

Thoughts on Communion

Parting Thoughts: Part 2 “Thoughts on Communion”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – June 2nd 2024

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Ecclesiastes 9:7-11; 1 Corinthians 11:17-26; Luke 22:7-20

Reflection: Psalm 116

Greeting: Praise the Lord, all you nations! Worship him, all you peoples! Because God’s faithful love toward us is strong, the Lord’s faithfulness lasts forever! Praise the Lord!

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for your presence with us day by day. We thank you for inviting us to your table and granting us a place in your kingdom. Helps us to remember your steadfast love and faithfulness all the days of our lives. May we always remember the salvation we find in your Son, our savior when we remember the sacrifice made in love. Bring us together this day that we can share of one bread and drink from one cup, finding unity in you, our Lord. We pray that we may always seek your peace and to share your love with one another. Help us to celebrate the hope that we have because you are with us forever and always, and it is in Jesus’ name we pray this day. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 116

I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord, “O Lord, I pray, save my life!” Gracious is the Lord and righteous; our God is merciful. The Lord protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I kept my faith, even when I said, “I am greatly afflicted”; I said in my consternation, “Everyone is a liar.” What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord; I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones. O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 116 NRSVue)*

We read the words of Psalm 116 and hear of salvation with the Lord. That God is there to grant us mercy and love. That in times of trouble we have an advocate in Christ. That we can share

in the cup of salvation that we drink together. What draws you closer in love with our God? How do you share that love with others? Who are you lifting in your prayers this week? Who will you share the peace of Christ with? What are some ways that you experience the unity we find with the Lord? How do you share that feeling with those around you? How can we share in the love that we find in sharing in God's peace together?

Prayer: Everlasting God, you have brought us together that we may share of the bread of your unity and the cup of your salvation as you invite us to your table. Help us to experience your love each and every day. We turn to you now with the joys and the concerns that we bring before you this day. May you grant us comfort and guidance in all things. We lift up our celebrations that we have spoken before you. We lift up the concerns that we share together. We also bring before you the silent troubles and triumphs that we hold within. We pray that we experience your grace and mercy in our laughter and our tears and that you are with us in sorrow and rejoicing. Grant that we may always hold firm and joyfully to this faith, and may we be one with you, who calls us in love to his table, for ever and ever. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Ecclesiastes chapter 9, verse 7 through 11.

Go, eat your bread with enjoyment and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has long ago approved what you do. Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful, but time and chance happen to them all. (Ecclesiastes 9:7-11 NRSVue)*

Our next reading is from 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 17 through 26.

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you proceeds to eat your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have households to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you! For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and

said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:17-26 NRSVue*)

Our final reading is from Luke chapter 22, verse 7 through 20.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it." They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?" "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there." So they went and found everything as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of 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." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. (Luke 22:7-20 NRSVue)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

I This week's thought is on communion. And I just wanted to talk a little bit about some of the ways that I see communion as such an important event and drawing us together. It is one of two sacraments, communion and baptism, that we celebrate in the United Methodist Church. Communion can be something that we gladly take part in without always thinking about the many things it means to us. I selected our readings to highlight a few things about coming together for the Lord's Supper. Our gospel reading explains why we celebrate Holy Communion. We hear about Jesus and the twelve gathering together to celebrate Passover. They're looking for a place to celebrate Passover. This is the last supper as it is just before Christ's arrest and his exit execution. And it's here that Jesus takes the bread he gives thanks. And he breaks bread together with his inner circle saying, "This is my body, which is given for you." He takes the cup and shares it with them saying "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." That we should do these things and remember Christ. We hear Paul expand on this to the church in Corinth. He chides them for the way that they're coming together to eat because they are failing to honor Christ in what they do. They come together to eat and one is full while another goes away hungry. That they do not honor or remember Christ in what they do because they do not remember Christ in how they treat each other at his table. We are called to care for one another as Christ cares for us, so Paul calls them out for their behavior. He reminds them of why they come and break bread together. They should be

remembering the body and blood of Christ. He reminds the church that they don't come together to fill up and let others go hungry. They come together to be reminded of the body and the blood of Christ and the redemption that it brings. And that whenever we partake, we should remember Christ and all that he taught.

