**Sunday, August 2, 2015, 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Call to Worship**

Come all who are scattered and discarded

**Come all in hunger and fear**

Today we gather together

**So that no one will be lost**

Jesus is with us…do not be afraid!

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, as a hen gathers her brood under her wing, so you have gathered us all here.  As the father runs to welcome the prodigal home, you too have eagerly opened your arms to welcome us into this holy space.  As your assembled people, help us to welcome you into our hearts.  Teach us to open ourselves to receive your word, your call, and your love.  Make us bold to worship and serve you, now and always.  Amen.

**Call to Confession**

The kingdom of heaven is a realm of reconciling love. Trusting in the promise of reconciliation, let us acknowledge our sin before God.

**Prayer of Confession**

**Holy Manna, you alone can feed us until we want no more; yet how often we turn to people or activities or substances to satisfy cravings. Bread of heaven, you prepare a meal to welcome people from far and near; yet we decline your invitation, preferring the comfort of familiar tables and food. Bread of life, you give of yourself to nourish all with abundance; at times we miss your bounty in our lives and forget how much we can share.**

**Loving Christ, you promise that all who come to you will never be hungry. Forgive us when we forget.  May we taste once again and know that you are good, and that your goodness is for us and for all the world.  In your name, Amen.**

*Silent Prayer*

**Assurance of Grace**

True abundance does not come because of what we do  
but because of the Person we know.  
Jesus still feeds hungry strangers – even us –  
and calls us to share food with others.  
Thanks be to God.  
Let us share God’s bounty.

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.  Amen.**

**PSALM 51:1-12**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

**according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

**For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,

**so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.**

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

**You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.**

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

**TIME OUT FOR TEACHING: The Lord's Supper**

It was October 1529 and Christians were gathered at a colloquy in Marburg, Germany. There they debated over exactly how Jesus is present in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli disagreed on how this could be. But both of these leaders of the Reformation disagreed with the Roman Church which stated that the bread and wine actually converted into Jesus own real flesh and blood, a process known as “Transubstantiation.”

They were smack dab in the middle of the Renaissance Period, when there was a new awareness of science and math, art, architecture. People were asking questions. They didn’t observe the bread and wine turn into flesh and blood. The elements still tasted like bread and wine. So how could Jesus be IN the bread and wine if we cannot sense it?

Luther and Zwingli agreed that Jesus Christ was still present in the bread and wine, but they had very different ways of describing it.

Luther said Jesus had a “real presence” and that it took obedience to faith to believe that Christ is simply there. He wrote: “When I fail to understand how bread can be the body of Christ, I, for one, will take my understanding prisoner and bring it into obedience to Christ” (The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, October 1520, B 197-99).

Zwingli says it is not a mystery at all but a ceremony and a pledge by which the believer proves to the church that s/he is a member of Christ’s body. He says it’s a memorial. When the gathering of Christians participate in their memory of Jesus, and thus become united with Him. And the presence of Jesus Christ frees the conscience, and feels faith within the heart and knows the truth of what has been felt. In this way Zwingli describes the presence of Jesus, by participating in the Lord’s Supper. Sensation and Faith for Zwingli are separated, thusly. He said, it looks like bread, it is bread.

Calvin was convinced that Zwingli and Luther had only failed to pay attention to what each was trying to make clear.

Luther should have shown that he was not intending a “transubstantiation and sacrifice in disguise.”

Zwingli should have shown what sort of communion of the body and blood is received.

John Calvin’s mediated Luther and Zwingli by saying that the Lord’s Supper as a sign of Christ’s body and blood, even if it is not the thing itself. But as we participate in the sacrament, the Holy Spirit also participates in the sacrament, making the body and blood an effective vehicle of grace. Calvin says that the Holy Spirit communicates Jesus Christ to believers, so this sign is effective for us.

What makes Calvin’s description powerful is that it respects the power of God’s Spirit to make the Lord’s Supper effective on our lives. To say the Lord’s Supper is a memorial and just bread and wine is in my opinion to not say enough. To say that it is a Real Presence of Jesus in it but in what way how is not saying enough either.

**2 SAMUEL 11:26-12:13A**

26When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him.27When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

1But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. 2The rich man had very many flocks and herds; 3but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. 4Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." 5Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; 6he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

7Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; 8I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. 9Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. 11Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. 12For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." 13David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

**JOHN 6:24-35**

24So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

25When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." 28Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?"29Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

35Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

**Sermon: How Does Communion Work?**

Reunions can be bittersweet times of celebration and remembrance. I went to the Friday night dinner and dance at the Convention Center. Even though I am not a THS graduate, it was so much fun to see many people I already knew and meet some new people. Different classes were specially recognized this year: 1965, 75, 85, 95 and 05. They had their class pictures out, mementos from their graduation year. There was fun, reminiscing, old friends embracing. Sweet.

But the bitter part was the sad reminder of old friends gone. Classes displayed loved ones gone by. 1965 celebrated with a photo of their Teacher of the Year, Mr. Earl Page and there below was a photo of Mickey and Earl together. Class of 1985 displayed a memorial list of those who are now gone. Daniel Lopez was one of them. Reunions are bitter and sweet.

