



Meeting Jesus at His Table

Vienna Presbyterian Church
The Rev. David Jordan-Haas
Mark 26:26-28

September 4th 2016



I have gratitude for my summer away and gratitude to be back with you. I want to show you a picture to assure you that my sabbatical was by no means a frivolous, messing-around kind of summer. I want to assure you that I spent time “laying down my life, sacrificing for love” many times over. Just look at this picture, taken within seconds of taking off on the Tornado at Adventureland Park in Altoona, Iowa!

This summer, we’ve been presenting a variety of spiritual practices to encourage you in growing your desire to live in Christ and to follow Him. The practices of spiritual friendship, spiritual mentoring, of worship, and hospitality (last week with Stan), and others. The practice for this morning stands out, however; it’s distinctive from the others. Why? Because of all the practices this summer, Holy Communion is a Sacrament—it’s one of only two sacraments that all Christians agree upon, the other being baptism.

What is a sacrament? It’s an outward, visible sign (namely, the bread and the juice) used to express/communicate an inward, invisible reality (namely, Jesus’ sacrifice in body and blood, for us).

Let’s introduce this practice, this sacrament of the Supper from the *Jesus Storybook Bible* (paraphrase by Sally Lloyd-Jones): Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22:

Then Jesus picked up some bread and broke it. He gave it to His friends. Jesus picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it, and He shared the cup with His friends. “My body is like this bread; it will break,” Jesus told them. “This cup of wine is like my blood; it will be poured out for you.”

“This is how God will rescue the whole world. My life will break and God’s broken world will mend. My heart will tear apart, and your hearts will heal. Just as the Passover Lamb died, so now I will die instead of you. My broken and spilled out life will wash away all your sins. And you’ll be clean on the inside – in your hearts. So whenever you eat and drink this, remember that I’ve rescued you.” Jesus said.

Let’s talk about this last meal Jesus had with His disciples. Christians know this sacrament by three names (all good, take your pick): The Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, and Holy Communion.

So, I’ve heard that you’ve been blessed to hear our pastors singing to you during their sermons this summer. Pete sang from the Toy Story movie; Glenda from the LEGO movie; and last week Stan singing a Happy Birthday Shout-Out to his daughter Shelley! So, I’ve got a song for you about, what else? A meal. “Hold the pickles, hold the lettuce, special orders don’t upset us, all we ask is that you let us serve it your way!” (The Burger King Theme Song” 1974 – Have It Your Way!)

First, the Lord’s Supper. It’s Christ’s supper with us, for us. This meal, it’s His idea, His initiative. This first supper, it began like every other Passover meal. As a faithful Jew, Jesus and the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem for the High Holy Days, the double festival of the Day of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Lord’s Supper =

Jesus becomes the perfect Passover LAMB, the unblemished, sinless Lamb of God

On this specific night in history, in the Upper Room, the Passover Meal became a lot more. This familiar meal—Jesus’ last meal—became a whole new meal, with Jesus as the focus. And notice at this Last Supper Jesus commanded His disciples to repeat this meal, to reenact it again and again, long after He’s gone.

The Passover—it’s the defining event for the Jews: God leads the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery into freedom and God rescues the Hebrew children from death. Heeding Yahweh’s command, faithful Jews smeared blood from a killed lamb over the doorframes of their homes, so that the Angel of Death would Pass-Over their homes and spare their first-born sons. The Lord’s Supper—it’s the defining event for you and me as Christians. Jesus becomes the perfect, slaughtered Passover Lamb. At this supper, Jesus offers Himself as the unblemished, sinless Lamb of God; Jesus spares us from our death and sin through His own “blood-sacrifice.”

Like the first Passover, the Lord’s Supper is rooted in history. The historical Jesus died in place of us, once and for all time. Jesus had a body; a heart that pumped blood; He had skin that bled. Jesus died publicly, on a Roman cross: Bread and Cup; Body and Blood; Execution and Death—real and true. (John Piper)

“So whenever you eat and drink this, remember that I’ve rescued you,” Jesus said.

***Jesus Storybook Bible*
by Rev Sally Lloyd-Jones**

So, when we participate in the physical act of eating and drinking at this table we are called to participate in the mental act of remembering this event, of never forgetting the cost of our forgiveness from sin, of our salvation from death. So at this Table what can our response be, but to

worship the One Who loved us enough to suffer and die for us?

