

“Come to the Table”
1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Receiving God’s Grace in Communion: Since Jesus commanded us to share the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16), it is important that all Christians share in this meal regularly and with understanding – and on this World Communion Sunday, we share in this meal with brothers and sisters all around the world!

Beginning with Christ: The Lord’s Supper was begun by Jesus on the night He shared the Passover with His disciples. We learn from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (11:23-26) and from each of the Gospels that Jesus gave the bread and the cup of wine a new meaning. The bread represents His body; the cup represents His blood, shed for the forgiveness of our sins. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we experience God’s forgiveness in the sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.

What We Believe and Do: 1) It is a meal of Remembrance. Communion is a time to remember Christ’s sacrifice for our sins.

2) We prepare for it with Repentance. To repent means to “turn around.” We turn from our own wicked ways to God’s wonderful ways.

3) We receive it Rejoicing in our salvation. Sometimes we get too sad and sober at Communion, forgetting that this is a sign of God’s love for us. Romans 5:8 – “*God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”

4) The effect should be Reunion – with Christ and with each other. Communion calls us to be reconciled with God and with each other. Just as the family comes together from their separate ways when it is time for dinner (or should), so the family of God comes together at the Lord’s Table. This is a time to lay down our differences and share a family meal together ...

Special occasions are often connected with food—Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays ... Chili/Bean/Soup ... Whenever there's a special meal, we can't wait to be told: "Come to the table!" This morning, Jesus has set the table and is inviting us, "*Come to My Table.*" There are several things we need to "bring to the table"...

1. Before we sit down to a meal, **we need clean hands**. You don't work in the garden or garage and then come inside, sit down, and eat dinner. You wash up first. The Word tells us to *examine* ourselves before receiving Communion. We may see something that needs to be confessed and cleaned up. I've heard some parents say, "When I was growing up, if we disobeyed, we'd be sent to bed without supper" ... When we come to Jesus with repentance and humility, we find forgiveness, restoration, and an invitation to His table. Some people get so burdened by their sins, that instead of asking forgiveness, they figure they're too unworthy to participate, and they pass the plate without partaking. *None of us are worthy; but if we've trusted in Jesus, all of us are welcomed.* He invites us ... to come to the table. So let us come before the only One who can make us clean.

2. Before dining, **we need a good appetite**. What would happen if you were invited to someone's house for dinner and an hour before the meal you ate a bag of chips and a box of cookies? After all that junk food, you'd have little appetite for the good stuff! Paul tells us, *"You can't drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you can't have a part in both the Lord's Table and the table of demons"* (vs. 21). God offers us a substantive meal—the Bread and Cup won't fill us up physically, but they will satisfy our spiritual hunger. When we stuff ourselves with the junk food of sin, we lose our appetite for the banquet God has prepared for us. We need to *"taste and see" the satisfying goodness of the Lord (Psalm 34:8).*

Dr Leroy Creasy of Cornell University has identified a chemical in grapes that reduces the risk of heart disease. He reports that grape juice lowers cholesterol and cleanses the heart of life-threatening impurities. At the Lord's Table, grape juice represents the blood of Christ, which cleanses our spiritual hearts of sin's deadly effects.

We are in the world, but we don't have to be of the world. We are exposed to sin, but we can resist temptation. Do we get an appetite for what God has for us when we've been dwelling on things below, rather than things above? When our perspective is fixed on temporal things, we can get caught up in what has no lasting value. Jesus promises, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

What does Jesus mean when He says we will be "filled"? I think a lot of people live their lives on EMPTY. They go day-to-day without much purpose or meaning, and when they reach the end, they wonder what the point was in living. They are starving spiritually. How much different to know that God loves us individually, and has a specific plan for our lives. Jesus fills our days with a sense of significance & *satisfaction*.

3. When we're dining, **we need time to enjoy the moment**. There was a fast-food place in NJ called "*Eat It and Beat It*." I imagine they didn't stay open very long. I hear the chairs in certain fast food chains are designed so people won't get too comfortable; so they'll eat, leave, and make room for more customers. In Europe, when you sit at a table, it's yours for as long as you wish—sit down for lunch, and linger the whole afternoon if you like. No one is urging you to go. American tourists complain that European waiters keep a low profile—the reason is, they don't want to appear to be rushing the customers.

