

Pastor Shaun Arndt  
April 1, 2021  
Maundy Thursday

*“Oh taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.  
Amen.*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

When God gave His Old Testament believers a special meal, the Passover, He instructed fathers to explain to their families **what this ceremony mean(s)**. On this night when we celebrate the special meal the Lord has given to His New Testament believers, we do well to take some time to think about **what this meal means**. So like Israelite children of old we ask: **What does this ceremony mean to you?** (Ex 12:26)

And God, our dear Father answers us in His Word, in 1 Corinthians 10, where we read: **<sup>16</sup>The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?** **<sup>17</sup>Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.** *This is the Word of the Lord.*

So **What is this meal?** Sometimes it is called the *Eucharist*, a Greek word that means “thanks,” recalling how Jesus **gave thanks** before the meal and how we give thanks for the precious blessings it brings. It is also called *the Lord’s Supper* and the *Sacrament of the Altar*. But I think it’s safe to say the name we use most often is ***Communion* or *Holy Communion***.

The name ***Communion*** comes straight from verse 16 that we just read. The original Greek Word the Holy Spirit put in the Bible is pronounced ***Koinoni’a***. The EHV translation brings it into English through a Latin root: **Communion**. You might be used to the wording of the NIV translation: **a participation in the blood of Christ**.

But whether you say ***Koinoni’a***, **Participation**, or **Communion** it all means the same thing: there is more than one thing present in this meal. If you **participate** in a birthday party, you are there along with others. If you have **Co-workers**, there is more than are several people on the job. So in **Co-mmunion** several things share together in this one special event.

So **What is this meal?** It is **the bread:** unleavened bread, bread made without yeast, like the bread of the Passover meal that Jesus ate with His disciples. It is also **the cup of blessing that we bless.** The **cup of blessing** was the name for the last cup of wine used at the Passover meal. So we use grape wine just as Jesus used that night when He ate with His disciples. **What is this meal?** It is unleavened bread and grape wine. That we can *see*.

But there is something else here that is unseen, as Paul teaches with those questions in our lesson, questions that expect a yes answer: **The bread... is.. communion of the body of Christ.** Just as Jesus Himself said on that Thursday night long ago: **This is my body.**

The Apostle adds: **The cup...is a communion of the blood of Christ.** Just as Christ said: **This is my blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many.**

So **What is this Meal?** Along with bread and wine it is the true body and blood of Christ our Savior who gave Himself for us.

Now the moment our minds begin to object, we need remember that this is not the body and blood of any ordinary man, but of the Son of God, Jesus Christ who rose victorious from death. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, He is the One True, Infinite, Almighty and Eternal God. I think it is safe to say that *He* is very able to give us exactly what these words say: His body and blood truly present in this Meal.

No this is not just as symbol. Yes, His body and blood are truly in this meal along with the bread and wine or there could be no **participation**, no **co-mmunion** between these earthly and heavenly elements. If you're out of town, you can't **participate** in the party. If you are the only worker you have no **Co-workers**.

So **What is this Meal?** Bread and wine we eat and drink in an ordinary way, but also the body and blood of Christ we eat and drink in a most extraordinary, miraculous, explanation defying, but real way.

And *NO*, I can't see it or explain it. But I don't need to. Our job is not to explain, but trust what the Lord tells us plainly in His clear Word and through faith enjoy the blessings He gives us here—Christ the God-man and Savior, Himself truly present with His people in this meal. **What is this meal?** It is Jesus Himself among us to serve and feed us.

But there is still one more **communion** to talk about in this meal, the one in verse 17: **Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.**

Those who eat this special meal together are joined together in a **Communion**. We are united into **one body**. Just as many different grains of wheat are combined into one load of bread, so closely are believers to be united together as one. We are reminded of this truth every time we come together to the Lord's Supper. **What is this meal?** It says we who **commune** together are joined together in **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**.

Of course this means we should only commune together if we are truly **one** in taking Jesus seriously when He says in Matthew 28 that we should **teach... everything I have commanded you**. If do not agree in Bible teaching, if we do not hold to everything in Jesus' Word, how can we say we are one without lying?

But there's another important application in these words that takes us beyond the hour of the Lord's Supper and out into our everyday lives. Since we who commune together at the Lord's table are **one body** we are to act like it not just when we stand at the Lord's Supper, but *all the time*.

1 Corinthians 12 says much about what it means to be **one body**. It means not looking down on or being jealous of others who have different gifts or different positions in God's church than we do.

It means caring about one another and helping one another, just as the parts of our body help each other, like our hands put the ice pack or band-aid on the injured knee.

It means working together to carry out the work Jesus gives us to do as our body works together to carry out a task, not sitting back and letting the rest of the body work, but stepping forward to help as you have been gifted.

It also means not heartlessly judging the parts of the body that might be weak or injured spiritually, but being patient with each other, forgiving one another and encouraging each other with love.

But how our sinful nature resists our acting like we are **one body** in Christ! Like when we are one in God's Word, but don't make sure we study and review the teaching of that Word?

Or when we act one in church, but act differently as we leave the church, and argue, fight, lose our tempers, think the worst of others, become jealous and greedy, complain and lie to each other, watch and listen to things inappropriate for God's people. And since we are the **one body of Christ** our every sinful action gives Jesus and His Church a bad name.

So we need help! Help to live for Christ in all we do. Help because we have sinned against the Lord and each other again and again.

And praise God, **this meal** is the very help we need! This meal brings us Jesus, who gave himself up to suffering and death to rescue us from every sin, including our failures to live perfectly as **one body** of Christ.

**What is this meal?** It is the body and blood of Christ given and poured out on the cross **for the forgiveness of sins**, just as Jesus words say!

Pretend you have an Uncle Fritz. If Uncle Fritz says I'm going to give you \$10 million dollars in gold, you might wonder if this is an April Fool's joke, or if Uncle Fritz has started to lose his mind. But if Uncle Fritz says I give you \$10 million dollars and starts to put gold bars into your hands you can know with absolute certainty this treasure is yours! It's right in your hand!

In this Meal the Lord gives us a treasure infinitely greater than gold: He gives you the body and blood He gave on the cross for the sins of the world. He places this forgiving treasure into your hand and mouth, so that you may be certain you are forgiven!

For **What is this Meal?** It is the body of Christ, true God who became true man to take the place of sinners. It is the body of the Son of God who lived a life of perfect obedience, who never brought shame on God or the church, who always lived in perfect love and compassion and gives you the credit! It is the body that was arrested in the garden and declared guilty instead of you. It is the body that shouted "It is Finished!" It is the body that came to life again in power and glory on Easter morning!

**What is this Meal?** It is the blood of Jesus, who is God and man in one person and so it is the precious blood of God! It is the blood that was shed as they struck him and scourged Him. It is the blood that was shed by crown of thorns and nails and cross. As 1 John says, it is **the blood of Jesus, His Son** (that) **purifies us from all sin**.

**What is this Meal?** It is forgiveness. It is not a picture of forgiveness but actual forgiveness given to you directly by Jesus in His body and blood that saved you. It is the treasure that has purchased you a place in eternal life.

It is forgiveness and eternal life for all who believe these words... **This is my body... my blood... for you... for the forgiveness of sins.** This meal is peace with God!

And through such forgiveness and peace the Holy Spirit renews our strength to live as God's forgiven people and refreshes to care for and serve our brothers and sisters in Christ as parts of the **one body** He has made us!

**What is this Meal?** It is the Love of Christ. So eat and drink His forgiving love and then love one another, because He first loved us. Amen.

*Give thanks to the Lord! For His mercy endures forever. Amen.*