We are going to share Holy Communion today. Before we do I want to compare and contrast some things about communion and 9/11 Remembrance.

Show pictures  Who knows what this is?

Who knows what it is called? ...

Reflecting Absence
What do you think of its design?

I like the name. Reflecting Absence

Absence ... because the waterfalls are in the place where the towers used to stand ... which are now absent.

Absence ... because it’s a memorial to those who died on 9/11 and those heroes who gave their lives in service to their fellow men and women – who are now... absent.

Reflecting ... because the waterfalls and the two pools of water are ... reflecting surfaces.

Reflecting ... as in: to think about, to reflect, to remember those who died and those who sacrificed their lives.

Reflecting ... because the names of those who died in all the 9/11 attacks and WTCenter tragedies are inscribed in bronze surrounds ... bronze that reflects their names.

NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg said of the memorial:  
“We’re not telling you what happened or what you should think, we’re challenging you to reflect”

In a way that’s what we are doing when we celebrate Communion – We are reflecting upon, remembering Christ’s absence.

On the night Jesus died, before he was going to be taken from his disciples and arrested, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples.
They celebrated how God had saved them from Pharaoh in Egypt And part of their meal was bread and wine.
And Jesus told his disciples that he was going to be taken and he would suffer and die and that, from that time on, every time they ate the bread and drank the cup they should reflect on it and remember Him . in his absence.

So someone might say that Holy Communion is reflecting absence. But in fact it might be the best thot of as the exact opposite.
Did you know that there was a kind of communion with bread in the sanctuary of the temple in the Old Testament.

Check this out. This is God speaking to Moses.

Leviticus 24:5-9
“Take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. By each stack put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the LORD. This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the LORD.”

So this is Old Testament. This comes way before Jesus.

God tells Moses how to build the place where the Jewish people could worship Him. He gives directions about what to do and what to put in it.

And in the first room, the sanctuary, the holy place,

God says make a gold table – about 3 feet long and 2 feet deep.

And on this table put 12 loaves of bread every week, every Sabbath, every day of worship.

Make these with fine flour. And make each one with 2/10 an ephah of fine.
That’s about 7 liters. – almost 2 gallons of flour for each loaf.
These are big loafs of bread.

- They are to take make how many loaves of bread? 12. For the 12 sons and tribes of Israel.
- It is for the High Priest Aaron, and his sons.
- They are to eat it in ... a small private room, a.k.a. as the sanctuary.
- They eat it at a table.
- It is a memorial – eat it in memory, in remembrance of the LORD.
- The Hebrew word for memorial also was used for the part of the offering that was sacrificed to God.
- It is a affirmation of the covenant God has made – the bond, relationship, friendship.
- It is a meal – a fellowship/friendship/communion with God.

It is a picture of God’s willingness to fellowship and commune with man.
It was like an invitation to share a meal, an extension of friendship.
Eating together often is an act of fellowship.
God was willing for man to enter into His presence to fellowship with Him.
But look at what the bread was called...

Exodus 25:30
Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times.

Exodus 35:13
... the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence.

Exodus 39:33-36
Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses: the tent and all its furnishings, its clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases ... the ark of the Testimony with its poles and the atonement cover; the table with all its articles and the bread of the Presence.

It was called the bread of the Presence.
The presence of God.
It is thought to be the bread of the Presence because it is always in the presence of God, but it more likely that it refers to it being in the place where you find God’s presence.

The Hebrew word for presence here is also the word face.
This is the bread you eat before the Face of God ... even face to face with God.

**That’s the exact opposite of absence.**

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So, now move forward to Jesus and his disciples gathered in a small room.

Jesus is eating at a table ...
  - With his 12 disciples.
  - He is the High Priest ... he will call them his sons.
  - They are eating bread.
  - He says this is my new covenant.
  - Do this in remembrance of me, it is a memorial.
  - And they eat it together as an act of their fellowship, their bond, their communion.
  - And this is the night that Jesus is going to be taken and arrested and crucified as a sacrifice.

