

# Holy Communion

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 August 2016

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[ 0 : 00 ] . We will rejoice and be glad then.

If any kids would like to come up and sing, they're welcome to join us. This is the day. This is the day.

That the Lord has made. That the Lord has made. Let us rejoice. Let us rejoice. And be glad in it.

And be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice. And be glad in it.

This is the day. This is the day that the Lord has made. Good evening.

[ 1 : 11 ] Welcome to our church. We have a gift for our visitors at the connection site. Please fill out your friendship card for any prayers or concern. Or just so we can get to know you. It's fun to be part of the welcoming committee here at Hamilton Center.

We are glad to have you here with us in church this morning. I have no clipboard. How cool is that? Well, I don't know what that is. It means nothing's going on. But anyways, we do have one announcement I'd like to make.

The Sunday after Labor Day weekend, we're going back to our regular schedule of 8-15, 9-30, and 11-15. And also Sunday school if you want to register for that and get started.

And all the programs will be getting up. Sorry. Whatever that was. You know what I meant. Anyways, they'll begin somewhere around that time. So look for that in the little good news and in the other information we send out to the church.

Or on our website. Let's take our prayers to the Lord, shall we? Dear God in heaven, we just pray your blessings upon us here. That you just touch us in this space and let your Holy Spirit descend upon us.

[ 2 : 14 ] That we might experience the wonder of God in this place. That you might be our blessing, our hope, our peace, and our power in all and everything that we do. The words in Jesus name we pray.

Amen. I'd like to invite you if you're able to stand as we're going to sing together, I Come With Joy. I Come With Joy to meet my Lord, forgiven, loved, and free.

In awe and wonder to recall His life laid down for me. His life laid down for me.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each proud division ends. The love that made us makes us one, and strangers now are friends.

As strangers now are friends. I come with Christians far and near, to find as all are fed, the new community of love.

[ 3 : 33 ] In Christ communion bread. In Christ communion bread. The Lord be with you. Also with you.

Take a moment if you will and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit. Good morning guys. Everybody's sleeping in this morning. Do you know what this is?

What is it? It's cereal. Exactly, it's cereal. Actually it's not just a box, there's cereal in there, yeah. Because I was getting ready for, you know, making a special meal.

I figured we'd use this for Thanksgiving dinner. Does that sound right? No? Christmas dinner? It will certainly be good for Easter anyways, right? No?

But don't you like cereal? Don't you eat it all the time? So wouldn't it be good? You have toast? You think we should have toast for Thanksgiving dinner?

[ 4 : 32 ] Yeah? I think so too. Yeah. Some people call it stuffing. They just give it a fancy name. It's really just toast with juice in it. Anyways, there are certain meals that have special things, aren't there?

What do we eat at Thanksgiving? Anybody know? Turkey. Yeah. Sometimes pumpkin pie. And they have mashed potatoes and stuffing. It's just kind of the way it is, right?

On Easter a lot of people eat ham. Yeah. And chocolate. Right? Yeah. Yeah. So you see, certain things come with certain special foods.

So when we take communion, we don't use pretzels and Coca-Cola, do we? No. That would just be strange, wouldn't it? Yeah. And then it wouldn't be the same meal. It wouldn't feel right. So we use certain things to remind us of certain memories that we've had in the past.

Okay? Because God wants us to remember things in a special way. And remember Him in a special way. So what do you guys thank you for this morning? You want to share something? Raise your hand. My mom and dad. My family. Friends and family.

[ 5 : 32 ] Anybody else? All right. Let's go. Lord, we do thank you for the blessings you've given to us. We thank you for special meals. We thank you for special times and great memories that you feed our lives with and our hearts. Bless us this day and bless us with all the wonderful things in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Okay, you guys can go out to church school now if you'd like to.

All the kids can go out to church school. Good morning. Good morning. As we continue in our worship, let's bring our gift tithes and offerings before the Lord. And along with that, we have a mission moment.

It is for our children's back to school preparedness. We know there are many kids who are in need of help getting the school supplies and things that they need to start the year off right. And we want our children to have a good start to their school year.

So as the Lord would put it on your heart, please give to this offering as well. Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.

[ 6 : 43 ] Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, we're going to see the King.

No more crying then, we are going to see the King. No more crying then, we are going to see the King.

No more crying then, we are going to see the King. Hallelujah, hallelujah, we're going to see the King. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

So, we're going to see the King. Sure there will be to the many rivers we must cross. Sure there will be to the many mountains we must climb.

