



So, today, we celebrate an important moment in the faith journey for our brother in Christ, Jack Bailey, as he takes his first Communion. Come to think of it, it's rather fitting that it happens on Pentecost Sunday, because there might just be something to the phrase from Acts, "rush of a violent wind," as a way to describe what happens to us when we partake of the bread and wine. And yet, quite often, we struggle to feel that holy rush within us. After all, we celebrate Communion *every single Sunday*. It has a way of becoming routine after a while. It can feel as if it's just another thing we do in the worship.

Yes, that was always one of the arguments for the good 'ole days of the church, when we only dared put out the wafers and the glass cups for the bigger occasions: Easter, Christmas, and maybe a few others in between. Slowly (the speed-of-a-glacier slow, mind you), many congregations reluctantly caved into the idea of including the Lord's Supper once a month, as they wondered if their ancestors would roll in their graves with the most utter disdain because of it. And as time went on (again, about the speed of an elderly tortoise), we swung for the fences to do this holy Communion thing with every worship. Still, we worried that if the more we heard about God's most amazing grace, or the more often we taste the death-defying love, would it possibly lose the precious sacredness of it all? As if our human minds have the power to lessen the holy rush of God's insistent hope in the depths of our soul.

For the longest time, the church had certain rules in place not only on when Communion would be celebrated, but who could participate. I have heard the stories not just of our Catholic siblings in Christ, but from supposedly the all-about-the-grace Lutherans, who had to meet with the pastor at some point during the week before, so that the clergyperson could somehow deem them worthy to partake of God's love. It was as if they had to meet a certain near-perfect standard before they dare tasted new life. That also carried over to what age we thought was necessary for a person to better understand what Communion was all about. Not that long ago, I had to wait until I was confirmed before I could partake of Communion for the first time. Again, slowly, but surely, the church was willing to open the floodgates of mercy on our family in Christ, as if we as the church ever had the power to limit God's holy rush to begin with.

So, when Jack and I met a few weeks ago to go over God's holy business in what we call Communion, it was not about Jack memorizing Bible passages or what Martin Luther said in the *Small Catechism* centuries ago, and then Jack having to pass a test at the end of it all, to deem him worthy of the holy rush. No, instead, at the beginning, I asked him to draw somewhat of a floor plan for what the Bailey house looked like: with the kitchen, the living room, and so on. Because I like to think, the church building is meant to be a house where God's love abides. We have a precious living room of sorts here where we listen to and share stories with one another. And yes, there is also the place where God sets up the meal with the essential ingredients of Christ's body and blood, so that we may be nourished and strengthened for the remainder of the day and beyond.

However, the other point that had to be made with Jack, and with all of us for that matter, is that our house within us, in the depths of our soul, no matter how cluttered it may be with guilt and shame, no matter how overrun it may be with other obligations or homework or jobs; that no matter how messed it up we may be on the inside, God will still insist on breaking down the door and coming right in every single time like a rush of a violent wind. But not in the sense of intimidation or anger or fierce control: that we better clean things up in our life, or God's gonna leave us altogether.

No, it is a rush that our heart is not quite used to: a rush of boundless love, of unceasing compassion, of never-ending embrace.

It may not make sense. After all, I could not explain to Jack exactly how a wafer and a few drops of wine become the body and blood of Christ. I did not expect Jack to understand how it all comes together, since no one I have ever met can anyway. In the end, that isn't what Communion is about. This is about God coming in with a rush of hope and new life that can never be taken away from us. This is about God coming in no matter how the church attempts to limit our Risen Lord from appearing. This is about tasting and seeing the Gospel. So, Jack, although this is a special day for you and your family; in God's eyes, every day with you has already been special, and what you get to taste today is that God promises to never stop loving you, to never stop believing in you, to never stop claiming you as a most precious child of God, no matter what. For that Greatest News for Jack and all of us, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen.