

Maundy Thursday
April 13, 2006
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Pastor Tom Schoenherr

This evening as we begin the journey to the cross with Jesus, we pause to have a meal with our Lord and with other followers of Jesus. We also are given a new commandment to love one another and we have been loved by God.

Food brings us together with other people. Food was important in Jesus' ministry, and we never hear of Jesus eating alone. He always had a number of people, and a couple of times with as many as 4-5,000 people.

When Jesus had seated the crowd on the ground and got the menu together—5 loaves and 2 fish—taking the 5 loaves and 2 fish, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke, and gave the food to the disciples to give to the people. The four verbs are “take, blessed, broke and gave.”

Those same verbs were used when Jesus fed the 4000; and again when we walk with Jesus and two disciples to Emmaus after the resurrection. The two disciples listen as Jesus opens to them the story of salvation that God has won for them. When they get to the place where they are staying, they invite Jesus for a meal. Again He took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and He gave it to them. Then they recognized Jesus, their Savior and Lord.

Now Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and gave thanks, and broke and gave it to the disciples saying, “Take and eat, Take and drink, this is my Body and Blood given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” Again the four verbs are “take, gave thanks or blessed, broke and gave.”

Jesus is the host at the meal. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians he pointed out that some people who came to the meal excluded others. Some went hungry while others were full.

We live in a broken and divided world where some people and nations try to take more for themselves, while others have nothing. Even in the church we may find ourselves judging other people, being exclusive or unwelcoming to those we don't know, people we judge to be lacking in some way or other. When we judge others as to who should have a place at the table of God's love, we run the risk of bringing God's judgment upon ourselves, and that judgment is death.

Instead, Jesus shows us a new way. First Jesus takes what we bring—our bread, our fish, our wine or grape juice, our sins, our virtues, our work, our weaknesses, our strengths, our hunger, our thirst, our broken lives, our death, all that we are . Jesus takes the bread and He takes us.

Second, Jesus leases and gives thanks for what we bring and who we are. He offers us to God. Jesus does not criticize, or reject our offering; “Two fish and 5 loaves of bread; is that all you could come up with?” No. Jesus is in love with us and He gives thanks to God for all we are and have.

Third, Jesus breaks the bread and breaks what we bring to Him. Jesus exposes all of what we keep hidden from ourselves, others and even God. He breaks open our sin and brokenness. We are not permitted to be self-sufficient. We experience the breaking of our sin, our pride, our self-centeredness.

Just as Jesus was broken on the cross for us, the bread broken is also a sign of Jesus breaking through to who we really are, but his in-breaking does not mean death but life.

Finally Jesus gives us back our lives, but we are not the same as we were. We are no longer just what we brought. He gives us His body and blood, and with this He gives us such an amazing love that heals us and makes us whole. In the meal the love of Jesus Christ lives in us. As we eat and drink the life of Jesus Christ, we live in His love and we love others as He first loved us.

In the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Communion, we receive Jesus Christ and His love; we receive ourselves in a new forgiven and healed way, and Jesus also gives us one another. We receive one another here at Good Shepherd, but also all people to love and care for as Christ has loved and cared for us all.

Now even our regular meals take on new meaning. The chicken and vegetables we had last night for supper were sacrificed so that we can live. Jesus Christ was sacrificed so that we can live forever. As we take the food that is provided, recognize that we are no longer self-sufficient. Our lives depend on many others, but especially on the life of our Lord Jesus Christ given and shed in love for us.

So whether we are preparing it and eating at home or at the Bread Co, or at McDonalds, we take the food that we receive, we bless it and give thanks to God for this gift, and we share what God has so bountifully given to us, His love, His life, His hope for all people. We do it in remembrance of Jesus and all that He has done for us.