God will supply, give us all the strength that we need. Give us strength till we reach the other side We have come from the other nation God knows each other name Jesus comes and walks us out Yes, there are some of us who have faith down in life But we all shall be again on the other side No more dying now We are going to see the King Hallelujah No more dying now We are going to see the King Hallelujah No more dying there

- [ 8 : 53 ] We are going to see the King Hallelujah Hallelujah We are going to see the King Hallelujah Soon and very soon We are going to see the King Hallelujah Soon and very soon We are going to see the King Hallelujah Alleluia, soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.
- Alleluia, alleluia, we're going to see the King. Alleluia, alleluia, we're going to see the King. We will see the King. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
- Praise Him, all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts.
- Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.
- [ 10 : 39 ] Amen. Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day. We give you thanks for all of the gifts that you pour out into our lives, Lord God.
- And we are blessed that we can offer some of them back to you for the work of your hands. We ask that you would give us wisdom to know how to best use this offering for the furtherance of your kingdom.
- We ask that you would especially bless the offering that is going toward the things that children need to get started in school. Lord God, we pray that many would come to salvation in Jesus Christ because of the work that's made possible by the blessings you pour out on us.
- Those that we hold in our hearts and use day by day. Those gifts of our time and our talents. And those financial offerings that we bring before you today.
- Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Would you please be seated? God, multiply it.
- [ 11 : 52 ] Amen. Amen. What a blessing. We have some folks that, as we come to the Lord in prayer this morning, we have some praise reports.
- Lorinda Morris is cancer-free. Amen? Amen. Praise God. And she's here this morning and we are blessed. We are blessed for that answer to prayer. Melissa Rada is doing well after her surgery last week, which is a wonderful thing.
- She needs continued prayers for healing. It's going to be a bit before she's going to be back. We do have some concerns. A couple of people. Lexi is going to be having surgery this week as well as Lori Rivers.
- We want to keep them in our prayers for healing. Sean Smith had suffered a burn injury, kind of serious, from a cooker of some kind that exploded, whatever, when he was working with it.
- And so he's got burns. I know some of us know Sean. We want to keep him and his family in our prayers. And we've had a request for prayers for all of our kids who are going back to college this week, this week, next week, whenever it is that they're going.
- [ 12 : 57 ] We need to keep them lifted up, not only that they'll be safe and that they'll do well in their studies, which that's good stuff to pray for, but we want to pray that they hold on to their faith, that they hold their peace, that God is with them, and that they're aware of how God is working in them and through them to succeed in their endeavors.
- We want them not to forget. College is a place where kids often forget God in the midst of everything else. So with these requests and joys and those that are on your hearts, either from your seat or joining me, kneeling or standing at the prayer rail, let's turn to the Lord in prayer.
- Gracious Heavenly Father, what a blessing it is to come before you knowing that you are the great God above all gods, the one who hears and answers our prayers, the creator of all that there is.

You are mighty, Lord, and powerful, and we trust you to take care of the things that are in our hearts. Lord, we lift up before you all those who are sick and infirm, who are in need of a touch of healing from you.

Make them whole in their spirits and their souls and their bodies and give wisdom and patience to their caregivers, Lord. They would know that they are ministering to a child of God who is in need of love and compassion while they heal.

[ 14 : 48 ] Lord, we pray for those who are grieving losses of all kinds. Sometimes those losses come in a way that's expected.

Sometimes even welcome, depending on the circumstances of the person. Sometimes they come as a shock.

People who are out having fun, enjoying the day, and not returning home because of a tragic accident. Father, we lift all of these folks up before you.

Their hearts are hurting. They're in need of comfort. We pray that by your spirit you would comfort them and that you would send other people and give them the right words or the right touch of a hand, the right look to give.

Thank you, Lord, for your promise of comfort and your promise of the hope of salvation that we have in Christ. Lord, we do lift up all of those kids going to college and we lift up all of the other people too who are traveling in any way, that they would be kept safe going back and forth from vacations.

[ 16 : 14 ] We pray that each and every one of us, whatever it is that we're involved in, would remember you, that you are with us wherever we go and that we need to remember that there is a way that we are good and right witnesses for you.

And there are things that draw us away from you. We want to stay with the things that are right, Lord. Help us. Lord God, we pray that as we hear your word, that it would transform us into Christ-likeness, that we would become better vessels, that your word can come through, that we can share your word, that we can share your love a little bit better than we did last week, that we can become a little more like Jesus as you continue to reshape us, making us the way you have called us to be.

