

**Participation in Lord's Supper Is a Holy Communion**  
**Sermon on 1 Corinthians 10:16-17**  
**April 5, 2007**  
**Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI**  
**Pastor Karl Walther**

The Bible says: *You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* Amen.

God's Word to us this evening is unique. It's the only obvious reference to the Lord's Supper in the Scriptures—apart from the four places the Bible records the very words Jesus used to institute Lord's Supper. Let me read to you First Corinthians, chapter ten, verses sixteen and seventeen:

***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 partake of the one loaf.***

This is God's Spirit-inspired Word regarding Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction: Americans Value Unity Too Little**

Dear fellow Christians—who treasure Holy Communion:

Unity is something we Americans value way too little.... It's probably the result of our national history, and even personal family history for most of us. Our country was founded by individualists. Our country was conquered not so much by people working in unity, but more by rugged individuals making their way across the frontier. Our ancestors – I mean: our personal ancestors – most all of them left their community in other nations and came here as independent individuals to make a new life for themselves.

Unity is something we Americans value way too little.... And it shows in the way Americans live their lives day to day. Our citizens don't agree with one another politically; we're divided almost evenly—as is evidenced by the past couple of presidential elections. In regard to entertainment, there is no unity among Americans; for that reason we have dozens of radio stations and hundreds of television stations, dozens of types of magazines and hundreds of varieties of basically the same sorts of products. We aren't united in sports either; there's not one of us interested in exactly the same sporting events or rooting for exactly the same teams as any other one of us.

And even when we are united, the unity doesn't go too deep.... There is any number of people I do agree with in regard to politics or entertainment or sports, but I surely wouldn't want to hang around them for any other reason!

So, unity is something we Americans value way too little. But that doesn't mean that we still don't crave it. Don't you long for relationships in which you agree with one another? Don't you long for relationships in which you connect with other people? Doesn't your heart just crave unity with others—and unity on items more lasting than sports or entertainment or politics?

## **Theme: Participation in the Lord's Supper Is a Holy Communion**

Well, tonight we celebrate together that kind of unity! On “Maundy” Thursday, “Command” Thursday, Jesus commanded us (among other things), “Do this (celebrate Lord's Supper!) in remembrance of me.” On Maundy Thursday evening, we remind ourselves that PARTICIPATION IN THE LORD'S SUPPER... celebrates union; we say it ...IS A HOLY COMMUNION, right? And we'll find out tonight from God's Word that Lord's Supper is a Holy Communion in a whole bunch of beautiful ways.

### **Part One: Lord's Supper Is a Holy Communion Between Us & Jesus**

In God's Word to us tonight, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Christians in Corinth, Greece, in about the year 55 AD—about a quarter century after Jesus instituted Holy Communion. The Corinthian Christians at that time were tempted to go with their friends to meals in honor of idols, false gods. And Paul says that eating at a meal like that amounts to worshipping false gods—just the way that eating at this meal, the Lord's Supper, is a matter of worshipping the true God.

Paul underlines the point by saying, and this is the first part of God's Word to us tonight: *Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks* – probably better: *Is not this cup filled with blessing, upon which we call God's blessing*, an obvious reference to the Lord's Supper – is it not *a participation in* – a joyous unity with!!! – *the blood of Christ* itself?!

*And* underlining the same point: *Is not the bread that we break* – another obvious reference to the Lord's Supper – *Is not the bread that we break a participation in* – a joyous unity with!!! – *the body of Christ*?

And of course, it is!!! So, do you understand what that means?

One of the holy unions that takes place in Holy Communion is that this bread is in union with Christ's body. When Jesus' promise is pronounced over this bread and you receive it, this bread really is the very body of Jesus Christ. As I'm prone to tell my classes, this doesn't just represent or symbolize the body of Christ; this doesn't just resemble or remind you of the body of Christ; this really is the body of Christ—conceived by God, born of Mary, lived on earth, dead and risen, raised to heaven and filling everything.

And another of the holy unions that takes place in Holy Communion is that this wine is in union with Christ's blood. When Jesus' promise is pronounced over this wine and you receive it, this wine really is the very blood of Christ. It doesn't just represent or symbolize or resemble or remind you of the blood of Christ; this really is the blood of Christ—which oozed from Christ's wounds on the cross as the payment God required for your transgressions.

And that's not all!

Because in the Holy Supper you receive the very body of Jesus Christ and the very blood of God our Savior, you are united to him in Holy Communion! Through Holy Communion God identifies you with Jesus Christ. So, how can God not count Jesus' birth as your new life, and Jesus' life as your own holiness?! How can God not count Jesus' death as your death for sin, and Jesus' resurrection as your guarantee of eternal life?! How can God not reckon you as ascended to heaven and dwelling in unity with him on high?!

Now, that's the unity – a deep down and eternally everlasting unity! – that my heart craves and needs!!!

## **Part Two: Lord's Supper Is a Holy Communion Between Us & One Another**

And – can you believe it? – there's actually more! Besides the Holy Communion of bread and body and wine and blood and us and Jesus (!) in Lord's Supper, there's still more!

Paul goes on to elaborate: *Because there is one loaf* – we would say: a single tray (or trays) of bread, we could add: a single pitcher (or pitchers) of wine – *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

Do you understand what that says?

Besides the Holy Communion of bread and body and wine and blood and us and Jesus (!) in Lord's Supper, we are also united with one another.

First and foremost: Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, unites us with the entire Holy Christian Church of the New Testament era. Holy Communion unites us with the Apostle Paul and with the Corinthian Christians, who trusted Christ and dwell in glory, because they partook of the same Lord's Supper as we do. Holy Communion unites us with Martin Luther and with every genuine Christian before him and after him, who trusted Christ and dwells in glory, because they partook of the same Lord's Supper as we do. Holy Communion unites us with every genuine Christian across the world to this day, because they partake of the same Lord's Supper as we do.

Isn't it amazing to think – isn't it heartwarming to know! – that this feast is so much bigger a celebration than just us here right now?

But do think, too, how Holy Communion does unite us! You and I are in perfect agreement: we need this sacrament; we are terrible sinners, but Christ died and rose for us. You and I are in perfect agreement: Jesus offers to us here his very body and blood for our forgiveness. And you and I are in further agreement: by the grace of God, we have united in the apostles' teaching and in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer; we have marked and avoided those who have divided themselves from the entire truth of God's Word. You and I enjoy a deep down and eternally everlasting unity—especially here in the Sacrament.

## **Conclusion: Christians Value Their Unity a Great Deal**

So, Participation in the Lord's Supper Is a Holy Communion. It is a Holy Communion Between Us & Jesus. Here he is ours, and we are his, and it will be that way forever. The Lord's Supper Is a Holy Communion Between Us & One Another. I am yours and you are mine; we belong to one another forever.

So, let's celebrate Lord's Supper this evening with great joy over the unity that we share! Our politics may be different, our tastes in entertainment divergent, and we may root for different teams. We may even have – in fact, undoubtedly we have – harmed one another in the past. But those things are unimportant tonight and in the future. Our sins are forgiven. And we are united in Christ and in his Word.

Thanks be to God for such a Holy Communion as what we enjoy! Amen.

The Bible says: *Christ entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.* Amen.