

Walking in the Light

Session 3:
Experiencing what I know

We have been looking at how we know God, and the language we use to talk about him. This week we look at the life we receive in God through resurrection, and how we experience God in the Sacraments.

1. Sharing your story

In the group (or in small groups) discuss with each other your experience of 'death' and the impact it has on us as we anticipate it ourselves and as we lose people who are close to us.

2. Jesus is resurrected

We watch an excerpt from *The Miracle Maker*.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

I Corinthians 15.20-26

3. Teaching

'Resurrection' is not just an event associated with Jesus, but because Jesus was God become fully human, then resurrection must have implications for all other humans as well. Paul refers to death as "the last enemy".

4. Discussion

- How do you 'experience' God's presence in your life (as opposed to 'know' or 'tell')?
- How have you heard God's presence being talked about in Church?

5. Sacraments

We use the word 'sacrament' in church a lot.

What is the difference between a sign and a symbol?

- We might say that a sign points the way to something, but a symbol is a way of making a reality present. A roadsign to Manchester in Liverpool does not make one city present in the other, but it shows you where it is. However, a police officer's uniform is a symbol of his/her authority: where you see the uniform, you know that the authority is actually present as well.

The church has often talked about seven sacraments: the 'dominical sacraments' (i.e. those instituted by Jesus himself) are baptism and Holy Communion. The others are Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage, Confession and Anointing.

Does the term 'symbol' help us to understand the sacraments? What reality is made present through the sacraments?

- Many modern theologians find that a list of seven sacramental functions of the church does not capture all we might mean by 'sacrament', and we should look for a much broader definition and understanding.

6. Discussion - responses to experiencing God's presence

Human response as pleasure

- Discuss the ways in which we feel close to God in nature

Human response as understanding

- Discuss the ways in which we are driven to 'action' as a response to our experience of God.

7. Holy Communion

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, 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.' 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.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11.23-26

- Think about how we celebrate the Eucharist in Church. How close do you think it is to the Last Supper? What is the role of the priest? Who is the host at this meal? Who is the guest? Look as well at how the Church has emphasized how special this meal is with special vessels and vestments (though note as well that the vestments worn by the priest are supposedly derived from the clothing worn in the 1st century, so they also indicate our continuity from the early church such as that in Corinth).
- What happens to the bread and the wine at the Eucharist? We say that they become the body and blood of Christ, but what do we mean by this? Probably everyone understands this differently.
- The Church of England holds the view that Christ is really present in the bread and the wine, but it does not express a single view of how this is.

Today, young people are often admitted to Holy Communion when they are 7 or 8, but for adults the traditional moment when we receive the Eucharist is at Confirmation. Confirmation is when we make an adult declaration of faith, and the Bishop lays hands on us and prays that the Holy Spirit should come upon us.

Have a think about Confirmation. If you are not already confirmed, is this the right time for you?