

Today is World Communion Sunday when Christians from all over the world, from different communities and different cultures all gather to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion. This day reminds us that no matter how different we are and in spite of the many different ways we worship, we all still worship and believe in the same God; Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of us all; and the Holy Spirit dwells in each and every one of us. The Apostle Paul must have had this in mind when he wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth. Listen to his words in the tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, verses 16 and 17.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Now listen to how the *Message* paraphrases these two verses: “When we drink the cup of blessing, aren’t we taking into ourselves the blood, the very life of Christ? And isn’t it the same with the loaf of bread we break and eat? Don’t we take into ourselves the body, the very life, of Christ? Because there is one loaf, our many-ness becomes one-ness – Christ doesn’t become fragmented in us. Rather, we become unified in Him. We don’t reduce Christ to what we are: He raises us to what He is.”

Listen to verse 17 again: “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we partake of the one loaf?” Did you notice how many times Paul used the word “one” in this one particular verse? Three times. I think that he is trying to make a definite point here that we Christians often forget. We are one, one in Christ. No matter all our different denominations, we are one!

The Lord’s Supper is a symbol of Christian fellowship. Our text reminds us that the cup is the communion of the blood of Christ and that the bread is the communion of the body of Christ. The Greek for communion means “fellowship with,” “participation in,” or “sharing.” Here it means sharing in the blessed assurance of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave His life for our redemption so that we might have eternal life. 1 John 1:7 says: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Jesus’ body was sacrificed once and for all on the cross so that death and sin might be defeated forever. In His body there is oneness and unity. As our text says: “Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” We who are many should be one in Christ. In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul underlined our oneness in fellowship when he wrote: “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

You know there is something special about eating together. Table fellowship creates close and meaningful relationships. An Englishman will invite friends to “come to tea.” Business and professional people get together for lunch with clients and colleagues. Dating couples go out to dinner together. Our closest times together as a family are often around a table sharing a meal.

I don’t know if you have ever heard the story of the school teacher who was doing a lesson on world religions and asked each student to bring something that symbolized their church. Well, the Jewish boy brought a Star of David; the Catholic girl brought a rosary; and the Methodist kid brought a green bean casserole. We Methodists do love to eat and that is why I like potlucks and cookouts.

As I look back on my childhood growing up in a small Southern town, some of my most vivid memories are of meals at holidays or other special occasions when the family gathered around the table in my mother’s dining room. Mom was a great cook, and an even greater hostess. She would invite everyone to her meals, especially those who had nowhere to go on those special occasions or did not have any close family nearby. As a child, I never really appreciated those times and what Mom was doing. But now in hindsight, I see that she was showing Christ’s love to all around her through times of fellowship.

Unfortunately, these times of fellowship are getting rare. We now live in a world where direct personal contact with friends, neighbors, and other people is becoming more difficult and less frequent, especially over the past year and a half due to the pandemic. Many of us have moved away from the family home town and our extended family. In addition, with all the social media advances over the past few years, people are spending more time texting and chatting online than just sitting down with each other, talking and having good old fashion honest fellowship. This is definitely a role that the Church is called to fulfill today.

Have you ever considered the prominent place that eating and table fellowship occupies in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life? Some of Jesus’ most memorable teachings were done around a table or at a meal. For example, His feeding of the 5000, His attending the wedding banquet at Cana, His meals at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, His request to have lunch with Zacchaeus, cooking breakfast for the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee, and His breaking bread with the two people on the road to Emmaus.

From my reading of the Scriptures, it appears that Jesus never passed up an opportunity to sit down and break bread with someone. This willingness and desire to be invited to fellowship with each of us is confirmed in His statement in verse 20 of the third chapter of the Book of Revelation where He states: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” The Book of Revelation also gives us hints of the final banquet in heaven. Imagine, sitting at a table, eating

with God! Surely, the Lord's Supper offers us a glimpse of what it will be like to sit at the Lamb's table in glory and fellowship.

The Lord's Supper is our opportunity for table fellowship, sharing and communion. In 1 John 1:3, the Apostle John wrote: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Christ is the head of the family – the Church, and we are all family members; this church is our extended family. Christ is the host at the Lord's Table, and we are all His guests, sharing fellowship with Him and all our fellow believers.

As we come to the Lord's Table, there is more than a vertical fellowship in the presence of the Father and the Son, there is also a horizontal fellowship at the Lord's Table, especially this morning as we celebrate with fellow believers all over the world. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ, for we are one. Here is the truest fraternity – around the table of our Lord. While we may be separated by theological differences and worship practices, by our baptism we are united as the body of Christ. By periodically sharing at the Lord's Table, we renew our companionship and strengthen our union and oneness with Him and with one another.

Holy Communion is the observance, the symbol that unites Christ's Church. Just as we are united with the Church and fellow believers in our baptism, so is our relationship cemented and renewed at the Lord's Table. We are part of a community of faith that is not just here but stretches all over the world. Try to visualize this communion table as extending north and south, east and west, connecting to churches all over this state, country and world. It also stretches back in history to that first evening when Jesus took the bread and the cup and blessed them. And it stretches forward into the future when we all shall gather for that final banquet in heaven. This is a community that is built and sustained around the remembrance and the promise of Christ as symbolized in these gifts of bread and the cup.

And the wonderful joy and love in all of this is that everybody, no matter their status in life: where they come from, what they have done, who their family is, what church they go to, where they are in their walk with Jesus Christ – everybody is invited to the table to partake in the fellowship, hope, peace, love and the grace of God. As we come to the table, we must also remember that the bread and the cup point back to the work that Christ accomplished on the cross and point forward to our promised salvation.

We must never let any barrier come between us and God and this fellowship. Don't ever, ever let any person, Christian, preacher, denomination or religion stop you from experiencing the grace of God – grace that is available to all who will accept it.

Remember the call to invitation that you will receive in a few moments – Christ our Lord invites all to His table; all, you and me to fellowship with Him, and all who love and seek to live in peace with one another.

Let us now approach the table as a family in the spirit of this fellowship and remembrance. As Christians, we should celebrate our differences, and focus and be thankful for our common bond – our belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Let us break bread together and share in the cup of salvation. May this fellowship meal bind us to Christ and to one another, as we remember and proclaim His death and resurrection with fellow believers all over the world this morning. Amen