

1 Corinthians 11:17-34
Eating at the Table: A Heaven & Earth Meal

Through this text, I pray that the meaning and beauty of Communion - this symbolic meal - will refresh our hearts and our minds. I also pray that this text and our observance today would challenge and convict us. And not only that, but that this meal would unite us, give us cause to celebrate, and would fill us with absolute joy that we're sitting together at the Lord's Table.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11, starting at verse 17:

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

[18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,

[19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

[20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

[21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

[22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,

[24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

[28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

[29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

[30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

[31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

[32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—

[34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.”

If we were to take a pop quiz here today, asking the question - “what is Communion?” - what responses do you think we’d get? Let alone if we did this survey on the street. What kind of responses might we get?

Some people might not even know what “Communion” is. Either they had never even heard of it, or they might know it by a different term: “going to Mass”, or the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, the Bread and The Cup.

The next question in the survey might be: “How often should you observe Communion?”

Responses might include: once a month, once a week, quarterly, once a year (around Easter/Passover), and some might even say that it should be daily, based on the early church’s activity in Acts 2.

As a kid growing up in non-denominational, Protestant churches, I grew up always taking Communion once a month, like we do here at Midwest. So, naturally, I thought my friends who took Communion every week were heretics...kidding!

And the last question we could ask is: “What is the meaning of Communion?”

Now, here we get into choppy waters. Here are some answers we might get:

- It’s a tradition we have to keep because Jesus said to do it at the Last Supper, before He was crucified.
- It’s a symbolic meal that represents the New Covenant.
- The Sacraments are a means to receive God’s grace, because the bread and juice literally become Jesus’ body and blood once the priest blesses it.
- I know it’s symbolic but it seems like there has to be more to it than that...
- I don’t know, but whatever it is, it seems weird...

Well, if you’re here and you’re not sure how to answer these questions - that’s ok! That’s why this time of preaching and teaching exists - to explore the Scriptures together and become united in both our understanding and practice.

Not considering the theology of Communion might lead to it losing its significance over time. It might lead to abuses, or wrong-headed thinking. Having a bad theology of Communion might lead you to pondering some really weird things about Communion. For instance, since the Catholic church has taught that the bread and cup turn into the literal body and literal blood of Jesus after the consecration, Medieval monks wrote volumes pondering what might happen if a crumb of Jesus’ body fell on the floor, and a mouse ate it. Would the mouse receive grace, and inherit eternal life? Seriously, this stuff exists...

Good theology must lead to good doxology. That is, the study of God and His Word (theology) leads to true worship and practice (doxology).

As author/pastor Sam Storms says, “The ultimate goal of theology is not knowledge, but worship. If our learning and knowledge of God do not lead to the joyful praise of God, we have failed.”

So, I hope we can explore the meaning of Communion today, and come out the other side with a renewed sense of awe and joy of what God is doing in His Kingdom.

Because, as we’ll see...if we come to the table flippantly or without the right heart and mind, it would be better if we didn’t come to the Lord’s Table at all. We’re actually worse off if we don’t examine the truth, and live it out genuinely.

So, before we get to what was going on in the Corinthian church and their problems observing the Lord’s supper, let me give you the main idea of where we’re going today:

Everytime we take the Bread and the Cup together, it is a unification of our PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE. Everytime we celebrate Communion, it should tune our hearts INWARD to careful reflection, OUTWARD toward the needs and relationships in our community, and UPWARD to worshipping the Father. To put it simply, it is a meal “**on earth as it is in heaven.**”

So, that’s the main theme of the message:

At the Father’s Table, our past, present, and future are united through the body and blood of Christ.

Now, that’s the ideal. And I really believe there is this metaphysical unification of heaven and earth as we take the Bread and the Cup together. But as we see, the church in Corinth had made such a mess of it, that not only were they forfeiting this transcendent reality, but making matters worse - to their shame.

So back to our passage, here are some observations and problems going on regarding the context of this passage.

Problem 1: Improper worship makes things worse.

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better *but for the worse*.