Which brings us to the second name, the Eucharist. Eucharist was the primary word used by 1st and 2nd century Christians to describe Jesus' last meal (The Didache). It's a

Greek word which means "Thanksgiving" = eucharistia, or "grateful" = eucharistos. When we remember Jesus' death we must respond with thankfulness and gratitude. In the Eucharist, we recognize our sinfulness, and then, by God's grace, we remember God's saving sacrifice. Some of you grew up with the hymn, "When I fall on my knees, with my face to the Rising Sun; O Lord, have mercy on me." That is our proper response—our giving thanks—to all God has done for you/me in Jesus. We fall on our knees in gratitude. But do we actually ever *do* this?

The Eucharist =
eucharistia = "Thanksgiving"
eucharistos = "Grateful"

Despite all our own individual prayers and efforts to cultivate "attitudes of gratitude," we still complain and act entitled, don't we? I mean I am deserving of having it my way (Burger King)! My God, of all people, Jesus deserved to be most deserving of having it His way, frankly, any way he wanted. Of all people, the Son of God should be entitled to whatever He would ever possibly want or need. But this Table ought to trigger our memory that Jesus *freely* gives it all up. Jesus could have bitterly complained about the Cross that was imminent. But He didn't; instead He showed us scandalous grace and a Love at-all-costs. It's the Eucharist. Question: How will you come to the Table thankful, grateful in a new way?

Holy Communion =

“Holy” means “set apart”
“Communion” means “a shared experience of intimacy at an emotional/mental/spiritual level”

Third, Holy Communion. “Holy” means set apart. “Communion” means a shared experience of *intimacy* at an emotional/mental/spiritual level. By

the way, how might you and I take the “spirit” of Communion from out of here into our homes. I want to challenge you, as Stan did last Sunday. Remember his urging us to do an Emmaus Meal? You and a friend/spouse inviting someone new, someone you don’t know well into your home, for a meal? A meal in your home, where Christ is the Host with you and where Christ is present with you and your guest(s)? Do this! Connie and I already have two Emmaus Meals on the calendar!

Clearly, a non-negotiable for Jesus was that this Communion happens in community. On that last night he chose to be together with His disciples. He wasn’t going to *not* invite or to leave out Judas, or Peter, or Thomas (those bad boys!).

And thinking about Jesus’ community that last night together—along with the male disciples, were there also women who might have been present – women, the Gospels tell us, who accompanied Jesus during His three years of public ministry? At least there were women present on the edges or margins, serving and listening? He chooses community. Jesus doesn’t ever want to be the Host at His Table and eat



alone, without His precious sons and daughters with Him (Polish, Bohdan Piasecki, 1998 for Irish Catholic women!).

We are invited to “consume” what Jesus offers us when He offered Himself so completely on the Cross: His peace and joy; His freedom from fear; healing from sickness; victory in temptation; His guidance in perplexity. – John Piper

One more thing, when we eat the bread and drink the juice *physically* we do another kind of eating *spiritually*, together. We eat and drink, that is, we take into our

lives, what happened on the Cross. Together in community, we “nourish” ourselves with the forgiveness, the grace, the mercy that Jesus obtains for us when He bled and died on the Cross. John Piper describes this “feeding” we do—We “feed” upon a meal which Jesus prepared with His “ingredients,” brokenness and sacrifice. We are invited to “consume” what He offers us when He offered Himself completely on the Cross: His peace and joy; His freedom from fear; healing from sickness; victory in temptation; His guidance in perplexity.

To be in communion with one another, in community—it’s hard work, isn’t it? Jesus knows this all too well. Look at how quickly the disciples fled and scattered when the going got tough. That last night together, Jesus knew all about His disciples. Trust that Jesus knows what you bring to this Table today. Maybe you are feeling unworthy or ill-prepared to be at this Table because of something going on in your own life. Maybe there’s even someone in this sanctuary with whom you are not fully in right relationship. Perhaps this might be holding you back from “communion.” Maybe you are seated right next to a family member or a friend with whom you need some healing or reconciliation.

As hard as “life together” is, it matters to Jesus that we are all in Communion and at this Table. Jesus knows; trust Jesus; come to this Table. This Table is not an inanimate, blank Table. There is a Living Lord present here, now, through His Holy Spirit. Jesus has already done the work for you and me to be invited here. This Table is for you to be nourished by what Jesus knows you truly need.

**Just as the Passover Lamb died,
so now I will die instead of you.
My broken and spilled out life will
wash away all your sins. And
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your hearts.”**