

“Sharing Bread”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

World Communion Sunday

October 5, 2014

The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of John, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17. I will also read one verse in First John, chapter 2, verse 2. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” And now from First John. “Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. All-inclusive God, who loves the whole world, help us to reach out and connect with all people. Your love God is not exclusive, but embraces everyone. Move us to create relationships with those who are different than ourselves. Make us bold to step out beyond our familiarity, because even “though we are many we are one body, because we all share in one bread.” Amen.

World Communion Sunday is a celebration observed by Christian denominations. It occurs on the first Sunday of October and encourages unity and worldwide Christian cooperation. The tradition originated in the Shadyside Presbyterian Church in 1933 and was adopted throughout the US Presbyterian Church in 1936. Others quickly saw the importance of it, and it spread to other denominations. In 1940, the Federal Council of Churches, which is now the National Council of Churches, endorsed World Communion Sunday.

World Communion Sunday—it reminds us of our closeness and oneness in the body of Christ. Our connectedness with other Christians extends to the other side of the world. Knowing that the body of Christ includes those far beyond Providence stretches my thinking—it helps me embrace those from other walks of life. It reminds me that we *all* celebrate and enjoy the love of Christ. Our culture may be different, but God’s love is the same.

The different breads we have displayed here today remind us that Christians in India, or the Caribbean, or Chile celebrate and participate in Holy Communion too. The entire Church is gathered together around Christ’s holy table. We come together as brothers and sisters. We come together as one body to celebrate.

When we take Holy Communion what is it we remember? John 3:16 says that “. . . God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. . .” And 1 John 2:2 says that Christ died for the “whole world.” God is saying, remember the love I have for you. God went beyond the words and showed us what love looks like. When the celebrant, that’s me, breaks the bread, we’re reminded there is “one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.” Christ is reminding us through tasting the bread that he loves us.

We drink the juice, and we’re reminded of the blood that Christ shed for the whole world. God hasn’t condemned the world, but through the giving of the body of Christ the world is made whole and can receive salvation and healing. “The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.” The body and the blood of Christ were given for the whole world. United Methodists invite everyone to the Lord’s table. We find unity and look for ways we can celebrate our oneness and commonalities.

“For God so loved the world” that his Son ate with those who were the outcasts in society. Today, we invite all who would come to receive the grace of God to our table. We invite different denominations, drug abusers, alcoholics, prostitutes, different cultures, different skin colors, different walks of life, different sexual orientations, different lifestyles, and different dialects. We invite the poor, the rich, the arrogant, the humble, those in high society, and those who are homeless. We invite all to the table who love God and all those who are trying to love God more. We invite children, teens, and adults of all ages. No one is excluded. All are loved, and all are accepted.

Do any of us completely understand how the bread and juice strengthen us and nourish our walk with Christ? No we don't; it's a mystery. Both children and adults don't understand, yet we know we're strengthened. Grace is poured out and mercy is received. By the Holy Spirit's presence working with the elements of bread and juice we're made one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world. We feel empowered to go beyond the walls of the church and show the love of Jesus Christ. And in the strength of God's spirit we give ourselves for others.

We remember the last supper and the sacrifice of Christ, but it's not just that we remember. We remember that Christ is present with us now; this very moment. We celebrate what is being accomplished for our families, our extended families, and families all over the world. We anticipate also what Christ will do in the future when he “comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.” We have a lot to celebrate—past, present, and future.

It's Holy Communion that strengthens us to love each other as Christ loves us—to bear with one another in patience and kindness and to know that we're not alone in our faith journey. There are those all over the world that strive to do the

same. We pray to be strengthened and to receive the love and mercy that God has for us so that we might show the world the love of God. We continue to pray for a more excellent faith, to serve one another in humility, and to do our best to be faithful to God and the church.

All over the world today our brothers and sisters in Christ are gathered together at the Lord's table to eat and drink. Let us all rejoice and celebrate and continue to pray that God's will be done in this body of believers and across the ocean and all around the world. Let's go forth in peace having received more grace from Christ and more love from God.

Let's pray. Christ who makes us one with God, one with each other, and one with all the world, you prayed that we might be guarded as we pursued this life in you. We've not been faithful to accomplish the unity you wanted us to. Lord guard our hearts and minds. Pour your love into our hearts and with those who feel unable to accept others because they don't agree. Help us to find unity in the love you have for all people.

Move us to take initiative as we look for points of agreement. Inspire us to reconcile with a brother or sister that we've held to a higher standard than we hold ourselves to. Make us to be of one heart and one mind as we draw closer to you. Bless all those who desire to accept and celebrate differences. Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.