

**Maundy Thursday 2020
Communion Bible Study
Grace Lutheran Church
“Grace at the Table”**

Before we get too far, I want to invite you into a time of conversation. For the first part of this lesson, I want you to gather around your dinner table and talk about some questions, have a conversation, because there is something holy that happens when we talk to each other. If you don't have someone in your home, call someone, and ask: would they just talk with you for a while?

Here are your questions:

1. What is your name and how did you get that name?
2. Why are names important?
3. How does baptism relate to all of this?
4. One of the important things we do together as a family is eat together. Why?

Grace Lutheran Church Communion Bible Study

Read the passage and take a few minutes to discuss it as a family, or to think about how this passage relates to Communion. From what you've seen in church and from your own knowledge, what does the passage mean to you?

1. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Paul writes regarding communion
²³For 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, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In 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." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Here is the Apostle Paul, relating to the believers in Corinth what he had been taught about communion. This has been something that Christians have been doing since the very earliest followers of Jesus met thousands of years ago. In celebrating Communion, we join ourselves to all of those believers who came before us, and all of those who will come after us, at one table, at one celebration throughout all time.

2. John 13:3-16, 34-35 The Last Supper, Part 1
³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, ^[a]took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, ^[b]but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.

³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Here Jesus shows us what it means to follow him. Peter says he should be washing Jesus' feet, but Jesus makes it a point to say that we must let him serve us in order to have a part in him. In communion, we are also accepting that there are some things we just cannot do for ourselves. We are allowing Jesus to serve us, so that we can have a part in what he has planned for the world. In being made clean, refreshed in Jesus we are set free to love others, to love them as we were also loved before we had done anything to deserve it.

3. Luke 22:14-20 The Last Supper, Part 2

¹⁴ When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it^[a] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Again, we have an account that these words we hear in church, they come from Jesus. This is his command to those who follow him – Do this in remembrance of me. This is not something that people thought would be a good idea, it was instituted by Jesus so that we would continue to do it. But it is not just a remembrance, Jesus says – this IS my body. This cup IS my blood. This is a hard point for a lot of people, do we believe that the wine and bread is magically transformed? No, but we also take Jesus at his word. Jesus body and blood are present in these elements, in, with, over and under, Jesus is there because he says that he is. That is where faith comes in. But there is more to this passage,

Did you notice who was there? From our previous reading, we hear Jesus say, not all of you are clean, because he knew he would be betrayed. Judas, the one who would betray Jesus is offered this same bread, this same cup, he still has a place at the table and these words from Jesus are also for Judas. This cup that is poured out for you – as Jesus prepared to go to the cross to show the world that there is nothing that will separate you from God's love, Jesus says this to the one who would betray him. And so, what does this mean for us? If you have ever felt like you are not good enough, like you are not loved or worthy of God's love – know this, Jesus says to you, knowing you completely – this cup is poured out for you.

4. John 6:48-51 Jesus is the Bread of Life

Jesus said⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Jesus was celebrating the Passover feast with his disciples the night that he first instituted Holy Communion, and Passover was when God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Afterwards, as they wandered through the wilderness, God provided them with bread, called manna that gave them something to eat while they were lost. As they walked onwards through the wilderness, they knew that God was with them because their very lives depended on the bread that God gave them eat. Here Jesus is telling us that there is a more certain sign of god's presence with us, and that is the bread that not only sustains our body, but our soul – The bread of Life from Heaven, Jesus Christ himself. In him we have the promise for life that is more than just a fully belly. As we wander the wilderness of our loves, and it can feel like a wilderness right now, we have the promise that Jesus is present with us, that he gave his own life for us to live.

5. Mark 2:15-17

Jesus eats with sinners

¹⁵ And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Once again, if you have ever felt like you do not belong, I am here to tell you, there is a place for you at God's table of Love and Mercy. You are loved by a God that sees you as you are and knows you completely, and you are invited just as you are to come to the table, to be fed with holy food even before you feel like you have earned it, because none of us have earned it. You are invited to come and be served by the one through whom all things were made so that in being refreshed you are able to go out and proclaim to the world the ways that you have found a place at the table and there is room for one more still. Come and see.

So, to recap: What is Holy Communion?

- a. It's a meal shared with others
- b. It's Jesus
- c. It helps us remember that Jesus is still with us
- d. It's a gift that we don't earn
- e. It strengthens us to go out and invite more people to the table

What are the benefits of Holy Communion?

- f. It is for the forgiveness of sins
- g. It is for us to receive life
- h. In it, we are joined to Christ, Jesus enters into us to work salvation

Who should receive Holy Communion?

- i. Those who seek Jesus
- j. Those who believe and trust in the promise of God, or who desperately want to
- k. Those who believe that this is for you
- l. Those of us who still need forgiveness, who are still not perfect and are yet loved by God all the same, that's all of us.

Let's close with a prayer

Lord Jesus, you came to live among us, to teach us to love one another as you first loved us, you proclaimed all are welcome by eating with sinners, showing us what grace looks like in the ways you came to serve. You gave your life for us, and you continue to give yourself to us in Holy Communion. Thank you God for naming us beloved child in baptism, for being present with us in Holy Communion, for living through us as your church, and for giving us new life in your kingdom through the Holy Spirit. Fill us now with that same spirit, so that wherever we are, separated or together, we might use our gifts, our time and talents to proclaim in your name: all are welcome to your table of love and mercy. Amen.