Bless Pastor Thomas. He brings the message. Let it be a blessing to him and a blessing to us and make all of our worship to be pleasing in your sight. We have come to worship you, Lord.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Good morning.

Our scripture reading this morning is from 1 Corinthians 10, verses 14-22. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

[ 18 : 22 ] I speak to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share one loaf. Consider the people of Israel.

Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean that the food sacrificed to an idol is anything or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God.

And I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, too. You cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.ienst foundational goals Marco Kiss for the flavor.

[ 19 : 50 ] Stir carefully through the days. See how the flavor stays. These are the dreams you will save.

With his blessings from above. You can't be the memories you gave. Serve it generously in the love.

You can't be the memories you gave. One man, one wife. One love through life. Man, Marisa, made a list.

You can't be the memories you gave. Man, Marisa, made a list. If I went to Ted's Hot Dogs, I would expect to eat a...

If I went to Duff's, I would think I'm going to get... And if I went, this is a little trickier, to Crystal Beach, I would want to get a funnel.

[ 20 : 57 ] But okay, some of you remember back in the old days. Memories. Memories. Memories. I'm an amnesis. That's a word. It's a Greek word.

Amnesis. It means to not only remember, but to actually relive the experience. To go through that same thing that we went through years ago.

So on Thanksgiving, we have turkey. We have squash. We have mashed potatoes. We have pumpkin pie. And it's not so that we can eat this particular food.

But it's so that we will not only recall, but relive all those years ago when we got together with our grandparents and our aunts and uncles and friends to gather around the table.

Communion is a great mystery. But it does the same thing in our worship experience. We've been talking about the different parts of worship, if you haven't been with us for the summer.

[ 22 : 01 ] And this morning, I want to talk to you about one of the most powerful ones, the mystery of communion that all churches believe we need to celebrate, but they don't do it the same way.

And yet, somehow, it has the same experience for everyone. When I was a child, I grew up in the Methodist Church. Back in those days, we had communion four times a year.

Anybody remember that? Four times a year. Quarterly communion. In fact, it was such a big thing because we would come on our knees. Remember this? We'd get these little tiny shot glasses, I mean little tiny glasses.

Remember the little glasses, right? And little square cubes of bread. Anybody remember the little square cubes of bread? Yeah. And it would take so long that they canceled the sermon that week. You might notice I've never done that.

But they did. We still do it in a similar way. Not quite exactly, but on Ash Wednesday, we take communion at the rail on our knees. I wasn't allowed to take communion until I was confirmed.

[ 23 : 04 ] So I was 11, 12 years old before I could come and receive the table of the Lord. It was different back then. Some of you have other memories. Some of you remember the same little glasses and the same cubes of bread, but they were passed in the pews.

And everybody would take communion all at once. That was a different tradition. Some remember standing before the priest and having a little wafer placed on their tongue.

Some had grape juice. Some had wine. It's all different, and yet it's the same meal of God. Now, we celebrate communion in this church typically three, four days a week.

We used a loaf of bread and a chalice, and we practiced what's called intention to take the bread and dip it in the cup, which was, and I hate to say this because I'd like to tell you that the chalice was a theological decision, and there are theological reasons for using the chalice, but it was mainly because our ladies got tired of washing those little tiny glasses, especially on Easter, you know.

There's over a thousand of those little glasses. They said, can we do the chalice? Sure. Shouldn't have said that, I'm sure. A loaf of bread is for more theological reasons, and we come standing now and not kneeling.

[ 24 : 23 ] Things have changed. I've changed. And the way we look at the table has changed. Little by little, in the Methodist church, we went from four times a year to once a month, and eventually, in our church, to once a week.

Communion is a mystery that began in a mystery. It's a celebration meal that began in a celebration meal. It began with a meal called Passover, which was a celebration that the Jewish people practiced.

In fact, they still celebrate. To remember the days when they left Egypt in a hurry. They had put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost, and so the angel of death passed over their houses, and they had to leave so quickly that they didn't have time for the bread to rise, so they called it the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus celebrated this with his disciples. In Mark 14, he says, On the first day of the festival of unleavened bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked them, Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

Preparations. It wasn't something that was done casually. It was something that had an importance to it. It had to be done right. And each church has a different opinion about what communion is.

