

Food for a Hungry World
John 14:1-17,31b-35
Maundy Thursday
Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner

Maundy Thursday brings us to the end of Jesus' time with his disciples. In this last evening we hear two final instructions from our Savior. "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." "Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Take and drink, this is my blood shed for you. *Do this*, in remembrance of me."

These two commands from Jesus are inseparable. Love one another. Do this to remember me.

Jesus gathers with his friends this evening because he has something important to tell them as he prepares for his coming death. And more than that, he has something to show them. Like a terminally ill person who wants to make sure those he loves knows exactly what's important to him, Jesus shows his disciples, he shows us how to love. He gets down to serve them, to wash them, to include them in his chosen community. He serves them a meal like no other, where he offers himself as the food so that those that love him, those that choose to follow him may commune with him and may know that he is with them.

As Jesus' followers, the same is true for us. We participate in communion because it moves us, it changes us, it humbles us, it brings us together. Communion also sends us out of the church, filled with God's grace and love and forgiveness so that we may embody Christ in the world.

Jesus tells us to take in his body and blood into ourselves and from it live out the kind of love that he shares with the world. This is communion. To seek the type of loving relationships with others that Jesus had when he walked the earth. It is communion to share generously the resources that we have been given where we see need.

Too often we think of the rituals that we experience in worship as a *private* sign of God's love for us. Its power and significance too often stops at the door of the church. In some cases, the Church has reinforced this practice by setting up barriers to receiving this precious gift. Yet, I think that when Jesus sat down with his disciples that night he expected this meal to do more. Jesus knows that we come to follow him. Christ sees in us the ability to be his body and blood in a broken and hurting world; the body of Christ that fills the world with God's love. He expects that these precious signs and rituals will truly transform our lives and the face of the world.

But this love is dangerous. It challenges us to examine our privileged lives. It confronts us with the honest facts of this world and calls us to take the downward path of the cross.

This love leads us to stand with those who are often overlooked or misrepresented. It calls us to serve, not just because it feels good to us, but because as Christ's body, we cannot tolerate business as usual.

All of us have been given God's power to serve. We often show our love locally, but let's face it...most, if not all of us also have the power and resources to respond to Christ's invitation to love on a broader scale. 1 billion people in the world cannot find safe drinking water, yet the average American uses 100-150 gallons of clean, drinkable water per day. 3.5 billion people live on less than \$2/day, where the average American teenager spends \$150/week. Americans make up less than 5% of the world's population and yet we use more than 20% of the world's resources. Rob Bell in his book "Jesus Wants to Save Christians" challenges us by saying, "If we have any resources, any power, any voice, any influence, any energy, we must convert them into blessing those who have no power, no voice, no influence." We must be Christ's body and blood poured out for the sins of the world.

We, as a congregation, are doing many things. We work to reach out to the hungry and the homeless, we support missionaries in Japan, and social services provided by LSS. Just last night, a team of seven people spent a half hour packing backpacks filled with food for 47 children who would otherwise go hungry this weekend. We cannot stand by and expect the next generation of leaders to be prepared if they go hungry on a regular basis. "Love one another, as I have loved you."

In May, we will host our first week of homeless families through Interfaith Hospitality Network. More than 40 volunteers will be needed for this week of service as well. The families served through IHN are often in transition, moving out of neighborhoods in larger cities, where life was dangerous and nearly impossible to raise children. They are looking for a fresh start and hope that they couldn't find where they were coming from. Volunteers will serve them by spending time with them in the evenings, providing meals and transportation. As Christ's body, we will not stand by and allow families to go unsupported through some of the most difficult times in their lives. "Take and eat, this is my body." It's communion to meet a stranger with Christ's love. And in that meeting we meet Christ.

To whom can you be Christ's living body? What influence, resources or energy do you have to make Christ's love real to someone who has none of those things?

Jesus has commissioned us, has empowered us to be food for a hungry world. Let those that we encounter, especially the powerless, the voiceless, those without resources or influence know that we have communed with the risen Christ and let us be the one's who offer them Christ's love and the invitation to, "Take and eat, this is Christ's body, this is Christ's blood, given for you." Amen.