

Hayward United Methodist Church

Pastor Samuel's Message for the Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost, October 3, 2021

World Communion Sunday

"Do This in Remembrance of Me"

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Gospel Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NRSV)

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he come.

Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The first Sunday in October is designated as World Communion Sunday. Communion or the Lord's Supper is one of the sacraments. Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania observed first World Communion Sunday in 1933. Then, in 1940 the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America adopted World-Wide Communion Sunday. The United Methodist Church began to observe the tradition until today. We as United Methodists believe in open table. We invite everyone including children to Communion.

There are two ordinances commanded by Jesus Christ. One is baptism. Jesus commissioned his disciples to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The other is the Lord's Supper. Jesus

asked the disciples to celebrate the Supper in his memory. The early church began to administer baptism and celebrate the Lord's Supper for believers.

First, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. According to the Gospels, Jesus and his disciples came to Jerusalem during his last days. People in Jerusalem welcomed Jesus by spreading leaves and waving palm branches. It was during the festival of Passover for the Jews. The first Passover was celebrated in Egypt when people were ready to leave for the Promised Land. They remembered how God delivered them from bondage. Since then every year the Passover was celebrated to thank God for God's salvation.

Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover meal in an upper room in Jerusalem. Within the context Jesus set an example to follow. He took bread and gave thanks to God and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying this is the body broken for you. Then he took the cup and gave thanks to God and gave it to his disciples, saying this is the blood of the new covenant poured for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. He asked his disciples to do this in remembrance of him. This account of the Lord's Supper is found in Matthew 26:17-29, Mark 14:17-25, and Luke 22:7-38. Among all the Gospels, Luke's account is more elaborate than the other two. John's Gospel does not mention the words of the Lord's Supper.

After having the meal with his disciples Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Then he was betrayed and arrested. He was tried and condemned to death on Friday. After his resurrection Jesus broke the bread with two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus. After his ascension the disciples continued to meet and celebrate the Lord's Supper and remembered Jesus's death and its significance for salvation. Bread and Cup represented Jesus's life. Jesus brought salvation to humanity through his death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper became symbolic and pointed to Jesus's death on the cross.

Although John's Gospel does not mention the actual words of the Lord's Supper, John's Gospel points out the significance of remembering the life of Jesus. Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life who came down from heaven. He said, "This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:58). Bread symbolizes Jesus's life. He offered his life on the cross so that people might

live forever. The life Jesus offers is eternal life. Those who believe in Jesus will possess eternal life which continues beyond death. It is a life lived in God here and now and continues into eternity.

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ constitutes the bread from above. His death on the cross is the culmination of Jesus's life. One should take the entire life of Jesus including his teachings, miracles, suffering, and death into faith to understand the bread of life. The goal of the life of a believer is to imitate the whole life and ministry of Jesus Christ. As we read through the Gospel, we should pay attention to every story of Jesus. Jesus actualized the love of God. And so the believer is called to demonstrate the love of Jesus in the world. So that the world might come to believe that Jesus was indeed God's Son.

Second, the Apostle Paul encourages believers to keep remembering Jesus's death. Apart from the Gospels, the Apostle Paul is the first one to talk about the Lord's Supper. In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul mentions the tradition of the Lord's Supper which he himself received directly from the Lord. Jesus gave thanks over the bread. Communion is also known as "Eucharist" which means "Thanksgiving." Jesus came to do the will of God. He offered his life for others in thanksgiving. God deserved to receive our thanksgiving because God sent Jesus to die for us. Jesus died for us individually. That's why each one is invited to the table to receive bread and cup and to remember Jesus's sacrifice on the cross.

Salvation is always personal. In the breaking of bread and receiving the cup, one is invited to remember the mystery of salvation, whether one understands it or not. It is not remembering the past. It is not recollecting the story of Jesus who died more than two thousand years. It is happening here and now. The Holy Spirit brings it to our memory as if it all unfolds in front of our very eyes today. The effect of Christ's death continues into the future.

Paul encourages the believers in Corinth to celebrate the Lord's Supper as often as possible. The same tradition continued to the church over the centuries. The Lord's Supper is celebrated many times and on special occasions. But baptism is celebrated only once in one's life. Baptism is not an repeated act. Baptism serves as a sign of new birth. The Lord's Supper serves as a sign of ongoing presence of Christ who reveals himself in the symbolic elements of bread and wine.

Paul adds the significance of the Lord's Supper. He says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). Paul himself experienced the presence of Christ on the way to Damascus. He became an apostle to the Gentiles. He proclaimed Jesus's death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper becomes a means to know the great salvation that God brought through Jesus Christ. It is available for everyone who believes in Christ Jesus. It is the duty of the believers to proclaim what they experienced through Jesus's death and resurrection.

Paul invites the believers to discover the body of Christ which is the church as one body. He again uses the Lord's Supper as an example to remind the believers that we are together as body of Christ everywhere united in faith. He says, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:16-17). Then Paul goes on to say that "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

Paul gives some practical advise to the believers by using the imagery of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper reminds of sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper invites us to serve one another and give in service with love for one another. The Lord's Supper invites us to bring glory to God. Our life in Christ should imitate Christ's love and sacrifice, which would bring glory to God.

The Lord's Supper invites us to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection. Salvation is still available to all. It is through our witness and proclamation that many people will come and experience a new life Christ offers through his death and resurrection. We are called to invite everyone to Gospel Feast.

God Bless.

Pastor Samuel

**Let's say the Benediction together:
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with us all. Amen.**