

## Holy Communion

I want you to think for a moment about your relationship with God. Right now, I want you to think about you and Jesus. You are in a covenant agreement with God. Think of God as your God and you as his child, his disciple. I want you to think of that relationship right now. How do you honour God? How do you reflect the love of Jesus? Do you ever take the time to examine your life? If so, are there any examples you can think of, when you can identify how you have honoured that covenant agreement?...specific examples of living your faith. Are there times that you can recall, when you have not? Can you think of anything you said, or thought, or did, that you know reflected God's love and the way of Jesus? How about anything you said or did that you now regret or are ashamed of?

(Slide #1) It is called The Eucharist, The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion to name a few. Some churches celebrate it 4 times a year, and some every week. Sometimes those gathered come up to the front to receive the elements, sometimes they remain in their seats. Sometimes the minister celebrating the sacrament eats first, sometimes last. There are acceptable variations when it comes to frequency and style of service. But what does not change is the significance of the invitation to the table. The invitation to the meal, is an invitation to remember our covenant agreement....an invitation to remember Jesus' sacrificial love. It is an invitation to examine our lives.....to acknowledge how we have followed Jesus' way and how we have offended His holiness.

When we celebrate Holy Communion, the bread and wine become the means by which the believer has real communion with Christ. Hearing the invitation to the table, drinking the cup and eating the bread, ...its an opportunity to reflect on your relationship with God....your covenant agreement. It is an opportunity to confess our sins and be forgiven. It is an opportunity to remember and give thanks of the depth of God's love for us, that Jesus would go to the cross for our sakes.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul encourages the people of Corinth to come to the table, once they have spent some time doing some self examination. It is not to become an automatic ritual.

Communion is an invitation (and like all invitations), we need to consider if we are going to accept it or reject it.

We may reject the invitation due to shame, lack of self worth, guilt, lack of belief. We might accept the invitation in acknowledgement of Christ's sacrifice, the assurance of forgiveness, and His undying love for us.

Paul has other instruction to offer. Come to the table with an attitude of humility and thanksgiving. The word Communion also implies community. We do this with others. Make sure they are served before you serve yourself. If you are coming forward to receive, allow others to go before you....don't rush to butt in. Humility. Thanksgiving.

Paul also reminds the people of Corinth and the people of Kanata, that this is not a meal. If you need to feed your physical hunger, wait until you get home. This meal is about your spiritual hunger. (Besides, 1 small piece of gluten free bread is not going to quench anyone's hunger!)

In the Gospel of Luke, and in 1 Corinthians, Jesus said, 'this is my body and my blood. Whenever you do this, remember me.' Remember me. Remember that we have a covenant, an agreement. Jesus says, remember the promises I made to you and that you made to me. I will be with you always. I will never forsake you. Keep me in your heart and in your mind. You will be my disciple, my representative on earth, my hands and feet. My eyes and ears. My voice. Remember that you and I are in a relationship that is beyond all others.

Because of food and drink sensitivities, and for some because of alcoholism, many churches use gluten free bread, and most offer both wine and grape juice. When it comes to the Lord's Table, the service of Holy Communion in the Roman Catholic church there are some important differences, and those of you who have worshipped in a Roman Catholic church will be aware of those differences when it comes to the bread and wine.

Transubstantiation and consubstantiation are fancy theological words. With slight variation, they mean that in the context of the Roman Catholic Mass, the wine and the bread actually become the body and blood of Christ. In the Protestant church, we believe that the bread and

the wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ which we remember was broken and spilled for us, during his death on the cross at Calvary.

Protestant scholars look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 and maintain that what Jesus is saying clearly shows that the bread and the wine are remembrances of our crucified Saviour, representative of His body and blood. They say that the fact that he was actually there, saying those words, shows that the bread and the fruit of the vine were not actually His body and blood. This was figurative language.

My hope is that the words we say and the prayers we pray in our Communion Service, are understood by you, not as some routine words we no longer even think about, but rather as an invitation to consider. An invitation to accept or reject. An invitation that stirs reflection and self examination. An invitation for repentance and thanksgiving.

We have already celebrated Communion today.

I want to close today with words from a subordinate doctrinal document of our church, Living Faith. It is section 7.7 and as we read this together, think about these words and what they mean to you as you contemplate your participation in Holy Communion.

Please stand and repeat it with me - (Slide #2)

Amen