**Even though I will be absent ... this is the bread of my Presence.**
**Even though I am going to be taken ... you will always have my Presence.**

Jesus went on to tell them that even tho he was leaving, He would send them the Holy Spirit.
And this was better.
Because the Holy Spirit could dwell with and in all of us.

So, in Holy Communion, because of the OT precedent of the bread of the Presence.
And all of the similarities we can see to the Holy Communion Jesus gave to us.
We can say and clearly see that the bread that we eat is a sign of God’s Presence.
In Holy Communion we are eating the bread of the Presence of God.
**We are in Christ. Christ’s Presence is in us... we have communion.**
Now let me show you another scene about God’s presence in the Bible, that is awesome.

When Moses comes down the mountain with the 10 Commandments what does he find?
   - They had made a golden calf.
   - It had been 40 days since Moses was gone.
   - They thought he was gone. They gave up and reverted to the worship in Egypt.
Moses comes down and sees the pagan revelry and destroys the tablets and goes back to God.

Exodus 33:1-3
Then the LORD said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.”

God threatens to change his plans of accompanying the Israelites to the Promised Land.
   - But, since He is faithful, He plans to keep his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by giving the land to their descendents.
   - He offers to send an angel before them to drive out the inhabitants, and the land would still be flowing with milk and honey.

So, did you catch that?
   - They would not have to fight for the land, and its bounty would still be available.
   - The catch? God would not go with them.

   Now there's a real jackpot!
Imagine the possibilities-having all of God's blessings w/o God telling you what to do w/ them!

But Moses goes into the tent of meeting and says to God,
Exodus 33:15  “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”

Wow!
Moses isn’t afraid.
God said he would protect and provide; he believes him.
   - But that’s not enough for Moses.
   - Moses doesn’t want what God can give, Moses wants God.
Moses has learned that God is worthy of being loved with all of one's heart, soul, and mind.
   - He is the Absolute Object of infinite delight.

Do you want God’s Presence to go with you like that?
C.S. Lewis once wrote,
“He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God alone.”

Wow!
Is having God’s presence in your life that essential, that important, that impactful?

What can you do to experience God’s Presence like that?
Last scene.

Come back with me to the New Testament and Jesus.

Luke 13:1
Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Jesus is speaking to two major tragedies in his day.

The 1st is something about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

It is not known from history what this means, but it probably is a reference to
The Roman governor Pilate killing 16 Jews in the temple area –
in essence mixing their blood with the sacrifices because of where it happened.

Foreign actors came on their ground and attacked and killed their loved ones.

The 2nd was a tower in Siloam, a tall building, that fell & killed the people inside and outside.

A tower, a building, that fell and killed their loved ones.

And they come to Jesus after these tragedies and says Jesus what about this.
And what is Jesus’ response?

He says here’s the response those kinds of events should inspire ...
Vengeance? No, not vengeance for those who did it.
Judgment? No, not judgment about whether someone deserved it.
But repentance.

Repentance – turn your life around. Turn your life to God. Turn away from sin.
So, in your reflecting on the terrible deeds by the foreign actors that killed our countrymen & women ... upon the tower that fell and killed so many, here is what Jesus says is important ...

Is your life right with God today?
Is your life in line with the righteousness that God requires,
So that if your eternity were to begin today, as is does, would you be ready?

So, today, as we receive Holy Communion, I invite you to reflect on God’s Presence or absence in your life.

- Maybe for you, you need to repent of sin in your life to be able to experience more of God’s presence.

Empty yourself of that which competes for God and that which separates you from a holy God.

- Or maybe you just could be inspired by Moses’ example.
  You want more of God’s presence in your life.
  You don’t just want what God can give you, you want God.

- Today, for all of us as we celebrate Holy Communion
  I encourage you to make the connection with the Old Testament sanctuary
  And the table and bread there – the bread of the Presence.

  It was clearly a foreshadow of what we do in Christ in communion.
  We have the same offer to have fellowship with God.
  We have the same offer to experience the Presence of God, right here, right now.

As we receive Holy Communion.
  Repent.
  Hunger for God.
  And receive his bread of His Presence today.