And then we have Ecclesiastes. I am sure that some are wondering what it's doing here. But as you may know, I do enjoy the challenge that Ecclesiastes brings. Ecclesiastes gave me something to ponder in all this because it made me think of the way we should partake in the Lord's Supper, eating our bread with enjoyment and drinking with a merry heart. That we should enjoy the life that we have and celebrate the life that we have in Christ. Because we are called to remember the good that we have been shown. And then there's that line at the end that reminds us that every mortal life has an ending. "Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful, but time and chance happen to them all." That we are given a reminder of our equality in this life. But it also made me think about the equality we find in Christ. That we are found to be equal in him. That none rises above the other when we share a life together in Christ. We are reminded of this when we partake in one bread, being the body of Christ. That we drink from one cup, the blood that redeems us. Ecclesiastes made me think about how we approach this, because when I think about the body of Christ, it is symbolic in many ways. Christ hands over his literal body to be crucified in order to demonstrate the depth of the love he has for us. But we also break bread together to show how we share together in Christ. That we share in his life, and as we share in his life we share in his death. As we share in his death, we share in his resurrection. The bread becomes a symbol of our unity in Christ. That we all partake of the bread, but we share of one loaf, Jesus Christ our Lord. Though each partakes individually, we share together as a community. We are made whole together in Christ. We then see how we partake of one cup. It is his blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. It is the knowledge that we can seek God's grace, the reminder of Christ's blood being spilled so that we would understand the depths of God's love for us. That we could understand the redeeming grace that is there to pull us beyond any sin and that we find salvation in Christ. That we drink of one cup as we share in one covenant. The new covenant says that it is not our burnt offerings or our circumcision that makes us one in Christ. It is living as one in Christ that draws us together.

Communion is the reminder that we have of our oneness in Christ as a community. That we are joined together by something greater than us all. And it is something that I come to joyfully. That part of why I included that reading from Ecclesiastes. Because this is a remembrance and a celebration that Christ is with us. It is a celebration of the body of Christ that is given for you. It is a celebration of the blood of Christ poured out for you. A celebration that God is with us, and God is for us. A remembrance of our Savior's love. A reminder of the love that we can have for each other. I celebrate all that Christ has done for me because this coming together always reminds me of everything Christ has ever done for me. Because every

time I come to partake in Holy Communion, when I lift up that bread, I know that it is the body of Christ given for me. I am reminded of all that Christ has done and I am reminded of how glad I am to be a part of the body of Christ. I remember how thankful I am that my Heavenly Father watches over me. How joyful it makes me to know that the Holy Spirit is with me. That I am with Christ and Christ is with me. And I do not eat alone because we are bound together as one in Christ. When I lift up the cup, I remember the blood of Christ poured out for me. That it is a sign of the new covenant, that we are not a people under punishment because of the law but a people under grace because of Christ's gift for us. That his blood is poured out for the forgiveness of sins. This is done so that we would know the depths of God's love for us. That it is poured out from me, and it is poured out for you, and it is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. And that this new promise is a promise made in love. That we love one another and that we love God and that we put our whole being into that love.

And it reminds me of my journey with Christ and how it's never over. Because each time I partake I think of how much Christ has already done and how much more Christ will do. And it makes me glad. So, I do remember. I come to this table knowing Christ has made a place for me at his table. Knowing that I am welcome at God's table and knowing there is always space so that I can scoot down to make room for another. Because there will always be plenty for all and there will always be room for one more. Because that is the promise I celebrate when I eat of one bread and drink from one cup. It is the body and blood of our Savior, the life that we live in Christ that it is open for all who seek him. It is that unity that brings me joy because we are always together in that unity. Going out from this place to anywhere in the world, going from this life to the next, we are bound together in one body and one blood, in one bread and one cup. And we cannot be separated in that love. So, I do come to eat this bread with a joyful heart. And I do drink from this cup celebrating the love that is there for me and for you. Because we are drawn together in Christ, we are equal and Christ, and we are celebrated. That there is always a place for us at the table. And it warms my heart knowing that I will always have a home. Because I will always have a home wherever I may find those who remember that we are of one body, redeemed by one blood, serving one God. And that wherever I go I will find my brothers and sisters in Christ. That we may joyfully celebrate that new covenant made possible through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Parting Thoughts

My last sermon series is going to be a series of parting thoughts. This will cover a handful of different topics and isn't going to be quite like other sermon series that I've done. We will look at various theological points and the way that we live our faith. Before I go, I'll leave you with a few parting thoughts about various subjects. But know that I leave with a thankful heart.

Prayer List

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Marsha Overton
Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox	Taylor Waldorf
Harriet Tucker	Marlene Kincaid	Cara Dillier	Peggy Farley
Mandy Schumacher	Ann McMorris	Marci Cutts Smith	Jaydelyn Brassard
Pat Hayden Titus	Devona Dittamore	Nancy McElravy	Jeff & Laurie Davidson
Connie Brown	Thelma Ball	Stephanie Strewsbury	John Graves
Cathleen Carl	Vivian Hallet	Marilyn Scott	Jim Stevens
Wes Martin	Mary Shumaker	Matthew Shoaff	Family of Donna Cutright
Family of Roger Nickum	Eric Wilson	Joan Martin	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Leo Smith	Greg Williams	Jim & Kay Wells	Earl Sparks

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