We must realize that this truth is all over Scripture, and is universal. When a good institution or good titles, or good actions are corrupted, twisted, or abused, it deserves more condemnation and swifter correction. For example, if a police officer is found guilty of a heinous crime, it’s worse than if a career criminal committed the same act. Why? Because the officer is supposed to stand for justice and protection, but those ideals were abused.

When a charity is collecting funds for a good cause, but later found to be fraudulent and corrupt, it is worse than if a shady business did those same things.

The list can go on...

The same goes for our worship. And throughout the Scriptures, God is insistent that worship not be defiled, but that it be genuine and pure.

King David writes in Psalm 51: "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees in Matthew 23 for their corrupted discipleship:

[15] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

The Corinthian church's mishandling of the Lord's Table deserved Paul's rebuke. Because it's deep transformative meaning was being violated. Religious, pagan meals were commonplace, with so many abuses and debauchery, often involving drunkenness, sexual abuse, and the powerful religious and political class taking advantage of the poor. In some ways, that is to be expected - because of the false gods and spiritual darkness that was being worshipped by the world.

But Jesus had meant for his church to be set apart, and these violations made things worse, and the judgment that much more severe.

That's why Paul writes:

[30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

(in other translations it says, some have "fallen asleep" which is a euphemism for the bodily death of a believer)

[31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

[32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

God desires to keep his church pure. This is not to be confused with simplistic ideas that any sickness is caused by sin. We can have a much more Biblical, nuanced understanding of sickness and our fallen world. But...that is not to leave out a pattern that we see throughout Scripture, that what God meant for His own, and is abused, He disciplines.

We saw that with Annanias and Sapphira in our series through Acts, we see it in the Old Testament with Aaron's sons who almost immediately defiled the Tabernacle, or the story of Achan stealing gold, just as the Hebrews had entered the Promised Land. It led to the LORD's swift judgment - and death.

Now, there could be much more debate about this topic, but suffice it to say:

Take the Lord's Supper with reverence. I don't believe we should put ourselves in compromised situations where God would need to harshly discipline us.

Problem 2: There were toxic, pre-existing conditions

[18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,

[19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

As we've seen throughout the series through 1 Corinthians, the church was rife with division. Paul addressed it in Chapter 1, with the divisions along identification with certain church leaders and preferences. And on top of that, there was infighting between believers that led to lawsuits. Unrepentant, sexual sin was causing chaos. Idolatry, disagreement on food laws, and modesty issues were also big problems on the table, no pun intended.

Not only was the actual practice of the Lord's Supper mishandled, but there was so much baggage attached. Divisions had already formed along spiritual and relational lines.

Problem 3: Divisions formed along social and economic lines.

[20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

[21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

[22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

There's much that could be said about the historical and cultural context of hierarchy and power and the honor/shame paradigm in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Much of it is the same today, actually. That is, the distinctions between the elite and the poor are amplified in the worldly, present age. And that was evident to how the Corinthian church ate this meal.

Now, the general consensus is that the church at this time was between 40-150 people, and when they all came together on these occasions, they most likely ate at a larger home, owned by someone with higher nobility. Roman homes in those days had a fairly uniform design, with a large, open-air central area that could host dinner parties. Again, these were not uncommon in those days. Those of the highest status would sit in the center, called the Triclinium, and discuss politics, religion, and show off their rhetorical skills. Those of lesser nobility would sit on the periphery of the atrium, and were usually more spectators - as they were honored to even be invited by the host of higher status.

But the Kingdom of Jesus had pierced through all those economic and ethnic lines. The church was made up of slaves, tradesmen, nobility, Jews, Gentiles, Barbarians. However, the

Corinthian gathering was still keeping their cultural norms. Where someone sat was to show partiality to their status, rather than to be seen as an equal, image bearer of God.

So, the noble ate to their full, while the lesser class sat on the outskirts and ate the leftovers. Some even comment that depending on the time of the gathering, the tradesworkers and slaves couldn't show up until their work was done, while the nobility could eat whenever they wanted.

That's why Paul says,

[33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—

[34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.”

