

COMMUNION COMMENTS IN BEAVERTON

Decemeber 8, 1996

How can we call the LS a celebration when we speak of death so prominently in it? In happy times we may not want to speak of death, yet **Paul in his epistle of joy** relates death and joy. In Philippians 2, he writes of **Jesus becoming obedient unto death**. As it is said in another place, “who for the **joy set before him**, endured the cross.” Like Christ, Paul was willing that his own **life be poured out as a libation**, and he spoke of **Epaphroditus** who nearly died for the work of Christ.

We would have nothing to celebrate in life had Jesus not died and arisen.

Making this more meaningful to each of us, we have been allowed to **identify** with Christ **metaphorically** in his crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and sustained life.

In identifying with Him who bore our sins, Paul could declare, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Gal. 2:20.

He asked other disciples, “Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ** Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). Being baptized into him, we identify with his atoning work.

Paul further explains, “We were buried with him by baptism into death.” Notice that it is “**buried with him**”, not he with us in the baptistry. This would mean that we were transported back symbolically to the time of Jesus’ burial and were buried there with him in his rock-hewn tomb of death. He and we were dead because of our sins.

But that is not the sad end, for “*as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in his death, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that the old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be*

enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” (Rom. 6:3-8)

That center, core, and foundation of our faith is remembered and celebrated each time we share in this meal of communion. We celebrate our identification with Him as he bore our sins in death and now shares continuous life with us..

December 15, 1996

As Tim has led us through the Bible, the communion comments have been related to each particular lesson. By that we have been impressed with the integration and correlation of all areas and facets of our religion. Our beliefs, hopes, attitude, and demeanor all have focus in this ritual meal in which we participate each week.

This morning, let us relate Phil. 4:4-7, a favorite text, to our communion: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

In this Supper we testify to the **nearness** of Christ depicted in bread and wine. We gain confidence from his **unseen presence**, and from his spiritual body consisting of all who participate with us this morning. Sure, we have normal **anxieties of the uncertainties of life**, but we are not left alone and helpless. He is **near** – within listening distance! His ear is attuned to our cries, our requests, our praise.

In proclaiming that he is **risen**, we are also pointing to his return to raise us up with him. Paul, in Chapter 3, put the **hope of the resurrection** above all earthly attainments and possessions. In view of this hope, why let anxiety about the temporal things rob us of transcendent joy? With such a prize before us, we can endure all of earth’s afflictions with rejoicing.

Putting things in this perspective moderates all our emotions, attitudes, and expressions with gentleness, patience, and gratitude. We have a peace that even we cannot understand. It is the peace of God, standing guard, as it were, over our hearts and minds to protect us from distracting intrusions. May such thoughts enrich you as today as we commune.

BREAD: In this bread we are reminded of your nearness and also of the presence of your spiritual body of those who share it with us this morning. May our communion truly be felt so that we can all find great cheer in our lives this day. His sacrifice made peace for us. Help us to comprehend that and enjoy it.

CUP: We thank you that when Jesus drank the bitter cup, he drank the cup of our alienation and separateness so that we might drink this cup of rejoicing and praise. Again we express our faith and our gratitude in tasting this cup so rich in meaning. May the conviction and hope expressed in it rule our thoughts and conduct in the time you give us here.

December 29, 96: Looking Backward and Forward

At this season particularly we are motivated to look back to evaluate the past and to look forward for preparation and expectation. Paul would have each occasion of participation in the Communion to be a time of **review** and **preview** – not just introspectively but also as a proclamation to others.

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor. 11:26). In this ritual meal we continue to point to the atoning death of Christ and to his promise to return for us with evangelistic fervor, for this is the Good News.

Many times I have quoted Hebrews 9:27, **“It is appointed to man once to die**, and after that the judgment,” as a solemn warning, even a frightening thought. But I was robbing that rich passage of the joy and confidence it offers.

I wish I had time here to review the context, but let us read vs. 26-28: ***“But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”***

Jesus became man, took our appointment with death and has already stood for us in judgment so that rather than death and judgment awaiting us, we can look forward to life and forgiveness.

Each time we share this Supper, we remind ourselves and declare to others that he bore our sin, death, and judgment for us and will return to lift us up with him.

BREAD: We are blessed to share in the spiritual body with all those who share this bread this morning. Thank you for the offering of Jesus' physical body that we might be his spiritual body. We are reminded with awe this morning that in his dying for us, he removed the fatal sting of death which is violation of law, and you have accepted us graciously on his merit. We thank you again.

CUP: In sharing this cup this morning, we again feel the assurance that Christ has stood in judgment for us, and he will ever stand there until he receives us to that place of glory with him forever. Father, it is beyond our comprehension, but we continue to thank you for your exceedingly great and precious promises.