[ 25 : 43 ] Different denominations have a different opinion, but even individual churches are different. In the United Methodist Church, we believe in something called an open table, which means that anyone can come to communion.

This may be the very first time you ever came here. You could be two years old. You could come to the table and receive communion. Other churches have what's called a closed communion.

Only their members can take communion. In fact, in some churches, you actually have to register the week before if you want to take communion. And there's a reason for that, because some churches follow the scripture that we read that says, Do not give dogs what is sacred.

Don't throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they'll trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces. And so the idea is that what's sacred, what's holy to us, shouldn't be treated casually and given out to people who have no respect or consideration for it.

And I understand. However, we believe that Christ is present in communion. We believe that in the Eucharist, that Jesus is actually there, and we're offering grace.

[ 26 : 53 ] And who are we to deny grace to anyone, to deny Jesus to anyone, and so we offer it to everyone. Are we right? Are they right? God will let us know.

In our church, we believe that it's important to draw a circle that includes people in. Draw it wide. Invite people to God.

How often should we celebrate communion? That's a question people have had. I was told years ago that it had to be four times here to keep it special. And yet somehow, now that I celebrate communion two or three days a week, I find it more special than it was when I did it four times a year.

It's an interesting thing that happens to us. And yet, it could be argued, maybe less, maybe more. There was a time in the history of the church when they practiced it, they celebrated it once a year, and the only one who took communion was the priest.

Because no one else was considered to be worthy enough. As if we're somehow more worthy. Which we're not. So in our church, we went from four times a year to once a month, and now we celebrate communion with every service.

- [ 28 : 04 ] How did that happen? Well, to begin with, the Methodist church celebrated communion every week in the beginning. We felt that that was what was the important custom.
- We followed the book of Acts, which tells us that... Book of Acts. There it is. On the first day of the week, they came together to break the bread.
- So the first day of the week, which is what day of the week? Sunday. That's not Monday. That's a work day. Sunday is the first day of the week. We celebrate the Lord's resurrection by breaking the bread and celebrating communion.
- As the early church did. And for centuries, communion was celebrated every single week. But in the Methodist tradition, we grew so fast in this country at one point in time that there weren't enough pastors to go around.
- And so basically, we guaranteed that the people would be able to celebrate communion at least four times a year. You see, the whole idea was to make sure people got communion at least four times a year, not to say that that was the right timing.
- [ 29 : 06 ] And by the way, baptisms were four times a year. All the business of the church was done four times a year. This was how the church was handled. And in the meantime, folks ran the church.
- Not a large church like ours, but most of the Methodist churches were tiny little churches. There's not enough pastors to go around. And then somewhere in the 1980s, we decided, well, four times a year it just isn't even close to what it's supposed to be according to what we read in the scripture and know from church history.
- So the Methodists decided to move it once a month. Now, there is nothing at all theological in one way or another about once a month. That's just something we did, try and move people closer. And we stopped there in many churches and stopped there even in our church.
- Now, our Saturday night people started celebrating communion every week from the beginning, but most of our congregation, it was once a month until an 11-year-old girl came out the door and asked me, why do we only celebrate communion once a month?
- Why don't we do it every week? I have to tell you, an adult would have asked me, I probably would have had some good answer, like, well, some people don't like it that way and it would cause disruption in the church and we want to be kind and loving to others.
- [ 30 : 12 ] But an 11-year-old girl, I had no answer. And so I told her, honey, we'll start celebrating once a week starting in September. And so we did. But we still have people that celebrate once a month.
- We have people that celebrate four times a year. And that's okay. It's one of the reasons we do all that singing between the sermon and communion, partly because, as a congregation, we found we really don't like to sing that much when we first come in.
- We want to get a little warmed up before we're ready to sing the God. But also, it's so that we have some time. For the people who feel that that's their worship experience and they don't have a desire to celebrate the table every week, they can go home.
- And that's perfectly fine, by the way. You shouldn't feel that you have to stay. Some people get up and go. You shouldn't look at them like, where are you going? What are you doing? You know? That's perfectly fine.
- We all have our own traditions, our own way of experiencing God. And what we try to do in our congregation is respect different people's traditions, even when it comes to something so holy as the table of the Lord.
- [ 31 : 19 ] So some people, they celebrate once a month, some three, four, five times a year, some every week, some not at all, because that's what their tradition is. Sometimes I wonder if Jesus just meant that we should say table grace.

Whenever you eat this bread or drink this cup, do this in remembrance of me. Maybe he just meant say grace. You know, sometimes people are impressed because the Muslim faith, they pray five times a day.