As we see - this was a meal. There was enough food to get full, and enough wine to get drunk. But as Paul states, what they were eating was NOT the Lord's Supper. They had profaned what should have been sacred. They made it look like a meal the world would have, when it should have been set apart.

These were the problems facing the church's observance of Communion: divisions, arguments, sin, and partiality. They should have been non-starters for the church to even partake in the sacred meal, but they continued on and shamed themselves.

So, Paul has to remind them of the basics. In verses 23-25, he tells the story of the Last Supper when Jesus broke bread and gave the cup to His disciples. And it is in that story that we find the meaning and significance of Communion. Mainly, that it is a meal that unites the past, present, and future. It is a meal that unites us as individuals to the collective community of believers, and it is a meal that unites us to God through Christ's body and blood. Again, it is a meal that unites heaven and earth.

Paul continues in verse 23, in this well-known passage that's often read when we take the Bread and the Cup:

(Interestingly, as an aside, many scholars date this letter to the Corinthians before any of the four Gospels were written. That is important, because it goes to show how well-preserved the oral history and apostles' teachings were in the early days of the church.)

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,

[24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

PAST // a meal of exodus

"In Remembrance..."

Our first point this morning is that Communion is a reminder of what God has done in the past. *It is a meal of EXODUS.*

Before we talk about the night that Jesus ate with his disciples before his crucifixion, we must remember what Jesus was doing on that night.

They were having a Passover meal. The Passover meal was one of seven feasts in the Old Testament. It marked the night that God ultimately delivered the Israelites from the hand of the hard-hearted Pharaoh and the false gods of Egypt. You can read about it in Exodus, chapter 12. The LORD had commanded the Hebrews to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, and to put the blood of the lamb over the doorposts of their homes. As judgment fell upon Egypt in the death of the firstborn sons, the homes that were covered by the blood were "passed over" by the destroying angel. The blood was an outward symbol of salvation from death.

And as for their meals, since the Hebrew slaves were to be ready to leave Egypt in haste, the LORD commanded that they not even use leaven for their bread. That is - and if you've ever baked a sourdough, you know - that it takes a lot of time for dough to be leavened and rise. They didn't have packs of instant yeast in their fridges like we do. Baking a loaf of bread that rose usually took at least an overnight to leaven. There was no time or allowance for leaven. They had to eat in haste. And further Passovers were observed by families cleaning out their homes, and getting rid of any leavened dough (aka sourdough starter) they had.

It's fascinating to see how Paul, inspired by the Spirit, is using all this imagery and symbolism in his letters. We'll see later how he intertwines the literal broken, human body of Jesus at his crucifixion, with the group of believers he calls the body of Christ. There is so much word-play going on throughout this letter - so many rabbit holes to study from. And even with this mention of "leaven" in the Exodus and Passover, we see Paul using it in Chapter 5, equating the sexual sin of one man as the leaven in the dough, that is the church.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? [7] Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. [8] Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

So, this Passover meal that Jesus was celebrating with his disciples was a meal that remembered the Exodus out of Egypt. And as believers today, partaking in this re-formatted meal, we can look back and remember our own Exodus from our sin, our own hard-heartedness, and from the false idols of this world. It is a meal that remembers the broken body of Jesus, and his spilled blood that offers salvation from death, and deliverance into the ultimate promised land.

The author of the book of Hebrews reflects on this much, especially in chapters 9-10. When the covenant between Israel and the LORD was consummated in Exodus 24, Moses took the blood of the sacrificial lamb and sprinkled it on the people. Moses said, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you."

Jesus, on the night before his death, took the Passover cup and instituted a NEW covenant, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

What is the new covenant, you might ask?

The prophet Jeremiah foretold what it would be in Jeremiah 31:

[31] "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, [32] not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. [33] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [34] And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (ESV)

It makes perfect sense that Jesus would reformat the meal that marked the covenant from coming out of Egypt, and make it as a meal of remembrance for the new covenant. The blood of a lamb marked the first covenant, the blood of Christ marked the new covenant.

So, when we eat the bread and drink the cup together - we remember the past.

It is a meal of true Exodus.

