

## **Holy Communion – Bishop Johnson**

Recently I visited a church and the pastor related to me that one of their young members, when he saw the bread and the grape juice at the communion table he exuberantly shouted out: “treat!” Though a little humorous this actually has profound meaning for us as we observe communion. In many ways the sacrament is the ultimate “treat” for all humanity. John Wesley described the Lord’s Supper as “the grand channel whereby the grace of God’s spirit is conveyed to the souls of all the children of God.” The early Methodist movement in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England put a great emphasis on the sacraments. They urged the people in class meetings to go to church and take communion regularly to draw on the power of God. The grace of God was active during the taking of the bread and the cup. People experienced conviction of sin, repentance, conversion, forgiveness and sanctification. It is still today just as powerful and important. There are many ways to describe it.

### **Holy Mystery**

We understand communion as a sacrament and a sacrament is an “outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” The Greek word for “sacrament” is “mysterium” which means “mystery.” Through the sacraments God reveals things that go beyond human understanding. What a mystery that Jesus’ death on a cross some 2,000 years ago can apply to us in this day and age! What a mystery that God can actually be present in a spiritual way as you partake. We cannot explain how that happens. When you take Communion focus on the mystery of God and listen in your heart for God’s revelations.

### **Eucharist**

Another word for the Lord’s Supper is “Eucharist.” That means “thanksgiving.” We cannot help but feel grateful to God for sending us this unconditional, personal experience of love and forgiveness. When Jesus broke the bread and offered up the cup he gave thanks. When you take Communion, give thanks to God for all the blessings in your life and for knowing Jesus. Give thanks for those who have revealed Christ to you by words and deeds.

### **Communion**

We are in fellowship with one another in the sacrament. Everyone agrees on Christ in this act. World Communion Sunday is powerful because Christians all over the world are partaking together in the one Body and Blood of Christ. In Christ we have unity. There are many divisions in the church theologically, even around communion, but in the Christian faith Christ is the center. Communion exemplifies that. May we find ways to build bridges of unity with people we disagree with theologically through the power of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper. When you take Communion, think about the persons with whom you are out-of-fellowship and how can you agree in Christ with them. Come to Communion when you have made peace with people whom you have sinned against.

### Sacrifice

In the Lord's Supper we remember Jesus sacrifice for us on the cross. It is not just an intellectual remembering of what happened on Good Friday long ago. It is a sign of ultimate love for us personally. It is a call to present ourselves as living sacrifices in union with Christ (Romans 12:1) to be used by God to do works of reconciliation. This is what Christ did on the cross. When you take Communion, think about how you can sacrifice as well so that others can experience God's love. Give of your service and your means to alleviate suffering and further the mission of Christ in the world.

### Eschatological

The Lord's Supper can be seen as the first course of a meal here on earth that will find its fulfillment in the kingdom of God that is yet to come at the end of history. Christ told his disciples on the night before he died, "I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:29) That day is yet to come when all of the saints for all times gather at the heavenly banquet. There we will have no divisions of theology, time, place and all the human "isms" and bigotries of this present age. As you partake of the bread and the cup, think about that day to come when all will be made right and all people will be with the Lord in a place where there will be no more sickness, sorrow and death.

I hope that you will consider moving toward having Communion more often in your churches. A weekly celebration of Holy Communion is the recommendation of The United Methodist Church. The theology of John Wesley was all about grace: prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. Holy Communion offers us a rich experience of grace.