



LAKEWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Brian Mitchell

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Come Together

2 Timothy 1:1-7

Thanks to Vanessa and Jacob for serving as liturgists this morning.

One of my professors shared a video with us last week, which really moved me, I shared it on Facebook and I know a few of you saw it. It starts with a woman coming home from work and no one is talking to her, everyone is in their own world in her office, the subway and the elevator to her apartment floor. Even her roommate is locked into her screen. So, she pulls the dinner table out of their apartment and into the hallway, and her and her roommate sit and wait. Eventually a family comes out of the elevator, and they are invited to join. They do. Other folks in the hallway hear the noise and come and join. They bring food, tables, and conversation. Some meet each other for the first time. It ends with one of the children, knocking on the door of an elderly man, at the end of the hall, who grabs some bread and joins them. All this while the song, "What the world needs now is love sweet love," is playing. It's quite moving. The tag line is "Nothing brings us together like eating together."

This picture of the table stuck with me. I love the idea of the welcome and the inclusion. The breaking down of invisible walls. Everyone bringing something to the table to share. It struck me a lovely picture of the church, what the church could be. And we also come together around this table this morning.

Here at Lakewood, we celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month. We come together to the table to remember, to worship, and to proclaim the Gospel which is evident at the table. The message is completely clear and reliable: take, bless, break, give. This is my body. Pour,

share. This is my blood. Remember. Celebrate. Proclaim this good news. This table keeps the Gospel before us in the simplest and most profound form: Christ for you. Christ with you. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Today is World Communion Sunday. Today we are not only united to each other, but we are united with Christians all around the world of many denominations who are gathering at the table of Jesus.

Christians from every corner come together to this table of Jesus, to be united with Jesus and with each other.

I love that my home church in Scotland celebrate at the table today. Perhaps you have friends or family that are far, who also celebrate at the table today. There is something special about the fact that we come together to the table on this day, not just with each other, but with the church outside these walls.

World Communion Sunday is celebrated on the first Sunday of October each year, it began at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1933. A Presbyterian church started it! The Rev. Hugh Thompson Kerr and his congregation sought to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Christian churches, regardless of denomination. It was their attempt to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity—in which everyone might receive both inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is, and how each congregation is interconnected one with another. Rev. Kerr appropriately chose the sacrament of Holy Communion to symbolize this unity.

It was accepted as a denominational practice within the Presbyterian Church in 1936 and in 1940, the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches promoted extending the celebration to several churches around the world and the practice became widespread. Today churches from all over, from huge cathedrals to small country churches will gather around the table of Jesus to demonstrate our oneness in Jesus. We come to the table together.

As I think about the Lords Supper being celebrated at my home church, it brings back memories of how we did that when I was young. My hometown

church would only celebrate the Lord's Supper a few times a year. Maybe 4 times. There is a push in the church today to celebrate the Lord's Supper every week, which can be supported scripturally and constitutionally in our church, but for me once a month seems like a lot. When I was young it was only a few times a year. But they did not mess around. On those days, the pews would have white cloth coverings on them. The elders would all wear black suits and ties. It was a fancy and formal affair. Everyone came on those days, because that is also how we kept the church rolls up to date. If you showed up for communion, your membership was good. I was ordained as an elder in my early twenties, and I served communion one Sunday morning in my jeans and with a big dangly cross earring. I did have a tie on. No one said anything, but I was never asked to serve communion at the morning service again. We did have a more informal evening service where they slipped me in.

There was one guy I knew who was always in church, but he never joined in with communion. He would sit in his pew and when the bread and juice were passed to him, he would pass them on. He was active in church but never joined in with communion. I asked him why and he just said, "I am not worthy."

That has stuck with me through the years. Why would he think he was not worthy? What makes us worthy to come to this table. Paul writes to the church in Corinth,

"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup." It leaves me asking, are we treating this meal too lightly. Paul was addressing specific issues in that church regarding the meal, but I still wonder how that relates to us.

Where do we as a church stand on this meal? This is the PCUSA Book of Order, it is the Second Part of our Constitution. Within here is a section called the Directory of Worship, which discusses standards and norms for PCUSA worship. It has a good section on the Lord's Supper.

The central theme running through the theological description of that section is one of grace. The Book of Order reminds us that the Lord's Supper connects us to God's saving power and providential care from generation to generation. The bread reminds us not just of the Passover but of the manna provided to God's people in the wilderness. This bread is symbolic of God's covenant relationship with God's people but also with the grace of God for those who had turned from God in the wilderness. God provides bread and grace. As Jesus sits at the table and calls the bread and wine his body and blood, he serves the meal to all who are there. That includes Judas whom Jesus knew would betray him very soon. Jesus served Judas this meal, that has the message of grace running deeply through it.

The Directory tells us that The Lord's Supper is the gift of God's grace. It is described as God's means of grace and God's call to respond to grace.

The Directory of Worship supports all being welcomed at the table. We read, "The opportunity to eat and drink with Christ is not a right bestowed upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance and love."

I would love to read that section to the guy in my home church. Feeling unworthy of this table perhaps makes you more worthy than ever.

Thinking back to the Lord's Supper of my youth reminds me that this gift of grace and faith comes with context and community. We receive the gift, and we pass it along. In this passage from 2 Timothy, we hear of Timothy's sincere faith. This faith, however, didn't originate with Timothy, it came down to him through the generations, from his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois. They are not named anywhere else in scripture, although we learn in Acts 16 that Timothy's mother was a Jewish woman married to Greek man. Their mention is brief, but how important were they in raising Timothy as a man of faith.

The Lord's Supper serves as a reminder that the Gospel is not just a personal relationship with Christ, but a communal faith that is passed on. As families and communities come together, the memory of Jesus sacrifice is shared and passed down. The act of coming together to the Table of the

Lord is not only about individual communion with God but also about the communal nature of the body of Christ.

So, we ask ourselves: How are we passing on our faith? Are we actively teaching the next generation? Are we living in such a way that they see the Gospel in our lives? How we speak to others, how we interact online, how we love our enemies. The Lord's Supper itself is a teaching moment—a tangible act of faith that has been passed down through the generations since the time of Christ.

As we approach the Lord's Table today, we are reminded that the Supper is not just about what we individually receive but also about what we are called to pass on. It is both a personal encounter with Christ and a communal act that unites us together with the faithful throughout history. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we not only proclaim the death of Christ but also renew our commitment to pass on the faith to the next generation.

This is not just a ritual that we carry out every month. This is the Gospel, this is grace. This changes our lives.

And if we think back to the video I mentioned at the start, it is our challenge to not only find peace and grace and community at this table but to also find ways to invite others to this table, but to take the message of grace and relationship with Jesus we find here, outside our apartment and into the hallway, outside this place and into our community, into our country, and pass it on.

When you gather at the table today, come together grateful for the community around you, the community that came before and the community that you are passing this on to, but most of all be grateful for the One who gave his body and blood and gave us the life that allows those communities to exist.

Amen.