

## “Unity”

**Sermon by Dan Harrison, Pastor at Church of the Covenant, Lynchburg, VA**

*I Corinthians 10:16-17*

*“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the life-blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the life-body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”*

Like many of you, we perhaps remember our first Holy Communion as a child. Whatever our church tradition, whether we had to take classes or make a public profession of faith, there were often strict guidelines to be adhered to in order to be invited to the Lord’s table, so to speak. For some of us this rite of passage was taught with such solemnity that “if” we were to take of the Lord’s Supper without being properly “ready,” first ridding ourselves of internal sin, we’d be condemned before God, so should approach the sacrament with equal reverence, even passing over the opportunity if we “aren’t right with God.” This fear of God’s table for some of us was simply a part of our childhood, our growing up experience. Like the priests who would enter the presence of God’s Holy Ark of the covenant in the time of the Israelites would do so with fear that they’d be struck dead at any moment by the wrath of God if they weren’t holy and pure in God’s sight, many of us grew up under such scrutiny though perhaps not as extreme. What a way to live, though... in such fear to approach God! But, certainly, this isn’t the spirituality Jesus introduced us to. I would even argue that Jesus brought us the opposite approach to connecting with God. So how did our Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist become so interlaced with fear and exclusivity?

Like with all modes of power and its expansion, actions are often driven with a earnest desire to hold on to that power, retain full control. Control is more often than not the key itself to what is deemed exclusive, right? I’d argue, however, that the spirit of Christ comes hand in hand with inclusivity. When Jesus established the precedence of what would later be called Communion, he did so with a somber attitude of humble love. It was during what would be known later as his “last supper” and after washing his own disciples’ feet, stripping down to even his underwear like a slave would have done it—someone considered so lowly, so inconsequential that they’d perhaps not even be considered human—well that’s what Jesus did to show humility to them, and then shared in a meal where he described it in such intimate terms that as they take of the food, he wanted them to remember his love for them, plain and simple. The word “communion” was generated from the Greek word *koinonia*, which meant fellowship. The word communion, however from the Latin takes on an even more powerful significance for us I think in that it is derived from the word “common,” and “communion” reflects a practice that is clearly not exclusive at all, but common among all. Jesus preached that we would “be one.” In our Module 1: Our Genesis class this past week we talked about the roots of this very church community spring from “unity” with all. Nathan Albert, our guest speaker from the University of Lynchburg last Sunday did such a great job enlightening us on the idea of “contemplative ecumenical,” or better yet “contemplative unity.” Gary Sullivan, the week before, shared at our Outdoor service the idea of harmony, or “yoga,”

the reconnecting of all things in “unity.” There is a theme here that stretches from Jesus into our own traditions, but because they become so routine at times that we forget their significance.

I am asking us to embark on a moment of serious reflection this morning. I am asking us all to teleports our mind into an empty space free from judgment and self-loathing, free from stress and burden, free from self-interest and selfishness, free from fear and comparison to others, free from pain and bitterness, free from hate and prejudice. I am asking us to close our minds off from the carnal provocations that often overtake our senses and let us rest into an attitude of love, simple humble, caring love that evokes waves of peace. Let this come to you now, invite it in. Say with me this simple invitation, “Love, come down. Love, come in. Love remain.” Again, “Love, come down. Love, come in. Love remain.”

Now take some sort of food near or around you, whether it is bread or not is irrelevant. And find a drink of some sort nearby. Let us take Communion together, in love...