Sometimes we're in such a hurry that we don't enjoy our food; we inhale it and rush on to something else! When we partake in the Lord's Supper, we come to savor the moment, to linger and reflect and remember. When we come to the Lord's Table, our

spiritual meal should be the focus of why we're here! The proclamation of the Word and the reception of the sacraments are at the core of our faith! Communion is right there at the center of our worship. Never rush it; always savor it.

4. **Harmony at the table is indispensable.** A family got together for a meal, but before long, the table conversation turned into table controversy. Their discussion quickly turned into debate, and as they argued, the enjoyment of the meal was ruined. We can't expect all of us to agree on every issue, but we are expected to possess a unique unity – an uncommon Communion with one another. In vs. 17, Paul makes a point of saying, "We, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." Discord can ruin a perfectly good meal. One thing we don't bring to the table is divisiveness.

When I served as a chaplain in the national parks, our Communion services were inter-denominational. We didn't all concur on the nature of the elements, or how often we should receive them; some of us were used to coming forward for Communion, others held the tradition of kneeling, and others were used to being served in the pews. What we did agree on was our unity in Christ. What united us was greater than what divided us.

5. **We need to be grateful for this meal.** Ever see that apron with the words: "Kiss the Cook"? Those who prepare meals appreciate being told that people enjoyed their meal. When I was a teenager, there was a diner my family liked to go to. On one visit, the cook approached our table; he looked like he was 7-feet tall and he boomed out, "How do you like my cooking?" I liked it—fortunately! [P] When we come to the Lord's Table, we need to eat with gratitude – to not take it for granted. God provided manna, miraculous food, to the Jewish nation in the wilderness, and all they did was complain. We need to appreciate the *cost* of this meal.

There's a famous Swedish film that's a parable of grace, *Babette's Feast*, in which a young woman uses her inheritance to prepare a wonderful gourmet meal for her friends. She obtains the most costly ingredients and prepares a banquet worthy of a 5-star restaurant. Unfortunately, some of her guests don't fully appreciate her gift. [P] Jesus has prepared a meal for us that cost Him His life. We should appreciate the sacrifice of our Savior; otherwise we miss the whole point.

I think perhaps that children, at times, understand Communion better than adults, with their childlike faith. There's a big difference b/n being childish and being childlike. When we are childlike, we come to Communion with a sense of wonder and awe. [P] A minister asked a group of children what they thought of the Lord's Supper. Here are some responses: A 6-year old: "Communion is part of God and God's life." A 10-year old: "It reminds me of Jesus and that He died for us." A 5-year old: "It makes me happy to remember." And a 12-year old: "It's the closest we can get to Jesus." Foster gratitude.

6. **We come to God's Table with loyalty.** If your family owned a restaurant, you would come frequently and tell others about it! Paul is talking about how people try to eat at "the devil's table," yet also come to God's. We serve a jealous God (vs. 22), who will not be replaced with substitutes. He demands our undivided allegiance. The Christians at Corinth were tempted to revert to the idolatrous practices of their former lives. We don't tend to see overt idol worship today, yet idolatry is just as prevalent in our society...because trusting anything for what God alone provides is idolatry. Eating at the Lord's Table means communing with Christ and identifying with His death. *Our partaking of Communion indicates that we are undivided in our commitment to Christ.* He is our priority; He has preeminence in our lives. [P]

The bread that we break is a reminder of the body of Christ – nailed upon the cross, dying in our place, taking on our sin. We are vividly reminded each time we observe this memorial that *we are a part of the body* of Christ. This remembering is not simply the recalling of historical facts; it's a participation in spiritual realities. At the Lord's Table, we don't walk around the monument and admire it. We have fellowship with a living Savior as our hearts reach out by faith, and as we share in this precious *Communion* together. *[Pause]* So let us prepare to approach the Table of our Lord.