

Where Does Jesus Live?
Psalm 5:1-8; Galatians 2:15-21
Communion Meditation

Paul Brand writes in the book *Opening Windows*, "The caste system in India is pervasive...

The lowest stratum of society is the deformed leprosy patient. Doctors, lawyers, and priests are looked upon as the highest stratum, and are treated with great deference. I have often been embarrassed by the way patients will bow to the ground and touch the doctors' feet before they can stop them.

In the leprosy sanitarium at Karigiri in South India there is a lovely chapel, made from stones that were hewn from surrounding rocky hills. In that chapel during the season of Lent, they have an early morning communion service every Wednesday. It is open to Christian staff and patients, and is led by one of the doctors who is also an ordained presbyter of the Church of South India. The members, a few at that early hour, stand around the table, passing the bread and the wine from hand to hand. In turn, they speak the name of the person to their left, and use the spiritual words define the elements that they share.

On one day as they participated in the service, the person to the right of Dr. Brand was leprosy patient, Manikam, a beggar on whose deformed hands the Dr. had operated on a few weeks before. Manikam had come to know the Lord, and was happy both with both the improvements to his hands as well as in his new faith. In the hospital ward, however, it was hard to get him to even look at the doctors, as he responded to their questions. His downcast eyes still identified Manikam as an outcast.

On that day, as the plate with the bread came around the circle, Manikam took his piece, and then took the plate to pass it to Dr. Brand. Because Manikam's hands were still stiff from the surgery and plaster casts, as well as from the effects of the leprosy, he fumbled and almost dropped the plate. Dr. Brand reached out to steady it for Manikam. Then Manikam turned to Dr. Brand and held out the bread. His back was straight, his voice was clear and strong, and his eyes looked directly into the eyes of Dr. Brand. "Paul," he said. "This is the body of Christ, broken for you." As Dr. Brand took the bread, his eyes misted over, and he could hardly control his voice as he turned to pass the bread to the person on his left.

Dr. Brand continues, "I cannot describe the joy I felt as I looked into Manikam's face and received the life of Jesus as Manikam spoke the words, "The body of Christ, broken for you." It was as though my eyes had been opened and I saw a new person. Jesus had broken hands. Jesus knew pain and rejection. And, it was Jesus whose life and death had brought about the sense of love and fellowship that I experienced with my patient at that time. We were one loaf, one body, and we shared one Lord."

This was a miracle. In any other situation, and any time in the past, Manikam would have called him "Dr. Brand" in a humble voice, with downcast eyes. But at the table of our Lord, passing that loaf from one to the other, Dr. Brand and Manikam were equal - both equal members of the same body. At the Table of our Lord, Manikam experienced the freedom and confidence of equality in the Body of Christ.

Dr. Brand continues, "All of us must have felt the transformation. We thanked God for the reality behind the symbol of the broken bread, broken from one loaf.

When we take the bread, here are three aspects of the broken bread that are significant. First, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, when His body was broken for each of us. Second, we think of the way in which Jesus' life continues to sustain us today, and every day:

The Body of Christ, the Living Bread. We also are compelled to look around us, recognizing those who are present with us at the Table. As we gather around the Table of Our Lord whether figuratively or literally, we are reminded of our essential oneness. Though we are different in so many ways, we are one in Christ Jesus. Moreover, as we look into the faces of all those present at this table, we seek to see the Jesus in each one.

This table is at once, a love feast, a memorial service, and - not the least, a celebration of the continuing life of our Lord within me, within you, within each of us.

This meal is a dangerous meal. For, in the words of a great theologian, you are what you eat. Does Jesus live in you?