not welcome at our table. For ours is the only route to heaven.

If you are poor, if you are sick, if you are a prostitute, if you are a tax collector, if you have leprosy, if you have schizophrenia, if you are just a fisherman, please leave now.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

If you hold views which contradict ours, please leave now.

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me

If you challenge our prejudices, please leave now.

Leave now. You're not welcome.

Go.

Or else.

[Silence]

This is my body. Broken for all.
Nailed to a tree for speaking out
and challenging conformity.

[Break Bread]

This is my blood. Shed for the world.
Gushing from sides pierced
by lances of uniformity.

[Lift Cup]

So eat and drink,
anyone,
who loves Jesus.

And be welcome.

[Share and sing]

You have fed with your love
and cast out our prejudice.
We have drunk of your promise
and been welcomed into your community.

Send us out
Into your wasteful creation
To share your welcome.

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