The Lord’s Supper is a reunion. We remember the bitter suffering of Jesus, which leads us to new life. An event around this table and every table in churches around the world. We do not linger at this table for long. But rather we go away and then come back each time with new joys and new sorrows. Each time we are reunited, we are a little different from the last, changed by our experiences of life. And each time we return, we are reunited as God’s people, people who belong to God and to each other. We’re home.

Jesus is inviting us home. That’s what he is trying to say to the crowds in our Gospel reading. He has just fed 5,000 people and it was a sign of God’s amazing hospitality. And yet… they have misunderstood the sign. All they have seen is he can multiply loaves and fishes and to them that’s good. It feeds the body. But now they only want more of the same. They were more interested in the bread. They couldn’t see the deeper message that God is here to do more than fill their bellies.

We all know that the Lord’s Supper is more than food to fill our own bellies.

This holy meal is a sign, not just a symbol, of the strength and grace that God’s Spirit gives to us. It’s a taste of God’s goodness, with real benefits. I checked: the Lord’s Supper has about 27 calories, along with a teensy bit of protein and fiber. These ordinary foods, fruits of God’s creation, bring us energy that reminds us the power and strength that the Holy Spirit gives us in abundance.

There’s no magic trick to this strength we get from the Lord’s Supper. And it is no accident that God chooses to use these ordinary foods, to remind us of His real presence and power. That’s grace in action. Food for the soul. Let’s not take it for granted as the people did at first in our reading today. Rather let’s listen to what Jesus says to persuade them.

He says, “Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures in eternal life.” And the work of God he tells them to do is to “believe in him whom he has sent.” For the promise he makes is clear. Jesus says if we believe in him, we will never hunger or thirst. Jesus is the one who we should hunger and thirst for. As we gather for this communion meal today, seek him earnestly in the sweet taste of the juice, in the texture and chewiness of the bread. Rejoice in these small reminders of God’s abundant grace.

We heard several examples of how God is present in the communion meal. They come from people who have studied it, talked about it, written about it. But it’s also a very personal experience, returning home for a time to be reunited with our Savior Jesus. Let it be so. Let the Holy Spirit in too, to work within you bringing renewal and strength. Here may you find grace.

Amen.

**Invitation to the Table**

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God!  
By the mysterious wonder of our triune God,  
we gather here to celebrate a feast for all time,  
joining with Jesus and his disciples in an upper room,  
with the church of the ages who have come here so often,  
with sisters and brothers in faith all along the way,  
with people we know well and we don’t know at all.

Here we trust that the mystery of God will become real.  
Here we gain a taste of the divine.  
And here we are fed as we go forth to serve in the world.  
Come, all of you, and share this feast of the holiness and wonder of God.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them to the Lord.**Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We praise your name, most holy God,  
for it is good and you are good.  
You reveal yourself to us in countless ways,  
even inviting us into the mystery of your inmost being  
where you are one in three and three in one.  
In your creation, you show us the marks of your hand,  
and in creating us in your image,  
you call us to bear your presence into all the world.  
For your wondrous being and your glorious creation,  
we join our praise with the sound of all creation  
to sing joyfully in praise of your wondrous glory:

We your church sing your praise, eternal God,  
for in your threefold glory we know Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.  
Fully human, fully God,  
he was born of low estate and lived among us,  
an ordinary man in an ordinary time  
who yet showed your extraordinary grace.  
He proclaimed your coming kingdom in word and deed,  
challenging the powerful,  
healing the sick and distressed,  
and calling all people to live in light and life.  
Even though he was executed by the powers of the day,  
you raised him to new life  
to show that your power was stronger than death.  
Still now he reigns in glory,  
united in your holy oneness  
to show your presence to all people.

We remember your church and your world.

For the many travelers in Tucumcari

For Gloria and Rudy

For Richard

For Bob

For Jo

For Sharon and Wayne.

For every place torn by war

For every person serving the cause of peace and freedom

For every person pioneering your gospel in the world.

Reunite us with you through this bread and this cup,

That we be sent as vehicles of your grace into the world.

In Christ Jesus we pray, using the prayer he taught his disciples saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven… Amen.”

Remembering his life, death, and resurrection,  
we gather at this table as he did to share this feast of heaven and earth,  
that by your power we might be united with you in this bread and cup.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus took the bread.

He blessed it and broke it.

He gave it to his disciples saying, “Take this and eat. This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then he took the cup. He gave it to his disciples and he said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of many. Drink this in remembrance of me.”

Every time we eat this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again.

Friends, the table is set. All are invited to this feast.

**Prayer after Communion**

Just as we have known your presence and love in the gift of Father and Son,  
so, O God, reveal yourself to us in the wonder and power of your Holy Spirit.  
Pour out this Spirit of love and hope,  
that we might rise from this holy meal to love and serve in your world.  
Keep us faithful in our service to you,  
that we might give you glory and honor and praise forevermore:

Amen.

**Announcements**

Next Sunday we continue our “What’s a Presbyterian?” Summer Adult Education series on Sundays at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. It’s not too late to join in the conversation.

Ever had a question about God?  The Bible?  Or something theological?  Your question might become the next sermon topic. Please write your questions down and drop them in the jar in the Narthex.