“Communion”

January 7, 2018

I Corinthians 11:23-34

Please open your Bible today to the 10th chapter of I Corinthians. And find with me the 14th verse. I Corinthians 10:14 *“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (15) I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. (16) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (17) For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”*

Today we observe the LORD’s Table. So, today’s topic is “Communion.” Shall we pray?

When we come to a passage of Scripture, we should pray *“LORD, help me to see what I need to see here. Help me to believe it with all my heart. And LORD, help me to do what You would have me to do.”*

Although many Churches observe the LORD’s Table every Sunday, we serve Communion on the first Sunday of every other month. Scripture tells us that there are just two ordinances which were given by Jesus that every Christian and every local Church is to follow. First, there’s baptism; not sprinkling or pouring, but baptism, which symbolizes your union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. And the second, Communion, also is a picture and a reminder of Christ’s death and our fellowship with Him. But, whereas Baptism is a one-time event for the Christian, observing the LORD’s table is to be done, according to the Scripture, often.

And there’s one more thing to be said about baptism and communion. Baptism is something done to us, whereas Communion is something we participate in.

Communion, as you are about to see, symbolizes your ongoing personal connection to the LORD.

C.S. Lewis once said this. “Remember that there are only three kinds of things anyone need ever do. (1) Things we *ought* to do (2) Things we’ve *got* to do (3) Things we *like* doing. I say this because some people seem to spend so much of their time doing things for none of the three reasons …” [C.S. Lewis from cslewisinstitute.org “Communion With God Is Real Whether Feelings Are There Or Not”].

So, today’s study on Communion will focus on why you come to the LORD’s Table. Well, what is your reason? Why do *you* come to the LORD’s Table? Is it because you’ve “got” to do so; or because you “ought” to do so; or is it because you “like” to do so? Only you know your heart well enough to answer that question.

The word (communion) means “fellowship.” The original word is κοινωνια. And so the words communion and fellowship are used interchangeably in the KJV.

For example, it’s always translated “fellowship” in I John. Well, then couldn’t we just as correctly read it this way? I John 1:3 *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have [COMMUNION] fellowship with us: and truly our [COMMUNION] fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

I John 1:7 *“If we say that we have [COMMUNION] fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have [COMMUNION] fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

And when we refer to Communion at the LORD’s Table, we might just as easily say “Fellowship at the LORD’s Table.”

And that’s exactly what we find in the Bible. Here’s I Corinthians 10:16 *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the [FELLOWSHIP] communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the [FELLOWSHIP] communion of the body of Christ?”*

So, why come to the Table? Is it not because you enjoy fellowship with the LORD? And is it because you *ought* to fellowship? Or, is it because you’ve *got* to fellowship? Or is it because you *like* to fellowship?

My hope today is to encourage you, like the Apostle John, to walk in closer fellowship with the LORD.

What is it; really? What is Communion? What takes place when we observe the LORD’s Table?

First, when we partake of Communion, we acknowledge that we are living under what the Bible calls “the New Covenant.”

Turn with me to the words of Jesus in Matthew 26:28 *“For this is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

Mark 14:24 *“And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many.”*

Luke 22:20 *“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you.”*

You might recall that the LORD initiated this Commun-ion Meal at His Last Passover. The Passover was a similar kind of meal. You see, it reminded every Jew who ate the Passover that God had done a miraculous thing when He rescued Israel from the domination of Egypt.

The Twelve had celebrated the Jewish Passover with Jesus on previous occasions. But this time, on the day before His crucifixion, Jesus lays down an ordinance for them to follow after He will have gone back to Heaven. In essence, He converts the Passover into a New Covenant meal. The Passover worked well under the Mosaic Covenant. But the Passover has now been replaced.

For the Christian, Communion is a meal in which we remember. But, for the Christian, the thing we remember is not the deliverance of a nation from the tyranny of another nation, Egypt. Rather, our remembrance goes back to a day in history unlike any other day. On that day, God died; God, the Son, died. And He died a horrific death. It goes back to the day when God provided a deliverance from the two greatest enemies of Heaven; sin and death.