If you pray when you get up in the morning and when you go to bed at night and for three meals, you'll pray five times a day too. It's not really that hard to do. But I think Jesus meant a little something more.

I think it matters, the words we use. I think it matters, the elements we use. And yes, I do know a pastor who celebrated communion with pretzel and Coca-Cola. And I do know people that change the words and try to be clever with the words in different ways because they're trying to make it different.

So to be more interesting, it won't be the same words again and again and again. And I actually agree with the United Methodist Church that generally it should be pastors celebrating communion.

[ 32 : 33 ] Not because we're any better. Not because we have some holiness to us. But simply because somebody needs to at least be trying to keep this as sacred as it was originally meant to be.

That's why. I don't think there's any other reason behind that. The words matter. I asked the teenagers who celebrated communion with me on the side of a highway one time and we were using the words and they remembered every word, every response.

We even had people wandering down to see what we were doing and joining us. Impressed that our young people knew these words. If we keep changing the words all the time, the whole meal becomes different.

If we change the idea every time and we have something different than something else to eat, would it really be Thanksgiving dinner if you ate spaghetti and meatballs?

Maybe. But not the one that takes us back to our memories of when we were little children. The words come to us from the scripture, actually.

[ 33 : 38 ] In the book of 1 Corinthians, if you go over one chapter to chapter 11, Paul says, In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, This cup is a new covenant in my blood.

Do this whenever you drink of it in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread or drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. You proclaim the sacrifice Jesus made. The words make a difference.

Somehow when we hear those words, it takes us right into the moment. And all the times we've celebrated that meal before come flooding back to us.

The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. You see how easy it is? And instantly, we return back to that moment.

Try it sometime with somebody who's lost most of their memory or somebody who's lying on their deathbed and really can barely get out any words and you'll see that they can remember the words.

[ 34 : 52 ] If we change them too much and too often, we end up with confusion. Now there are words that change and that's perfectly fine. But the whole point is, is it points to the death of Jesus as that next chapter tells us.

Because it's part of the salvation drama. Believe it or not, God likes drama. Not the teenage drama. Not that drama, okay? But drama, like a great pageantry, like a show, like something that gives us the opportunity to not just hear, but to see and taste and feel and touch and experience God in every single way.

And the table gives us that ability. And so, in verse 18 of this passage, it says to us, consider the people of Israel.



Do not those who eat the sacrifice participate in the altar? Communion helps us remember what the saving grace of God is all about.

And so we need to come in the way in which we would come to receive salvation. Prepare. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved.

[ 36 : 09 ] And so again, we go one chapter over into the 11th chapter of Corinthians where it says to us, everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat the bread and drink from the cup. And so we have a prayer of confession.

Another addition brought to us by one of our members who challenged their pastor that maybe we're not quite ready to come to the table. And they were right. Now, some churches do a very formal prayer of confession.

Ours is a little different. It's just the way in which we do it, but in each and every way, we need to prepare our hearts and examine who we are so that we can be prepared for the grace of Christ, that mystery of faith.

And it is a mystery. You know, people have studied this. People have talked about this. Preachers have preached on this and they've experienced this for 2,000 years and yet we don't fully understand it.

In the end, when we come to the table, it still becomes some sort of a mystical thing for us. People say children shouldn't take communion. They don't understand it. I had a three-year-old one time out in my Wyoming church and his grandmother looked at him and said, Travis, you can't take communion unless you understand what it is.

[ 37 : 17 ] He says, Grandma, I know what it is. It's the body and blood of Jesus that was shed for me. Really? Could you do better? I don't know that I could. Have you ever noticed that children don't goof around?

They don't joke. They don't laugh. They don't make a mockery of it. They respect it. They experience it. It may be a mystery in some sense, but in some ways, it's the whole sense of who and what we are as we give our lives to Jesus.

The table in and of itself has no power. It's the God of grace behind the table that has the power. That's why Paul says to us in 14 that we need to be careful to flee from idolatry.

We are so caught up in idolatry in this world we don't even understand it. We think of idolatry as worshipping some little statue like they did years ago, but our idolatry is different.

Idolatry is to think that there are things that can make our lives what they need to be. If we only have the right things, if we had enough of that green paper piled up, if we have the right numbers in our 401k program, if we have the right job, if we have the right possessions, if we have the right friends, if we have the right house, if the Buffalo Bills could just win the Super Bowl, everything would be well with the world.

