Q&A: Communion – For you and for many?

From **DaveO**:

The last two times I've had Communion… I've pondered a detail in the liturgy which to me looks like it is strongly based on the Luke account.

> *(Luke 22:19) And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. 21 But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.*

My Anglican heritage has me "hearing" the old (well old for me) liturgy as "for you, and for many"

> *(Matthew 26:26) Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

> *(Mark 14:22) And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to*

> *you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*

So a question of the Greek… rendered into English as “for you” in Luke. The other two gospels have “for many”. What does Luke actually say in the Greek? I like the community (across time and space) and the evangelistic impulse which “for you, and for many”’ has, and have been jarred by the intensely personal and private “for you”. And been adding an inside voice of “and for many”.

Thanks for the question DaveO,

As an aside, the other Last Supper account is, of course, in 1 Corinthians 11 where we read:

> *23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*

Which also excludes the “for many” that Mark and Matthew apply as the indirect object of the pouring out of the blood of the new covenant. So it’s a 50% split between the “for many” usage and not!

Matthew and Mark both have the pouring out “τὸ περὶ πολλῶν” (Matthew, Mark has a different preposition) where “the many” is literally *hoi polloi* (which does not mean the upper crust classes) which has a sense of ‘the masses’, ‘the rest’, ‘the majority’.

Matthew has an additional phrase before the pouring out

comment, in the imperative “Drink of it, all of you;” in which “all of you” is simply the word “all”, the “you” comes from the factor that the imperative “drink” (πίετε) is in the 2nd person. In my mind this actually should lead us to de-emphasis the “you” pronoun and almost take the “all” as a vocative

Luke, however, simply has “τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν” where the indirect object is “you” (plural).

The distinction then, if there is any, is not between “private” (you singular) and “communal” (many) but between the specific participants in the last supper (you (plural) disciples) and the broader participants (the many who will come to faith) in the new covenant.

It seems there is a covenantal connotation of *polloi* with the word rendering the Hebrew *rabbim* which is associated with the non-Israelite peoples. Therefore the distinction would be Luke’s emphasis of the application of the new covenant to the Jewish disciples, and Matthew and Mark’s would include application to the gentiles that would also enter that covenant. Perhaps Jewish-focussed Matthew wishes to retain the emphasis on gentile inclusion, whereas for gentile-focussed Luke such a notion was less scandalous and needed less emphasis. (Consider article in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology for ‘All, Many’*)

In sum, both emphases are correct, and “for you, and for many” would seem to be a decent liturgical expression of it.