

The sermon in the synagogue is over now. Jesus has pointed out the foolishness of any form of salvation that deals in this earthly world and its currency: *do not work for food that passes*. He has held out to us the understanding of *the work God wants: to believe in the one he has sent*. Then he has called them to *come to him*, to *trust in him*, and to *inherit eternal life*. This understanding has offered them a map for their lives. But it is a huge demand; it involves a massive shift of religious understanding; in a way, it involves moving from the ancient Judaic insistence on the oneness of God to the revelation of God as Trinity. He is calling them to become Christians.

Many of them are going to say no. When they do, they will be saying no to the share in the life of the Trinity towards which our Christian life is pressing. They will be insisting on their world picture: Almighty God in his heaven, sinful man on the earth, the gulf between them impossible to cross. The pain and violence of such a faith will already be at the heart of Jesus, who is of heaven, and who is treading the same earth with them. He has come amongst them by a huge act of emptying himself of glory. He must continue to empty himself, even of the human life he has accepted for them. That is what links their refusal of belief in him to the Cross, by which his self-emptying will be complete.

The Jews who engineer his death think that they are separating him from them for good and all. That is what crucifixion means. But in fact, they find themselves *collaborating* with the plan of God - Father *and* Son - who devised this obedient act of self-giving, this pouring-forth of self, to translate into human language the love that is the heart of God.

For this reason, John brings to this chapter the words that deliver the Eucharist at the Last Supper. In the Eucharist, far from letting the Cross *divide* us from Jesus, we unite ourselves in his sacrificial love. We offer ourselves in the same Spirit that impelled him, and give ourselves as he gives himself to the Father. So our humanity is contributed to the humanity of Jesus, so that in one sacrifice we hand ourselves over from this passing world to the Kingdom of heaven. As St Ignatius of Antioch said of his martyrdom in the arena, *we become, between the teeth of the wild beasts, milled flour, to be pure bread in Christ*. So Jesus: *not this bread is my Body*, as Paul, Mark, Matthew and Luke say it, but *my flesh is real food, my blood is real drink eat and drink, be fed in to eternity by my sacrifice: with me, draw eternal life from the Father, in me, become children of God*. Now at last the sixth chapter *is* talking about the Eucharist. Tomorrow, it will return to the great issue of faith, by which the synagogue at Capernaum will be judged.