

Title: “Into Communion”

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1 Corinthians 10:16-17

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Service Readings: Exodus 24:3-11, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Mark 14:12-26

Lesson: *Each and every time we present ourselves at the table of the Lord and hear his words “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you,” and when we eat and drink we are brought back into communion with him.*

Message:

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.

The message is based on the Epistle reading of today. First Corinthians 10:16-17:

¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

The church in Corinth was divided, and not over the color of the carpet or the choice of the music. Their problems were much more serious; serious enough, in fact to solicit the aid of the Apostle Paul. Some held one belief about sexual morality and another group held an opposite view. The same could be said about eating food that had been offered to idols. And those were only two of the items in a long list of other grievances. One by one Paul addresses them but with a common theme. For each item he describes what it means to participate in the body of Christ. “We who are many are one body,” he says in our reading tonight. And, because we are joined to Christ, we participate in his body. What does he mean, participate? Some translations use the word “commune” or even “communion” instead of “participate,” and I tend to like that word more because, for me, it evokes images that are much more relational, much more intimate and help me better understand the point that Paul was making. The message from Paul was that they were in communion with Jesus and with each other and any division separated them from that blessed union. He was telling them that it was impossible to be in communion with both the body of the world and the body of Christ.

Focus

Now, our church is a wonderful church, one that is united to the body of Christ, one that is in communion with him. We have no serious divisions, and our focus is on him and the work that he has prepared for us. But the same cannot be said about each of us individually. We are a sinful creature and are constantly divided between the body of the world and the body of Christ. And left to our own desires, we are even unwilling to shift away from being in communion with only ourselves. Of being “me focused.”

But God sent Jesus to earth as the great sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice. And his body was willingly broken because he focused on us. It was broken to bring *us* into communion with him, to graft *us* to him. On that cross *his* communion with God was broken so that our communion with God could be made whole. And that communion is made whole each and every time we present ourselves at the table of the Lord and hear his words "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you," and when we eat and drink his flesh and his blood. That is when he brings us back into communion with him. That is when we shift from being focused on self, to being focused on God.

Serve

Now, our church is a wonderful church, one that is united to the body of Christ, one that is in communion with him and evidence of that is in our service to others. We reach out into the community and into the world and we deliver the good news of the gospel to everyone that will listen. And even to those who won't we deliver to them our love and our service. We feed them, we cloth them, and we never require them to first participate in the body of Christ. But the same cannot be said about each of us individually. We are a sinful creature and as often as we use our talents and gifts for the service of God, we offer them for the service of self. We look to our own needs, our own wants. Like the disciples in the room that night, we don't always wash the feet of others, but instead look to our own desires.

But God sent Jesus to earth as the great sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice. And his body was willingly broken because he wanted to *serve us*. On that cross his blood was shed so that our sins could be washed away. And he serves us each and every time we present ourselves at the table of the Lord and hear his words "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you," and when we eat and drink. That is when he enters into *our* bodies and serves us from within ourselves, making us holy and perfect and presentable to God.

Forgive

Now, our church is a wonderful church, one that is united to the body of Christ, one that is in communion with him and evidence of that is in our forgiveness towards others. Every Sunday we ask for and receive forgiveness from each other. But the same cannot be said about each of us individually. We are a sinful creature and so often we expect forgiveness from others but don't offer the same when we are wronged. Extending forgiveness means letting go of a part of us - of the hurt or of the anger. And we can't trust that we will be healed after that. We can't trust that the missing part of us will be filled in with restored love towards the one who caused us that pain. And so we withhold it, to protect ourselves.

But God sent Jesus to earth as the great sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice. And his body was willingly broken because he wanted to *forgive us*. In perfect obedience he made his way to the cross where he suffered unimaginable anguish, where he was separated from his Father. He did not have to come to earth as man. He did not have to live a perfectly obedient life. He did not have to suffer. He did not have to do any of it. But he did. He did come to earth as man. He did live a perfect life. He did suffer. He did receive the judgement from God. He did die. And then he did rise again in defeat of death. And he *does* offer us forgiveness, fully, completely, and selflessly, each and every time we present ourselves at the table of the Lord and hear his words "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you," and when we eat and drink his flesh and his blood. This is when he washes away every one of our sins and makes us holy and perfect and forgiven to God.

The church in Corinth was divided, in communion with both the body of the world and the body of Christ. We too are divided, in communion with both the body of the world and the body of Christ. But because God sent Jesus to earth as the great sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice, we find ourselves reunited with him. We find ourselves communing at the table of the Lord and being brought back into communion with him. We find ourselves restored.

Please pray with me.

Lord I come, I confess
Bowing here, I find my rest
Without You, I fall apart
You're the one that guides my heart

Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more
Where grace is found is where You are
And where You are, Lord I am free
Holiness is Christ in me

Lord, I need You, oh I need You
Every hour, I need You
My one defense, my righteousness
Oh God, how I need You