

Scene 2 Provision

Some people responded to the pandemic by excessive panic buying, perhaps revealing a desperation to find security in surrounding ourselves with things. By contrast, there are many people facing financial difficulty and the need to rely on providence from others. Here, Jesus offers exactly what the disciples need – opportunity to commune and to remember. We reflect on different ways we've had fellowship and meal-sharing through the pandemic, and consider who provides for our needs and what Jesus offers us.

The upper room – Mark 14.17-25

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?' He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'



Voices

Here Supermarket checkout worker

An hour into my shift and I've had enough already. Piles and piles of groceries, tins, booze – oh, and don't forget the blessed toilet rolls! There's been a real change around the tills since the pandemic started. Suspicion, anxiety, peering over shoulders to check people aren't standing too close, and of course, checking what others have in their trolleys. Some people make more of an effort to talk to me – asking how I'm doing, am I managing to take time off, all sorts, and I'm incredibly grateful for those who take the time and bother to ask. Others treat me as an inconvenience, one of the hurdles between them and the safety of their car. They glare over their mask if I have to check something about one of their items. They feel better with stuff, I suppose – enough food and supplies to hunker down and know they'll be all right. But I wonder if there's more to it. I wonder if feeling safe is about knowing we're all in this together. Shared struggle alongside others, and all that. Even at a distance – there's a thought we wouldn't have had a year ago! The nice ones nod, and their eyes show they're smiling behind their masks. There's more hope there than a multipack of long-life milk!

There Servant girl in the upper room

It was no different to a normal Passover meal to start with, the usual noise, a pile of filthy sandals in one corner, a group of men laughing and joking, sharing stories, as I came and went serving meat and bread. But as it went on, the atmosphere changed. Only one of the men was talking, holding up the bread in front of the others and tearing it up, passing it around. He called me forward with a smile, took the wine jug I was holding and poured out a little into their cups, telling them to drink and remember him. The men were silent, just staring at him, amazed, some a bit confused maybe, but they did as they were told. It was like he was preparing them for something – giving them really important instructions, like his life depended on it. When his eyes filled with tears, mine did, too – I hung on his every word, he was mesmerising. The men ate the bread like it was all they'd ever need. They didn't want anything more after that, though they'd been stuffing loaf after loaf into themselves minutes before. It was different from any other meal I've served at, but it made me feel – hopeful – like I wanted to join in, really join in. And when they were preparing to leave and I began to clear the table, the man held out a piece of bread to me, smiled again, then left. That bread was like something else, like something of him had spilled over into it. I've never forgotten that meal, or the special man.

Scene 2 Provision

Conversation and reflection

- 1 Spend time sharing or reflecting on experiences of provision, need or grace (during the pandemic or otherwise).
- 2 If you had been there, how would you have felt receiving the bread and wine from Jesus?
- 3 What might we take forward with us from Jesus' style of sharing meals and our changed patterns of fellowship at the moment?

Listen

[My Shepherd will Supply my Need](#), Isaac Watts

[How about Lord, for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray \(just for today\)](#) sung by choirs of the Diocese of Leeds

Prayer action

Make a small display somewhere you walk past or see often, to remind you of blessings and provision during the pandemic, e.g. a tin of food, a toilet roll, a supermarket receipt, a card from someone you care about.

Prayer for the 'providers'

Strengthening God, thank you for all who are able to give of themselves, whether through time, energy, or resources. Replenish what they give out, and teach us to emulate your generosity through our words and actions. Show us how to rely on your grace and strength, not our own. In your name, Amen.

Prayer for those in need

Generous God, at one time or another we have all been in need, whether emotional, financial or physical, and in so many other ways. Please would you surround those in need with people able to support them, whether by providing for physical needs, or comfort and encouragement. Enable them to feel empowered and needed. In your powerful name, Amen.

Follow-up activity

Through the week, remember occasions when you have been in need of some kind – financial, medical, emotional, physical, or any other need. Reflect on who or what helped you, and think about any ways you can 'pay it forward' and help others who may be in need of some sort.