**Maundy Thursday Reading 2015**

ARLONA

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

DAVE

Examine myself? What does that mean?

JOE
I can tell you exactly what it means because I’ve heard it all before. In the New Testament, people were eating a meal along with communion and some people were taking all the food or not waiting for everyone to get there or getting drunk. This is why we don’t serve beer at the Agape Feasts and people shouldn’t take all the deviled eggs for themselves.

PHYLLIS

Well, that’s true, but I think it means a little more than that.

KEN

I was there, you know.

GILBERT

You were?

KEN

I don’t think any of us knew what Jesus was doing until later. This is my body? This is my blood? It was wine and unleavened bread! It wasn’t until . . . after . . . that we understood.

DAVE

What did you understand?

KEN

That the bread and the cup were symbols of Jesus’ death. His sacrifice.

DAVE

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you;

ARLONA

The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed -

ALL but JOE

Took bread

PHYLLIS

And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said,

ALL but JOE

This is my body, which is for you.

ARLONA

Do this

GILBERT
Do this

JOE

Do this

KEN
In remembrance of Me.

JOE

Plastic cups filled with Welch’s grape juice. Hardly worthy of Jesus’ blood.

KEN

In the same way – and we stared at Jesus trying to figure out what he was saying and doing – He took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.”

ARLONA

The new covenant?

KEN

Did that mean the old covenant of sacrificing animals and going to the Temple and the offerings through the priests was gone? This was mind-blowing! What did He mean?

DAVE

Whenever you drink it

ALL but JOE

In remembrance of Me.

GILBERT

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

ARLONA

Sometimes when I take communion, I am overwhelmed with what Jesus did for me. The pain and suffering get to me.

DAVE

I can’t watch those Jesus movies when they act out the crucifixion. It tears me apart to watch it.

ARLONA

But when I take the cup and the piece of cracker, I know what Jesus did for me. Even though I know, in my head, slowing down and holding the physical reminder that He left for us makes me remember.

DAVE

I know! The roughness of the wafer, the smoothness of the cup. I know it’s just plastic and cracker but . . .

PHYLLIS

But sometimes the plate is there and I have to take a cup and it’s time to drink it all together and I’m not sure I’m ready.

JOE

And now we’re back at the beginning. Sometimes I don’t even take communion when it’s passed. You know why? So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. You’re not going to catch me being hypercritical.

DAVE

That’s true. The Bible says that everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

JOE (*to KEN*)

Maybe you ought to start examining yourself a little earlier.

KEN

You guys have had decades to figure out how to share the bread and the cup. It wasn’t so easy for us. We made some mistakes along the way.

GILBERT

I wouldn’t say we have it all figured out.

ARLONA

(*to JOE*) Actually, I start thinking about Communion on Saturday.

PHYLLIS
What? Why?

ARLONA

So I have time to examine myself. (*looks at PHYLLIS*) You’re right. Sometimes it’s Communion Sunday and I’m not prepared. I haven’t studied my heart. I haven’t repented and asked God for forgiveness. I’m still angry at people.

JOE

See? That’s what I’m talking about. You guys are all so noble with your quiet music and your dimmed lights and your prayer time. But when that plate starts coming around, you grab it because it’s tradition. It’s what we do. Put it in the front of the service, put it at the end of the service, it doesn’t matter. At least I think about being unworthy.

KEN

You people! You weren’t there! Do you know how wretched we felt? Jesus showed us what He was going to do and then we left that room with our bellies full and fell asleep when He asked us to pray with Him! And then we ran like the cowards we were when Jesus was arrested! He was in agony on the cross and we stood to the side and watched. And then when He was dead, we hid together. We didn’t have a clue. You need to understand the cost that Jesus paid to save you, all of you, from death. I saw it! I was there! The first time I took the cup and the bread, my hands shook so hard I could hardly hold on to them. Everyone in the room was in tears. We knew! Oh, how we knew then!

For you it’s a little plastic cup filled with juice you buy off the grocery shelf but it’s Jesus’ blood! Oh, the blood trickling down His face from the thorns. The body gasping to breathe, straining against the nails in His hands and feet! How can you eat the bread and drink the cup without remembering? How can you do that? (*brokenly*) How can you possibly do that?

(*long pause*)

ARLONA

We’ve made mistakes, too.

KEN

I understand it’s become routine. I think Jesus wanted it to be a routine in our lives. But a routine of remembering! Not a routine of thoughtlessly eating and swallowing.

DAVE

From this day on . . .

PHYLLIS

Starting tonight . . .

GILBERT

I will never take the bread . . .

KEN

And the cup . . .

ALL but JOE

Without checking my heart.

ARLONA

I will confess my sins.

DAVE

I will forgive.

GILBERT and KEN

We will remember.

ARLONA, KEN, GILBERT, PHYLLIS

We will remember.

ARLONA, DAVE, GILBERT, KEN, PHYLLIS

We will remember.

DAVE (*to audience*)

Will you?

ARLONA (*to audience*)

Will you?

GILBERT (*to JOE*)

Will you?

JOE

(*hangs head*) I will.