[ 38 : 39 ] Some people even make an idol out of the church. As if the church in and of itself is somehow the means to salvation when it's the God that gives the church power that is the means of that salvation.

The sacraments are not magic. They don't do something special. In fact, some people believe, I don't know how true it is, that the word hocus pocus actually came from the original Latin that they said over the mass, which began with the word hocus or to transform and to change.

But the sacraments don't have some particular special power. When I baptize a child, it doesn't save the child. It's the faith of the parents to make a commitment that they'll bring that child into the church so that they'll understand grace before they even understand grace.

Do you understand what I mean? So that they'll know Jesus before they even know what they know. It's coming to the table and giving our lives to Jesus.

It's not the event itself. It's the faith behind it. Otherwise, just as it talks about the idol worship, it's the same with us. This is just food. It's just bread.

[ 39 : 55 ] And for us, it's grape juice. That's all it is. Anything more just opens us up to demons. As Paul says, we don't want to be united with demons.

Communion is about uniting with Christ. About giving our lives to a God who's given himself to us. And so the blood shed for our salvation is represented in the table with the cup.

And so some would say it must be wine and it has to be red, but we found that wine excludes some people that can't have alcohol. And the red is just simply because you ladies were getting red stains all over your blouses and it wasn't attractive.

So we went ahead and used wine. sometimes we make decisions to include people in because the point is not what's particularly in the cup, although I think it matters.

I don't think Coca-Cola would work right. The point is that we're trying to get close to the holy drama so that we can hold and feel and touch and taste and experience the living God.

[ 41 : 17 ] My wife has found these crosses. I don't know where she got them, but they're kind of an interesting cross because they fit right inside a person's hand. You can hold them. Not like a regular cross.

They've got sort of a grip on them. And she tends to take them, the people who are going through really significant, serious concerns. And it's fascinating that even when they're not really very conscious, they've got that thing gripped in their hand.

You could pry it out of their hand. Because even though it's not a cross that has the power, they're gripping onto something because it matters. If we can have something we can hold, something we can feel, something we can touch, something we can taste, it helps us to hold on to Jesus.

And so we come to the table for the same reason. To be united with a God that allows us imperfect creatures into his presence by the grace of God.

Because he has forgiven our sins, we are allowed to be in his presence and the table represents that. The table also represents the place where we unite with each other.

[ 42 : 28 ] In verse 17, it says, because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body. For we all share in the one loaf. Now you notice we have now one loaf. We don't have the little square cubes.

We don't have wafers. I'm not saying they're immoral or evil or anything, but that loaf means something to us. It means that everyone in this room is gathering together to draw from that same bread.

Sometimes we have four stations, I almost kind of like to have one giant loaf of bread that we would give out in the middle, but it would probably take forever. But the truth is that that bread represents something.

It means that no matter what divides us elsewhere, when we come to the table, we are the believers of Christ united together. Amen? So believe it or not, in this room, I know it's beyond your comprehension, there are Democrats, there are Republicans, there's probably even some people that will vote for the Green Party.

There are people who are wealthy. There are people who are poor. There are people that come from different races or backgrounds or nationalities. There's people that live in Lockport or Amherst or Pendleton.

[ 43 : 40 ] There's even people that live in Cheekwaga and Buffalo, if you could imagine such a thing. And they gather with us and we become one. One body, one group of people who remember that the things that divide us are not as important as a thing that draws us together, the one who draws us together.

Jesus Christ. And believe me, if there was ever a time in our society we need something to pull us together instead of pushing us aside, we know that now. I don't have to tell you that.

We understand the divisions and the brokenness and the sense of separating everybody out. You don't watch HGTV, you're a loser.

Really? Really? We can't even agree on what's the most popular television show. because we become divided.

There's a very interesting verse in Acts chapter 2, the very first verse, which simply says, on the day of Pentecost they were all together in one place.

[ 44 : 48 ] Now, when I first read that I thought, that's pretty redundant. Why did they say all together and in one place? Obviously, if they were in one place they were all together and obviously if they were all together they were in one place.

But I can tell you we can have a lot of people who are not together in one place, right? And by the way, some of that's because we have real genuine passions and concerns that we believe in.

I don't want to diminish the differences because some of these things are very important. And I think to be passionate and to feel strongly about the things that you care about that you think are going to matter for the future of the people around you and your children and your nation, this is not a bad thing.