And it was the Cross that we entered into the New Covenant relationship with God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said this about the LORD’s work on the Cross. “The Cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life; but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ.” (D. Bonhoeffer).

So, you see; our remembrance is more than a remem-brance of an event. It’s a meal of remembrance of a Person. And it’s a remembrance of the communion with have with Him. Here’s what Jesus said at the table that day. Now He says this. Luke 22:19 *“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.”*

Every Christian is joined to the New Covenant at the moment of salvation. And in the New Covenant, through the work of Jesus on the Cross, we have complete, total, and final forgiveness of every one of our sins. So, when we partake, we acknowledge the wonderful event of Calvary. We’ve been forgiven and at the Table, we remember Him.

And, by the way, this is why the Table excludes those who are not Believers. Those who have not believed on Christ for salvation are not a part of God’s New Covenant.

But, when you come to this Table, you are, in essence, saying that you’ve come the Christ for forgiveness. You are counting on His blood and His death on the Cross to save you for eternity. So, you’re in. You’re saved. You’re His. You are now a member of His New Covenant.

How great a death did Jesus die

That day on Calvary!

It was my death He died

It was my debt He paid

That day on Calvary.

How great a love that Jesus spent

Upon a sinful soul as I!

He gave His all that I might live

That day on Calvary!

And now what more have I to give

This life no longer mine to live?

His life to me He brought

That day on Calvary!

First, then, when we partake of Communion, we acknowledge that we are living under what the Bible calls “the New Covenant.”

Second, it’s a public statement regarding your inward fellowship with the Trinity.

Look at Scripture with me and see that it’s really a fellowship, a communion, a spiritual connection with all three Persons of the Trinity.

Here’s what the Bible tells us. I John 1:3 *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our* ***fellowship is with the Father*** *…”*

And our fellowship is with the LORD Jesus. I Corinthians 1:9 *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the* ***fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ*** *our Lord.”*

And our fellowship is with the Holy Spirit. Philippians 2:1 *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any* ***fellowship of the Spirit*** *…”*

You see, practically speaking, to have fellowship with God is to have fellowship with Christ. And to have fellowship with Christ is to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. It’s impossible to have fellowship with the Father and not have fellowship with the other two Persons of the Trinity.

When we come to the Communion Table, we reflect what is going on in our hearts. We are in a living, moment-by-moment fellowship with God. The communion we have as Christians is communion with the Trinity.

First, then, when we partake of Communion, we acknowledge that we are living under what the Bible calls “the New Covenant.”

Second, it’s a public statement regarding your inward fellowship with the Trinity.

Third, it’s a reminder of our fellowship with each other.

Here’s what the Apostle John tells us about both our fellowship with God as well as our fellowship with one another. I John 1:3 *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

I John 1:6 *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

In Christ, we are united to every other Believer on the earth. So, what are we saying when we join together and eat and drink at the LORD’s Table? We are saying that we are not only united to our Brothers and Sisters here in Old Saybrook, we are saying we enjoy fellowship with each other.

And what picture does the LORD give to us to express that oneness? Bread. One of the primary elements at the Table is bread. And bread, as you know, has more than one purpose. Yes, it’s to be eaten. But, the LORD has also given it to us as a symbol of our unity and our true relationship with everyone who comes to with us at this Table.

Here’s what Paul teaches. I Corinthians 10:16 *“…The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (17) For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”*

In I Corinthians 12:26 Paul puts it this way. I Corinthians 12:26 *“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”*

You see, we, the Christian Church, here in this town, are one bread. When your brother or sister rejoices in the LORD, you rejoice with them. When they suffer, we all suffer. When they are honored. We are all honored along with them.

Think about the marvel of God’s setting up this Table. Our lives are bound up in the lives of those we eat with. We are united spiritually with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our true brothers and sisters are not those who are joined to our flesh; but those to whom we are joined in our spirits.

God calls that union “one bread.”

