

Wine
(Scripture is from Good News Bible)

(INTRODUCTION)

Jesus set in motion a series of events that would change the world. In three years of teaching, performing miracles, and - when he felt people were suffering - flying in the face of established authority, Jesus had become well known. He was beloved by many, but misunderstood, hated and feared by some...and some who hated him were in positions of power. This is the third Wednesday of Lent, the season we celebrate the week that changed the world forever. Holy week was a week of God's love poured out for us. On Ash Wednesday, we looked closely at the element of blood: Jesus' blood shed for us. Last Wednesday, oil, which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit come to live in us when we accept Jesus' salvation. Tonight, we will consider the element of WINE. The element of wine is central to our understanding of God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ: his death on the cross and resurrection which is the new covenant, the final sacrifice offered for our sins.

Tonight, I bring the element of wine. My character is Judas, the betrayer.

Our scripture reading tonight is from John 13, verses 21 to 30:

"After Jesus had said these things, he was deeply

troubled and told his disciples, "I tell you for certain that one of you will betray me." They were confused about what he meant. And they just stared at each other.

Jesus' favorite disciple was sitting next to him at the meal, and Simon motioned for that disciple to find out which one Jesus meant. So the disciple leaned toward Jesus and asked, "Lord, which one of us are you talking about?"

Jesus answered, "I will dip this piece of bread in the sauce and give it to the one I was talking about."

Then Jesus dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Right then Satan took control of Judas.

Jesus said, "Judas, go quickly and do what you have to do." No one at the meal understood what Jesus meant. But because Judas was in charge of the money, some of them thought that Jesus had told him to buy something they needed for the festival. Others thought that Jesus had told him to give some money to the poor. Judas took the piece of bread and went out

It was already night."

Wine. From an historical viewpoint, evidence of wine production has been found in Middle Eastern archeological evidence, dating from 5000 B.C. In ancient

times, there were places with little, or poor quality, water for consumption, and wine became an ordinary drink shared at meals.

Wine. The first mention of wine in our Bible is in Genesis 9, recorded after the flood. In verses 20 and 21, we read: "Noah, who was a farmer, was the first man to plant a vineyard. After he drank some of the wine, he became drunk...." We might call this first mention negative, because the consequence of Noah's drunkenness lead to the cursing of Noah's grandson, Canaan, son of Ham.

The second mention in scripture is far more positive. In Genesis 14, we read about Abram returning from battle, victorious. Genesis 14:18: "...Melchizedek, (mel kis' e dek) who was king of Salem and also a priest of the Most High God, brought bread and wine to Abram, blessed him, and said, "May the Most High God, who made heaven and earth, bless Abram! May the Most high God, who gave you victory over your enemies, be praised!" It is also recorded that Abram gave a tithe, ten percent of the spoils of war to Melchizedek.

Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, is considered one of scriptures' mysterious figures. Salem is identified with Jerusalem and Salem means "peace." So Melchizedek was literally King of Peace. Melchizedek means "king of righteousness." In the New

Testament, Hebrews 7:15-17, we read of Jesus: "...a different priest has appeared, who is like Melchizedek. He was made a priest, not by human rules and regulations, but through the power of a life which has no end. For the scripture says, "You will be a priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek." Jesus and Melchizedek: connected by God's words, connected by the bread and the wine.

Wine was to be an offering given to God, along with other "food offerings" recorded in Exodus chapter 29, verses 40-42, an offering to be made morning and evening: "With the first lamb, offer two pounds of fine wheat flour mixed with one quart of pure olive oil. Pour out one quart of WINE as an offering. Sacrifice the second lamb in the evening, and offer with it the same amounts of flour, olive oil, and wine as in the morning. This is a food offering to me, the LORD, and its odor pleases me. For all time to come, this burnt offering is to be offered in my presence at the entrance of the Tent of my presence. That is where I will meet my people and speak for you."

Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of God, the final offering given so we might be saved. Wheat, made into bread, has long symbolized the body, the flesh of Christ, given for us. Christianity has long recognized olive oil as symbolic of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter sent to dwell in us after Jesus' obedient death on the cross, his

resurrection, and his return to the Father. And the wine. We read about the Last Supper in the gospel of Mark. Jesus and his twelve disciples were gathered in the upper room to share the Jewish Passover meal and what would become known as the Last Supper. My character, Judas, sat among them and ate and drank with our Lord. But John 13, verse 2 tells us, "The Devil had already put the thought of betraying Jesus into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot." The Devil thought he could kill Jesus and thereby destroy the hope of salvation...for all of us. We don't know what made Judas susceptible to this temptation; we do know that Judas was the treasurer of the twelve and that he stole from the purse. We can only imagine Jesus' sorrow when he said, "The man who shared my food turned against me. (John 13:18)" But what Judas planned for personal financial gain -- for thirty pieces of silver Judas sold our Jesus -- God planned for the salvation of the world, Jews and Gentiles, you and me.

Wine is called the "blood of the grape," and we recognize its importance in our Communion.

We read in Mark 14: 22-26: "While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. 'Take it,' he said, 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and handed it to them; and they all drank from it. Jesus said, 'This is my blood which is poured out for

many, my blood which seals God's covenant. I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God.' Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives."

Jesus came to save us from our sins. When He said, "It is finished," He didn't refer just to the end of his life, He referred to the last great sacrifice that allows us to be saved by grace, not by works nor by accurately following hundreds of rules. Grace. Freely given. All we have to do is accept Christ and his gift of salvation.

Jesus instructed us to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Him. Each time we walk to the altar to take Communion, let us meditate carefully on this priceless gift given for us. When we drink the wine or grape juice, remember the blood of Christ, the final sacrifice given that we might have eternal life.

Please join us next Wednesday for the element of water and its importance to us as believers during this Lenten season. Will you stand and join in singing