But at some point in time we have to draw together. If we're the followers of Christ we have to represent the one who draws the whole world to him and will explain to us what's right in the end.

And so at the table we come regardless of what our background is, regardless of who we are, people from all walks of life walk up and the power of God is unleashed.

[ 45 : 57 ] In fact, it says to us in Matthew if we put the church together the gates of hell will not overcome it. God has the ability to take us and use the unity of Christ to change the world.

But we have to make a decision. We have to choose God. Communion is actually God's original altar call. It's interesting that people use that term altar call.

You may not know what an altar is. An altar is actually a box that's located in some churches and you know what's inside the box? Bones.

Typically the bones of a great saint or maybe some previous pastor or something. Don't bury me up there. I'm not going there. All right? But really that's what it is.

Bones in a box in the front of the church. The idea is that person of great renown sacrificed their lives to God and we come and sacrifice ourselves to God and remember to sacrifice Jesus.

[ 47 : 06 ] Other churches have a table because they remember this as the Lord's table and we come to celebrate the great meal that we join in together. we've had an altar and we've had a table.

Now we've got an altar table. I don't know what that means. You know? We got it as a gift from a wonderful church in Lackawanna. We're grateful for that. But the altar is where we're called to by God to give our lives to the Lord.

And so communion is really the altar call. Some people say to me, Pastor Tom, why don't you do altar calls? I do an altar call every single service. If you want to give your life to Jesus, come to the table.

If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus or want to be one, come to the table. See, what you don't see is the people that after they come to the table come to the rail with tears streaming down their face because they just made a decision to Jesus.

You want them to put on a show for you. But this really has nothing to do with you. It has to do with Jesus and that person's soul. And in the moment that we come to receive that bread, it's a very personal, private opportunity for each of us to say, I choose God.

[ 48 : 24 ] Paul says to us, no one, no one can drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You can't have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Now we think that has something to do with the ancient practices of the temples they had back then, but it also has to do with us. We have to choose.

We have to make a decision which way our life is going to go. We have this crazy word in our culture called secular, which implies there's some sort of neutral. There's no neutral. You either live in a world that's profane without God and ruled by demons that will destroy your life or you live in a life that's ruled by God.

There's no in-between. You can't walk down the middle. If you do, the demons are more powerful than you and they will draw you in. They're fallen angels.

You really think you are more powerful than a fallen angel? You're not. But with the power of God, if we choose God, the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to overcome all that, we make a choice for God.

[ 49 : 35 ] And then God offers us hope and love and joy and peace and the wonders of eternity. He helps us to remember whose we are and who we belong to in that great cloud of witnesses that God has put in place for us.

Memories are made of this. With his blessing from afar, serve it generously with love.

One man, one wife, one love, through life, memories that he's made of this.

Memories. Not simple memories. Herminesis. In the book of Hebrews, it actually says to us, that we will be surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses so we can throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Communion. Communion is a hug from God. And by the way, from anyone who's ever sat in these chairs and pews before us in this church with your grandparents, your aunts and uncles, great-grandparents, the apostle John and James and Priscilla and Aquila and all the ones who came before us are gathered here with us and embracing us and encouraging us on.

[ 51 : 15 ] That's what the table means. We come. We come to be part of something so great we can never fully understand but we can fully embrace it.

We come to look You have called me to your table You have called me by my name You know the hunger we've made in my heart I don't want to be the same Lord, light a fire again I feel when life begins I'll stand and testify Lord, new strength abounds in me

Revival set me free I am brand new You have called me to your table You have called me by my name You have a hunger within my heart I don't want to be the same Lord, let your power grow Inside my heart I know I will be healed Lord, your glory will be shown My life is on my own

I give it to you Lord, your glory will be shown My life is not my own I give it to you How beautiful I give it to you I give it to you How beautiful

How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful The dahsy How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful is the body of Christ How beautiful the heart that breath Look all my sin, glory, and sound How beautiful the tender eyes

[ 55 : 42 ] Close to our head, number of smiles How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful And as he laid down his life All the sins and sacrifice That we will live Just as he died

Willing to be the peace Willing to be the peace How beautiful The pain that brings The sound of the tears And the love of the king How beautiful The hands that serve The wine and the bread And the sons of the earth How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful

How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful Is the body of Christ If you came to sin Who knew no sin He might become His righteousness He humbled himself He carried the cross Love so amazing Love so amazing Jesus Messiah ■ Name of the makers, rest thy redeemer.