The original word here for “bread” is “loaf.” We are “one loaf of bread.” And do you remember the account in the Gospels where Jesus had been teaching an entire day and just as He is about to send the people home, He multiplies five loaves so that more than 15,000 can be fed? This is the exact same word we have here translated “bread.”

Matthew 14:17 *“And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.”*

Mark 6:41 *“And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; …”*

Luke 9:16 *“Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.”*

John 6:9 *“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”*

This word “loaves” is the exact same word as “bread” in Paul’s message to the Corinthians. We come to this Table today because we are one loaf.

Think about it this way. When the Apostles first heard Jesus say these words at that first LORD’s Table, they were all eating from the same loaf of bread; pita bread to be exact. So, today, when you eat, when you feel the bread in your fingers, let it remind you of the truth of Scripture. You are one with each of us who partakes.

And, don’t you think that we’ve lost that when, instead of each of us taking a piece of bread off from one loaf of bread, we eat a piece of broken Matzo cracker? How much better would it be to pass just one loaf around on a platter and let each one share in that same loaf? I think it would say much more to us than our present process.

Let’s imagine today, that, as I preached, that there was one large loaf of bread sitting on this Table. Would not, just its presence in front of you, remind you of the truth of your unity with the one spiritual bread that you are a part of?

We aren’t doing what we ought to do when we come this Table merely for ourselves; although it is extremely important that we come to the Table as we examine our own hearts. But rather, we, the Church, are a loaf of bread. We are here for each other and a vital part of each other.

And folks, the Only One Who can help us to see the truth of these things is the Holy Spirit. He is here to bring to our hearts and minds the work of the Cross of Christ, the wonder and blessing of complete and final forgiveness. But also, it’s the Holy Spirit Who enables you to see both your union with Christ and your union with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And the final word I want to say about the Table and the Covenant and the Bread is this. Some future day you and I will join together with all the Saints at a future meal. Every-one in Christ will be together as one eating at the LORD’s Table in the LORD’s House. In the Kingdom to come we will sit with Him and we will sit with each other and enjoy the blessings and joys of our eternal union and fellowship.

So, when we eat and drink here today, we are reminding each other, not only of our present relationship to each other, but of that future, eternal relationship as well. Will we not all be together at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

Here’s the Apostle Paul remembering the LORD’s command to come to the Table. And He reminds us that we are here to remember Christ.

But, just as soon as Paul points us to the Table, he warns us about eating without discernment; verse 27. I Corinthians 11:27*“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

*(30) For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (31) For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. (32) But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”*

There are some who come to the Table and partake unworthily. These, he says, are guilty of more than just not remembering Jesus. They have a specific guilt. They are guilt of the body and the blood of Christ.

When was the last time you felt guilty for a specific sin you committed? How big was that sin? Folks, those who don’t see or won’t see the Person of Christ as their Savior and LORD should never come to this table?

You see, before you ever come to the Communion Table, you must come to Christ Himself and find His mercy for your sins. Otherwise, you’ve eaten and drunk yourself into a guilt that no one would ever want.

So, instead of coming to the Table as a lost sinner, repent today and believe on Christ. At that very moment you will find your complete and final forgiveness and you are then able to come to His Table and partake.

Here’s the only thing you can do. Acknowledge that your sin is what separates you from God. And when you will repent of your sins and believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, you will be saved.

* To Repent - to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe - to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin you ever

committed. He became your Substitute on the day He died on Calvary two thousand years ago.

This is the greatest news in all the world. The Father gave Only His Son to pay the penalty for all your sins. Jesus died on the Cross as your Substitute and He wants to be your Savior today. Won’t you cry out to Him for His free gift of salvation? What could possibly hold you back from having a saving relationship with your Creator?

Think about the LORD as the One Who loves you and delights to have you as His Child and to have you know and understand Him. He delighted in purchasing salvation in order to bring His forgiveness into your heart. John 3:16 *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

The Sinner’s Prayer. *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Jesus said, Revelation 3:20 *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 583 “You Are My All In All”