

Lincoln Park Baptist Church

August 2, 1964

Communion

Order of Worship

1. Organ Prelude
2. Call to Worship

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!
 Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... (Eph.4:3b)
 That they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they
 also may be in us, so that the world may believe... (Jn.17:21)
3. Hymn of praise - 482
4. Invocation:

O God, we beseech thee to maintain thy church in truth and patience, that her
 ministers may be faithful, her people loyal, her watchman vigilant, her camp
 united, her weapons heavenly and her warfare heavenly. In the name of Jesus,
 who taught us to pray ...
5. Scripture Lesson #24, N.T. section
6. Message in music.
7. Pastoral prayer.
8. Concerning the fellowship

--Ordination service tonight at 7:00 in Natick, First Baptist
 --Flowers today given by Mr. Anderson in memory of his sister, Elsie.
9. Worship in giving –

Sentence: Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above,
 coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no
 variation or shadow due to change.

Prayer: O Lord, we thank you for you are so faithful in giving and
 forgiving. Grant that our gifts to you may be prompted always by a
 deep sense of thanksgiving and adoration. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Doxology
10. Hymn of worship #281
11. Message – “The Church as Fellowship”
12. Hymn #455

13. Fellowship offering
14. Invitation to the Lord's table
15. Prayer for the bread
16. Breaking of bread
17. Prayer for the Wine
Drinking of the cup.
18. Hymn 261 (1)
19. Benediction

Communion Sentences:

We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in Spirit. (Eph.2:20-22)

Words of Institution

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The Church as Fellowship

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Mass.
Sunday, August 2, 1964
Scripture - #24, N.T. section

Introduction

Communion Sunday has special significance for me as I am sure for you all. Participation in the bread and the cup proclaims the basic fact of faith, that Christ is the invisible guest in our midst. As we shall be with him at the end of time to share in a banquet the rejoicing at the final consummation of salvation, so he is with us today as the present living Lord of the church. We rejoice because he is with us and, as happened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, our hearts also burn within us while he tarries with us, opens the meaning of the Scriptures to our minds and breaks bread with us.

Communion Sunday brings to focus all these aspects of the Christian faith, that is, that the one who was for us, is also for us today, and shall be for us at the end of time. In the words of Hebrews: “Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.”

In some churches the Lord’s Supper is an appendage to the regular church service. The first part of the service is conceived as unconnected with the breaking of bread. I consider this practice unsatisfactory, for it breaks the continuity of the worship experience and relegates the Lord’s Supper to the category of an afterthought. In our estimation, the service of Communion Sunday should be seen as whole. From beginning to end our thoughts and feelings ought to be concerned with the total meaning of communion. It is within the fellowship of believers that the breaking of bread takes place. The Lord’s Supper is the climactic event within the worshipping community in which we proclaim dramatically and visibly that Jesus Christ is the living Lord of the church.

For this reason, while shepherding this congregation, we shall endeavor to bring together the Lord’s Supper and that which precedes. The two parts of the service belong together.

Today we shall attempt to give a more precise definition to the term communion.

In our Christian tradition, communion often refers to a body of Christians having a common faith and discipline. Thus we speak of the Methodist communion, of the Baptist communion, or of the Roman Catholic communion.

We also refer to the Lord’s Supper as communion. However, the Greek term that is behind the word “communion” has a wide variety of meanings in the N.T., and most specific occurrences do not refer to the Lord’s Supper as such. The Lord’s Supper is called communion, because it is the act of sharing food, and thereby Christ.

Simply defined, communion means to share, to participate. Consequently, those who share are called a communion or fellowship. Those who share the Lord’s Supper are those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the church; those who have been called out to have a share in God’s salvation. For this reason the church is a fellowship, that is, a community of sharers or participants.

We have fellowship with God

- *I John 1:3 ff. “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

Notice here the priority that is given to our fellowship with God. According to John, fellowship with men is possible only on a prior fellowship with God. This means that we understand ourselves and our fellow men properly in the light of God. When we have found that God has loved us first, then we can truly love ourselves and our neighbors.

I Jn 4:10 ff. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins."

In this context, to know God is to know yourself forgiven and transformed in your basic attitude toward life by the power of a new call – the call of the love of God. It is a call that comes to us from without through the word of preaching.

Now we Christians share this call of the love of God, and as a result the Christian church is a fellowship.

II. We have fellowship with our brethren.

A. Fellowship with God is not possible without at the same time having fellowship with the brethren.

To love God alone is to deny our humanity. To love man alone is to affirm man's inhumanity, for without God, the life of man can only be conceived along naturalistic and materialistic lines.

The author of I John put the love of God and the love of man together:
I Jn.3:11ff. "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, and not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous."

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word nor speech but in deed and in truth."

Love of God is meaningless without love of the brethren. This love assumes specificity in deeds of kindness. The author exhorts the brethren to share their goods with the needy.

B. When we as the people of God share our material goods with others who are in need, by that very fact we manifest the meaning of fellowship. We share the material blessings that God has given us.

C. The apostle Paul was aware of the fact that Christian faith implies the sharing of material possessions. He uses the term "fellowship" – or to share – in connection with the collection he took from his churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Rom. 15:25ff. When he writes to the church at Rome he says to them: “*At the present, however, I am going to Jerusalem with aid for the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem; they were pleased to do it, and indeed they are in debt to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.*”

Paul is concerned for a visible token of unity and fellowship. He was conscious of the fact that there were at least two major theological perspectives that were shaping the life and practice of the churches at that time. On the one hand, there were those who maintained that to be a Christian, apart from the acceptance of Christ as the Messiah, implied also the keeping of the law of Moses. Others, one of whose leaders was Paul, sustained that with the coming of Christ, a new stage of God’s revelation was in operation in which the legal requirements had no validity. Both groups accepted Jesus as the Messiah but differed as to the relationship of the new faith to the O.T. They had Christ in common but were miles apart in theological thinking and church practice. Paul sees the offering of the Gentiles to the poor in Jerusalem as a token of the unity that the Christians have in Christ, which theological formulations and differences in practice cannot destroy. The collection of an offering for the poor is a sign that the church is a fellowship.

D. The meaning of the collection for the needy in this church.

E. The meaning of the collection for the poor among Protestants and Catholics. The collection is a symbol of the unity we share in Christ.

III. We share the gospel – meaning of missions

We share God’s gift of salvation with others. I am a product of missions.
We ought to share it more here at home.

Conclusion:

The breaking of the bread gives meaning to life. We proclaim that we have been found by God and have found ourselves and our brethren.

Mr. Nobody – in one of Henry Ibsen’s dramas.

Are we a part of the fellowship of believers or do we float around without any center of gravity?

When we break the bread this morning, let us remember that we belong to God and to each other.