

Today is World Communion Sunday. World Communion Sunday originally began in 1936 in the Presbyterian Church. Then in 1940 it grew to include other Christian denominations as well. This Sunday churches all across the world are celebrating our unity as Christ's church through Holy Communion. I like this Sunday because it reminds us that we are not the only church in the world and that the Church is much bigger than FUMC Mexia.

Instead of focusing on a particular text, today I wanted to talk about communion and more specifically, what it means when we share in this meal together. This meal we share together around the Lord's Table goes by different names – the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, Holy Communion, etc. Whether we call it the Eucharist or Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, one thing is for certain – it was authorized by Jesus Christ himself. It is literally "The Lord's Supper". For our purposes today I will refer to the meal as Holy Communion. Every time we share in Holy Communion I remind everyone that this is not a United Methodist table. It is the Lord's Table and all are welcome. Holy Communion and Baptism are what we refer to as "sacraments" established by Christ.

It's interesting to look at the history of the word "sacrament". Sacramentum is the Latin translation of the Greek word mysterion. So in a sense sacrament refers to mystery. If you have ever participated in Holy Communion or Baptism, then you that there is something mysteriously wonderful about the experience. It is really beyond words and explanation. A sacrament is a sign which is applied to divine things. Augustine defined sacraments as "visible signs of an invisible grace." There are four components to the definition of a sacrament: a physical or material element, a likeness to the thing which is signified, authorization to signify the thing in question (Jesus Christ authorizes the sacraments), and an efficacy by which the sacrament is capable of conferring the benefits which it signifies to those who partake in it. Let's look at Holy Communion and see how it fits the four categories.

The bread represents the body of Christ and the juice represents the blood of Christ. The physical elements of communion, bread and wine, bear a likeness to what we are signifying. The juice is not literally blood but it reminds us of the suffering of Christ and the blood that was shed for you and me. We know Holy Communion has been properly authorized because

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Christ himself instituted the supper. The event of the Lord's Supper is narrated in the Gospels, and the tradition is also passed on by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11: "The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took 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 comes."

Just think, when we say the words of consecration for our service of Holy Communion, we are literally repeating the words of Christ. This is a special meal, not only because Christ instituted the meal, but because it conveys God's grace, strengthens our faith, enhances unity and commitment within the Church, and reassures us of God's promises toward us.

I don't know about you, but I can testify that there is no comparison between a service without communion and one with communion. I leave the services when we have communion with a special kind of peace and can say that I have experienced God's grace and have felt a stronger bond of unity within the congregation. I think that is why I like our worship services on Wednesday evenings so much. It's not the singing and casual atmosphere that gets me, although those things are nice, but it's the fact that we share in communion together as a faith family.

In his book "Faith Seeking Understanding", Daniel Migliore wrote, "The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of human participation in the divine life by sharing life with each other. As a public, open, joyful, hopeful meal, the Lord's Supper is a foretaste of a new humanity. Christians cannot eat and drink at this table – where all are welcome and none goes hungry or thirsty – and continue to condone any form of discrimination or any social or economic policy that results in hunger or other forms of deprivation. The Lord's Supper is the practice of "Eucharistic hospitality," in which strangers are welcomed into the household of God."

When we come to this table this morning all distinctions are wiped away – young, old, rich, poor, black, white – none of that matters at this table because at this table Jesus is the host and we are all God's children.

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I'll never forget what happened one Sunday morning while serving communion. It's amazing the things you see and hear at the communion rail! This five year-old girl came forward to receive communion with her mother. She was a sweet little girl and like most five year-olds, she said exactly what was on her mind. I tore off the piece of bread and gave it to her. Only one problem though, she ate the bread before dipping it into the cup of juice. She realized what she had done and looked at me and said, "Can I have seconds?" I said, "You sure can. There is plenty to go around."

This morning you might come to this table thinking that there is not enough to go around -- not enough love, not enough grace, not enough forgiveness. You might not even feel worthy to come to this table, but let me reassure you, you are worthy. You are worthy because Jesus said so on the cross and Jesus loves you. I have talked enough now. I think it's time for us to gather together around the table and experience once again this sacrament – this holy mystery. Amen.