

His Food, Our Fill ² **In the Three Unions of Holy Communion**

In the name of Jesus, the soul's Best Friend, dearly redeemed by the blood of Christ:

Tonight we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper, also called Holy Communion. A communion is a joining together, a common union. Tonight as we rejoice in **His Food, Our Fill**, let's see how the miraculous three communions of the Lord's Supper truly satisfy our souls for time and eternity.

✠ **Communion #1: Bread and wine with body and blood**

At a dinner party ever wonder what you're eating? In Wuhan, China, 2005, the brown soup seemed to have hair in it. Should you ask the host? Two weeks later they explained it was lotus soup with silk strands that always bind you forever with that city; you're forever changed. What if your host in that culture offers you the head of the fish to eat? Meals with strangers can be a bit challenging.

In the Lord's Supper your tastebuds tell you there's wine and bread. And God's Word has our Lord Jesus taking the **"bread"** (Luke 22:19) and referring to **"the fruit of the vine."** (Luke 22:18) But don't let your taste buds or your eyes fool you. There's something else here. Something else is joined in common union with the bread and wine. Our divine Host says, **"This is my body," "This is my blood."** (Matthew 26:26,28) If I said this while you were eating dinner in my house, you'd know I was speaking figuratively. I obviously can't be in two places at once. But Jesus as is God is present everywhere at once and also omnipotent, able to do anything! When Jesus speaks, we know He does not lie.

Jesus calls this a **"new covenant."** (1 Corinthians 11:25) A covenant is a solemn agreement, a binding contract which calls for very precise language that says exactly what it means. As the Son of God, Jesus knew his words would be written down and remembered. If Jesus wanted us to understand otherwise, he could say, ~~"this looks like"~~ or ~~"symbolizes"~~ or ~~"reminds people of my body and blood."~~ Instead while giving us His last will and testament Jesus speaks very plainly about his body and blood in common union with the bread and the wine. Simple, clear: **"This is my body. . . . This is my blood."**

That's what Christ's New Testament church clearly believed. Jesus' body and blood are truly present. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, **"Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the Lord's body and blood. Instead, let a person examine himself and after doing so, let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For if anyone eats and drinks in an unworthy way because he does not recognize the Lord's body, he eats and drinks judgment on himself."** (1 Corinthians 11:27-29 EHV) You can't recognize something that isn't even there. So the body of the Lord must truly be present in Holy Communion since those who receive the sacrament without faith sin against, not bread and wine, but the body and blood of the Lord in union with them.

Martin Luther said it well: "If a hundred thousand devils should rush forward and ask that question [How can bread and wine also be the body and blood of Christ?], we know that all the demons together with all the scholars of the world do not have as much wisdom as God does in his little finger." Yes, the words of Christ are clear, and they will stand forever. **"This is my body. . . . This is my blood."**

His Food, Our Fill – not just a tiny wafer and cup of wine, but Christ's true **body** and **blood**.

¹ Parallel accounts: Matthew 26:20-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

² Adapted from NPH 2022 Lent: *The Crucial Hours*, based on the book by William Lauterbach. (NPH: 1-800-662-6022)

✦ Communion #2: Sinners and God

Think of different levels of friendship. Old school friends may still send cards or keep in touch online. Maybe that all you want from each other, not a weekend at each other's house. Friendly neighbors at the mailbox don't usually invite you over. If that neighbor steals your deck furniture for his drinking parties or a power tool he never returns, there's not much chance for dinnertime together.

And yet, isn't that how we treat God? Have we acted toward him like neighbors asked to turn down the music, but we do the opposite in loud, obnoxious parties? Have we dishonored His kindness in all the material blessings on loan from God, that we treat like ours and not his at all? His greatest blessings of marriage and family, do they get our worst moods or the love and respect God commands?

Truly, we have no reason to expect God to invite us over. How dare we to drop in. We've built a fence by our sins. We've destroyed neighborly relations by our attitude. Paul writes, "***At one time, you were alienated from God and hostile in your thinking as expressed through your evil deeds.***" (Colossians 1:21) Why would God even care about us, much less plan a special meal and invite us?

The answer is in the Supper itself. For it is Christ's body and blood—the same body and blood by which God brings us together with Him. Paul goes on to say, "***But now Christ reconciled you in his body of flesh through death, in order to present you holy, blameless, and faultless before him.***" (Colossians 1:22) He's not worried about you messing up the tablecloth or breaking His chairs. No! Because through "***Christ's physical body***" you have been made "***holy, blameless, and faultless before him.***" That's exactly why Jesus says he instituted this meal: "***This is my body, given for you. . . . This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.***" (Luke 22:19; Matthew 26:28) This Holy Supper assures us that God's friendship is eager to have us come to his table. In fact, we're on the VIP list! **Sinners in common union with God** – what a miracle of mercy and grace! And Christ's body and blood are preparing us to dine at his table not only here on earth, but forever after in heaven.

✦ Communion #3: Believers with one another

At a table with strangers might feel uncomfortable. What if they like poetry, but you'd rather talk about sports? Their anti-competition talk might ruin your appetite. Imagine the disciples arguing about who was the greatest. What did they have in common as fishermen, tax collectors, zealots and doubters? What bonded them together? In a word: Jesus. That's what we discovered with our fellow Christians in China. Once they realized we were laughing as we told American jokes, they started telling Chinese jokes. It was okay to decline their offers of fish heads. As one brother picked out the eyes and brain with his chopsticks, he explained why the Chinese are so much smarter than Americans. See better too!

Christ's love binds Christians together even in a pandemic. How could such strong opinions not rip us apart despite medical opinions stirred by media politics? Jesus says, "***A new commandment I give you...Love one another as I have loved you.***" (John 13:34; 15:12 EHV) **His Food, Our Fill** – unites us as sinner-saints through the blood of Christ. World mission cultures are united. "***Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.***" (1 Corinthians 10:17 EHV)

Following the pattern of Scripture and the ancient Church, we first establish the common union of beliefs and then practice fellowship vigorously. We rejoice in our common union as **Sinners with God** and **Believers with one another**. We stand next to each other confessing that here we are one. For us "***there is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism.***" (Ephesians 4:4f) Just as we express this unity speaking the creeds, singing our hymns, praying together, we express it most clearly standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder at the Lord's Table in His Holy Supper of Holy Communion. We recognize the communion of bread and wine with Jesus' body and blood, rejoice in the communion between ourselves and God, and are strengthened and encouraged by the communion we have with one another! This miraculous meal is **His Food, Our Fill**. *Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His mercy endures forever!* Amen.