

"Back to School: *Lunch*"

October 4, 2015

Welcome/Opening Prayer

Introduction

We may not see lunch time as an academic endeavor, but Jesus viewed it as an educational opportunity. The gospel-writers tell us that Christ regularly ate with sinners and tax collectors. This venue provided Him numerous teaching moments.

1. Think of some examples from the Bible where Jesus used meal times/food to teach a lesson (i.e., feeding of 5000 or faith the size of a mustard seed).

Jesus's most significant meal-time lesson came on the final night of His life when He celebrated the Passover with His disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper.

2. What does Holy Communion mean to you?
3. How has the meaning of Holy Communion developed/changed as your faith changed?

Holy Communion is more than eating some bread dipped in juice. It is a very special time for Christians. That's why we call it a "sacrament" lit., "sacred moment." In his First Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul addresses the practice of the Lord's Supper:

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NIV)

4. Take a close look at Jesus's words. Knowing that Jesus would soon face persecution and death on a cross, what do the words mean to you?

In this passage, Paul claims this spiritual meal provides us with several opportunities

Break It Down

Holy Communion Is a Time to...

1) Remember

At the Last Supper, Jesus instructed His disciples:

“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me ...This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:24b-25 NIV)

The bread reminds us of the body of Christ that was given for us. The body of Christ represents the very life of our Savior.

Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry...” (John 6:35 NIV)

1. What does it mean when Jesus called himself, “the bread of life?”

When we partake of the bread we remember that

- Jesus gave His life for you and for me.
- By receiving Christ in faith, His life is imparted to us – real, abundant, eternal life.

Like bread, Jesus is the One who sustains us and nourishes us.

The cup (or juice) reminds us of the blood of Christ that was shed for us. His blood that was poured out when Jesus was nailed to the Cross inaugurated a new covenant between God and human beings. That new way of relating to us brings us forgiveness of our sins and gives us a fresh beginning.

Jesus said: “For this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.” (Matthew 26:28 NLT)

2. What is the new covenant that Jesus is talking about here? (See Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 9:15; Romans 7:6; Romans 8:1-4)

So Holy Communion is a time to remember. This Holy Meal causes us to pause to remember and give thanks for the life of Christ and for the forgiveness of God – both freely given to all who believe.

2) Receive

As United Methodist Christians, we believe Holy Communion is a “means of grace.” That is, it is a special way in which God works in our lives. He does that by taking some ordinary things (bread and juice) and using them in an *extraordinary* fashion (cf. the natural becomes *supernatural*).

1. How is receiving bread and juice a symbol of ingesting God's grace during Holy Communion?

God's goodness takes the form of whatever it is that we need – forgiveness, healing, encouragement, guidance, wisdom, assurance, acceptance, etc.

The founder of our denomination, John Wesley, said this about Holy Communion:

“The Lord's Supper was ordained by God, to be a means of conveying to [us] either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace...There is no previous preparation indispensably necessary, but a desire to receive whatsoever he pleases to give.”
(*Wesley's Works*, Volume I, p. 280)

So as we receive the Communion elements, some rather spectacular sorts of transactions take place. John Wesley saw many people come to faith in Christ while receiving Communion. Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, witnessed so many people receive help and healing during the Lord's Supper that he referred to it as “the medicine of God.”

God wants to provide us the cure to whatever ails us – physical healing, emotional restoration, or spiritual renewal. All we have to do is receive God's grace by faith.

1. Describe a time when you experienced some type of healing during Holy Communion.
2. What do you usually think about when you partake in Holy Communion? What are specific some things you can remember the next time you have Holy Communion?

3) Reconcile

Meal time serves to magnify what's going on in relationships. If things are good, eating together is really fun and enjoyable. But if things are bad, sitting down to eat can be torture.

Apparently, that was what was happening in the church in Corinth. Earlier in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul reveals that it had come to his attention there was trouble in the believing community that was manifesting itself in worship.

“I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and...differences among you...” (1 Corinthians 11:18-19 NIV)

Paul claims there is no room for divisions and differences at the Lord's Table. It's very similar to something Jesus said during His Sermon on the Mount:

“If you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the

altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”
(Matthew 5:23-24 NLT)

In order to live in a right relationship with God, we need to be in a right relationship with others.

1. Why would God want us to reconcile any differences we have with another person prior to taking Holy Communion?

We need to let go of the past and give others a new beginning (exactly what God has done for us and what we celebrate at the Lord’s Supper).

4) Repent

When we remember that Christ gave His body and blood for our sins, it causes us to realize that we are sinners.

According to the Apostle Paul, to do otherwise is to make a mockery of the sacrament:

“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-28 NIV)

To receive the bread and cup “in an unworthy manner” refers to consciously sinning with no remorse or intention to change the sinful behavior, i.e. hypocrisy, living a lie, pretending to be something we’re not. Paul goes on to say that this has been occurring in Corinth and, as a result, serious consequences have resulted.

“For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment on yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.” (1 Corinthians 11:29-30 NLT)

1. How does the understanding that “eating and drinking God’s judgment on yourself” change your view of Holy Communion?

Closing

1. What have you learned about Holy Communion?
2. How will it affect your partaking in the holy sacrament in the future?

Close in prayer: remember what Christ died for you on the cross; thank God for His grace in your life; pray for reconciliation between you and someone you know or between two people you know, and repent for any sins that have been brought to your mind during this study.