

Communion



Some people call it the Eucharist, some people refer to it as The Lord's Table or the Lord's Supper or maybe you grew up in a tradition where it was Holy Communion.

The passage for communion is taken from 1 Cor. 11:23-26 – ²³ *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."* ²⁶ *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

We have typically had a "tradition of remembrance" when it come to the Communion The Lord's Supper is not just an occasion to think back to what happened in the past. . The thing most striking about the character of the feast is its presentness and not just its pastness or its futureness. It points back and is a memorial of the death of our Lord, and it points forward to his return, but there is also a distinct present aspect.

As we celebrate Communion, we have communion (that is, deep fellowship) with Christ and through Christ with his people. It is also a time to experience once again the life, love, and grace of God in Christ right in the reality of the present moment.

Time at the table should cause us to pause and reflect on what Jesus is doing in our lives right now.

As we consider the ritual of communion....the taking, the blessing, the breaking and the giving...of the bread, we find we've heard it somewhere before:
In the Feeding of 5, 000 (Recorded in all 4 gospels...Matt. 14:13-21; John 6:1-13; Luke 9:10-17)

Mark 6:32-44 (New International Version)

³² *So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.* ³³ *But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.* ³⁴ *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.*

³⁵ *By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late.* ³⁶ *Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."*

³⁷ But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages^[a]! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

³⁸ "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

As we gather at the communion table, we are reminded...that the bread signifies the Body of Christ. "Now **you** are the **body** of **Christ**, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

We are the Body of Christ...WE are taken, blessed, broken, given to a desperate and starving world.

- **We are Taken.**

Phil 3:11-13 "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus **took hold of me**. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead..."

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- **We are Blessed**

Eph. 1:3-12 (Notice all the ways we are "taken" in this passage as well.) ³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ**. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us

for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. We have been given every spiritual blessing.

- **We are Broken.**

In salvation, our sins were forgiven and were put in right standing with God. We are positionally sanctified---set apart. Yet Scripture also describes an on-going process of being sanctified. There are still parts of our old nature that need to be restored. That's why it's a journey...to being conformed to the likeness of Christ.

Gal. 4:19 – “...My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth **until Christ is formed in you...**”

Rom. 8:28:29 “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be** conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

This conforming process is....a process! It's the journey we are all on.

Phil 2:12-13 *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—**continue to work out your salvation** with fear and trembling,¹³ **for it is God who works in you to will and to act** in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

Psalms 23 – “He **restores** my soul”.....not **restored**....it's an ongoing process. Much of that process of restoration is described....*he makes me lie down; he leads us beside still waters; he guides us along right paths....*

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Eph. 4 talks of **being made new**...in the attitudes of our minds... It's an on-going work...and none of us have arrived. So when someone in the church hurts you or disappoints you....it's because we are broken people.

That's why there's so many "one anothers" in Scripture...we need much patience, and forgiveness, walking with other broken people!

Eph. 4:2 – *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love"*

Eph. 4:32 – *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

Where did we get the idea that church people are perfect...or at least they think they are. We aren't.

We are the fellowship of the broken. We are a community of wounded people.

To say that being in Christ includes being broken is not to say that we have to allow ourselves to be broken in order to be given. Rather, it is to acknowledge that brokenness is something we all experience, and that it in no way changes the truth that we are still and always will be chosen and blessed.

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Christian Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope. In community we say: 'Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs—but we do not have to live alone. We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate that the wounds of our individual lives, which seem intolerable when lived alone, become sources of healing when we live them as part of a fellowship of mutual care.

It is very interesting and significant that remembrance of Jesus would center around a table; the intimacy of a shared "meal." It may be the most human of all human gestures: a gesture of hospitality, friendship, care, and the desire to be together.

The table is one of the most intimate places in our lives. It is there that we give ourselves to one another. When we say, "Take some more, let me serve you another plate, let me pour you another glass, don't be shy, enjoy it," we say a lot more than our words express.

So it is with the communion. But in Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, communion had caused divisions in their community rather than uniting them. Some eat too much food and some eat too little. He accuses them of eating their "own private meal" instead of eating *the Lord's* Supper together.

READ 1 Corinthians 11:17-32

¹⁷ In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸ In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹ No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. ²⁰ So then, when you come together, it is not **the Lord's Supper** you eat, ²¹ for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²² Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

Skip to verse 27.

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink **without discerning the body of Christ** eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ **But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves**, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

As seen in this passage, the main problem in the Corinthian practice of the Lord's Supper was the failure of the members of the church to love and care for each other as they celebrated Communion together. Following the common practice of their culture, the wealthier Corinthians ate a full meal, while others went hungry.

Paul corrected them, first by pointing to Jesus' own origination of the Lord's Supper and its core meaning. The bread and the cup point to the death of Jesus. Such sacrificial love ought to be, not only remembered, but also practiced by Christians, even and especially when celebrating the Lord's Supper.

In the context of 1 Corinthians, it seems most likely that honoring the body has to do with paying attention to the body of Christ in the Christian gathering. It's a matter of recognizing that the bread of Communion calls for Christian brothers and sisters to

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So in communion it's a matter of examining ourselves in regards to loving others. -Are you holding on to bitterness? Are you jealous? Do you think you are being slighted, or ignored, or misused? Do you need to ask for forgiveness or extend forgiveness?

The Apostle Paul believed that if the Corinthian Christians would remember the meaning of the Lord's Supper, if they would focus on the cross...then their behavior in communion would begin to reflect the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. This, more than a list of do's and don'ts, would transform the Corinthian community into a unified church that reflects the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ.

- **We are Given.**

Finally, the same love and care we have received...we are to love and care for our neighbor. Our transformation into Christlikeness is for the sake of others. In fact, our spiritual formation is aborted or at least infantile if it does not find its greatest expression in love for others. Christian spirituality is not only rooted in a growing, deeply held friendship with God but must also be lived out in our world.

Our faith must always have feet. What good is our faith without works of righteousness? James 2:14 -17 says, *"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

We are given to a hurting world hungry for healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and most of all unconditional love. Wherever we proclaim the gospel, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the lonely, listen to those who are rejected, and bring unity and peace to those who are divided, we proclaim the living Christ, whether we speak about him or not.

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Conclusion: And so Jesus didn't leave us a "to-do" list but rather a table, a meal, a free space where love and forgiveness are extended. Yes, communion is a short meal, but it is a meal when we gather as a community, literally around the table. It is an opportunity to stop, and engage in *real* community.

Jesus did not *only* leave a legacy of bread and juice, he *also* wanted to give us the church *community* as a support, a challenge and an opportunity to be transformed by grace.

Just as the bread and juice help us remember the life of Christ, so also our Christian community teaches us to love one another as Christ loved us. Jesus left behind a meal that creates space for real community. A time of giving and receiving...of humbling ourselves...of being blessed. A reminder that we are chosen and loved...and blessed... broken and...and given to others.