

Communion

Why do we practice communion? Recently I asked a group of Christians this question and I heard a variety of responses. One person said communion is how we are obedient to Christ. Another said it's an act of forgiveness. A lady in the back of the room said it helps us grow in God's grace. And all are true. Let's take a look at these ideas before moving onto how we can more faithfully observe this holy mystery.

First, Holy Communion is an act of obedience to Christ. In the Last Supper, when Christ instituted communion, He not only explained that the bread was his body and the wine was His blood. He also told them to "do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24-26).

Remembrance stands out in this passage. In communion we are commanded to remember Christ's sacrifice for us. Yet there's another important word in there: often. Jesus wanted His disciples to frequently reflect upon the sacrifice of Himself, as often as you eat bread or drink wine. Jesus wants us to remember His sacrifice for us.

Second, Holy Communion tells the story of God's salvation. When we celebrate Holy Communion you'll notice that it's always accompanied by a story. The story always moves from God's good creation, Christ's work to redeem us from our sinfulness and brokenness, and the Spirit's ongoing work of making us one with God. When we tell this story we focus on God. Yet you'll also notice that we belong in the story, too. We confess our sins and remember that Christ's gift pardons us. We acknowledge God's sovereignty over our lives. We open our hearts to the Lord. And we offer praise and thanksgiving. Holy Communion is God's story that each of us has been invited into.

Third, Holy Communion allows us to experience God's transformative work in our lives. When we go to the Table we aren't simply eating a piece of bread, but are receiving the gift of the One who said He is the very Bread of Life. Jesus told His disciples that "those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them" (John 6:56). In other words, in Communion we receive Christ and offer ourselves back to our Lord. And this regular practice of receiving the Bread of Life changes us. We begin to unlearn the ways of sin and learn the ways of God. We are nourished on a regular diet of God's presence that helps us grow stronger as people of faith. It is a regular meal that strengthens us in God's grace.

Holy Communion is a beautiful gift. So the question that remains for me is, 'how often should we practice it?' As I reflect upon all that Communion can mean, I'm left to think that this is really meant to be a regular practice. The church should regularly stop to remember Christ's sacrifice for us and fulfill Christ's commandment to do this often. We should frequently tell the story of God's salvation that affects us personally. And finally, we need to have a regular diet on the Bread of Life that truly sustains us.

As I reflect on Communion the most faithful conclusion I can draw is that it should be a frequent. That's why I'm pleased to share with you that Aldersgate is going to make Communion a part of our regular Sunday morning worship. By making this move we not only join the practice of the historic and ancient Christian church, but a multitude of churches around the globe. Yet what excites me the most is that we will be regularly encounter the Lord who at the Table offers Himself to us. I look forward to the ways this meal will nourish us to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

I'll see you at the Table,

Pastor Erik