Emmanuel, red new use ever. Ransomed from heaven, Jesus, Messiah, Lord of all It's by the way One to one From here and all And all the love For all the friends There was no love Love so amazing Love so amazing Jesus, Messiah Name of our home name Bless every demon

I thank you, Lord Rescue for sinners Ransom from heaven Jesus, Messiah All of all All our hope is in you All our hope is in you Follow, follow, renew you Love The light of the world Jesus, Messiah Name of our home name Blessed redeemer Emmanuel Emmanuel

[ 60 : 50 ] Emmanuel Emmanuel The rescue for sinners The ransom from heaven Jesus, Messiah Lord of all Jesus, Messiah Lord of all Lord of all Lord of all Lord of all Please be seated And so we need To come to the Lord The right way Because We're not good enough You're not good enough I'm not good enough None of us are But God makes us good

When we confess our sins And believe in our heart He offers us his saving grace Shall we pray to God Dear God in heaven I have sinned I have sinned But you already know that You know what I've done wrong You know what I've said wrong You know what my heart's been wrong about Forgive me Lord Change me Transform me That I might live As you would have to live A servant of Jesus Christ Amen God Absolutely Wants you to be perfect Isn't that incredible He absolutely wants to remove All brokenness from your life And give you a mulligan A do over He wants to start fresh with you

So all those things That you've done wrong He wants to put them aside And say let's try this Again So in the name of Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven In the name of Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven Glory to God Amen We gather here In Jesus' name His love is burning In our hearts Like living in our hearts Like living clay Where through the times The Father makes us one Come take the bread Come drink the wine

Come share the love file And dad No one gives aA We intend for kids of ours.

He joins us here. He breaks the bread. The Lord who pours the cup is risen from the dead.

[ 64 : 35 ] The one we love the most is now our gracious host. Come take the bread. Come drink the wine.

Come share the Lord. We are now a family of which the Lord is here.

But what seem he meets us here in the breaking of the bread.

Come take the bread. We'll gather soon where angels sing. We'll see the glory of the Lord and coming King.

Now we anticipate the feast for which we wait. Come take the bread.

[ 65 : 40 ] Come drink the wine. Come share the Lord. Amen. Pastor Tom invited us.

All of us. Let us know that we are invited to come to the table. So come. If you love God, repent of your sin and seek to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Come to the table and receive what God has for you this day. If you need to draw closer to Christ, you'll find that closeness here.

If you've been coming to church all your life and you don't know Jesus in your heart, come here. God will meet you. The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

[ 66 : 54 ] You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets.

And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ.

Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

[ 68 : 12 ] And on that night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and he gave thanks to you, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples.

He said, Take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave you thanks and praise, and he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you.

This is the cup of my blood. The blood of the new covenant poured out as you poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this as often as you drink it. In remembrance of me. And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us.

We proclaim the mystery of faith. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here.

[ 69 : 39 ] And on these gifts of bread and wine, make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world, the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world. Until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet, through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in your Holy Church.

All honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen. Shall we pray together with the confidence of children of God, the prayer Jesus taught us?

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily breath, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[ 70 : 51 ] For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. Will those who are serving please come forward? Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 72 : 40 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. I'll worship your holy name.

[ 75 : 29 ] Let's bow, O my soul, O my soul, worship this holy name.

She might never be born, O my soul, I'll worship your holy name.

I'll worship your holy name. And on that day when my strength is failing, the end got near and my time has come.

Still my soul will sing your praise on any more. Ten thousand years and one forevermore.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship his holy name.

[ 77 : 00 ] Sing like never before, O my soul, I'll worship your holy name.

I'll worship your holy name. I'll worship your holy name.

I'd like to invite you, if you're able to stand, as we're going to sing together, I Come With Joy.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. such friendship that unknown we see and praise him here we see and praise him here together men together we'll go our different ways and as his people in the world we'll live and speak his praise things have changed and so on ash wednesday when they play let us break bread together on our we go down to the rail then i feel that ominous from my childhood and i have to tell you we have spaghetti for thanksgiving dinner because you know between this diet restriction and that diet restriction and this diet restriction it's the only meal we can eat as a family together things change but the soul of what god wants us to do and to be is in the table to come and remember whose we are what we are what god called us to be and to go out into this world and live that for the world to see may god bless you may god go with you may god go in you and god may god be with you this day and forever go in jesus what are we saying for the birds who haven't been here and every day events next