PRESENT // a meal of examination: INWARD, OUTWARD, UPWARD

And when we eat the bread and drink the cup together - we examine ourselves in the present. We examine ourselves as individuals (inward), examine ourselves as a community (outward), and examine ourselves in relationship to God (upward).

Paul continues in verse 27:

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

[28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

[29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

[30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

[31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

[32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

What does it mean to eat and drink in an “unworthy manner”? There has been much debate over this, but what it doesn’t mean is that God expects us to come to His table in perfection. We know this is impossible without His grace and the Spirit’s sanctifying power.

The Greek word here is “*anaxios*” which is translated as irreverent, or worthless. It’s a rare word in the Greek NT, and even in the OT, but in the Greek of Jeremiah 15:19, the prophet uses the word “*anaxios*” as the opposite of “precious”. So, unworthy manner, might be also translated to “eating and drinking in a **worthless** manner.” Interestingly enough, the equivalent Hebrew word used also sometimes refers to despicable, gluttonous behavior in the OT - which is appropriate, given the context of the meal.

Again, God doesn’t expect perfection, but he does expect us to examine ourselves, and to approach His table as a precious gift, not a worthless tradition.

In verse 28, Paul writes that a person should examine himself. That is definitely an inward, introspective examination. That’s often why we leave time before the bread and cup to pray and examine our hearts. As the Psalmist writes, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” Sin must be repented of. Unknown sin in our hearts revealed.

But notice Paul says, “anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body...” In the next chapter, Paul will go on to talk about the church as one body with many members. It’s this paradox that the many believers ARE the one body of Christ. So, besides examining ourselves, personally, Paul seems to be implying that one should step outside one’s self to examine the entire body. That is, the entire community. At the heart of communion is examining outward. To see if the church as a whole is worthy of taking communion.

God cares about our interpersonal relationships. Where feud, division, pride, jealousy, and sin exists, the peace of Christ cannot abound. In this outward examination of the body, Paul would say, “as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with one another.” Jesus would say it a little differently in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:

[23] So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

We know the hyperbole Jesus uses in the previous passage, where he says if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off... and the point is, do whatever you need to do to stop unrepentant sin. But, we often miss the hyperbole here.

At this time, the only place in the world to offer sacrifices was in Jerusalem. Jews and proselytes who were scattered across the known world would travel to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices during the holy feasts of the Law. We see this, for example, in the book of Acts at Pentecost.

So, Jesus is saying that if you traveled hundreds of miles from Alexandria to Jerusalem to offer your sacrifice and THERE realize that you're not in right relationship with your brother... leave your offering there, travel ALL the way back, and then come back.

Before we take Communion together, if you realize you're not in right relationship with your brother or sister in Christ, or with your wife, or with your kids. Make it right. Walk across the room. It's much easier than walking back and forth to Alexandria. Don't worry about what others might think. May we make this a commonplace practice of examining our bodies, and the Body before Communion.

FUTURE // a meal of expectation

Not only is Communion a meal where the past Exodus and present examination take place, but it is a meal of future expectation. That is, it is a meal that will continue on into eternity

As Paul writes:

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

In all 3 synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Jesus says something interesting: "Truly I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." What does that mean? Why would he say that?

Some Biblical scholars have noted that at the Last Supper, Jesus, besides reformatting the Passover meal to the meal marking the New Covenant, also reformatted the meal as a covenant betrothal ceremony - or what we might call today an engagement ceremony. I'm telling you, there are so many layers to this. It's amazing...

As it was custom in the Hebrew wedding traditions, there were two stages to a marriage: the betrothal (called the *erusin*) and the wedding ceremony (called the *nissuin*). In the betrothal ceremony, the fathers of the man and woman would first meet to agree on the condition of the dowry. That is, in exchange for giving away a productive member of the household, the groom's father would have to pay a price for the bride. If the fathers agreed on the conditions, this sealed the purchase price and committed the man and woman to each other. The groom would then pour wine into the Betrothal Cup, and if the bride drank from the cup, they were seen as contractually married. The groom would not drink again until the second cup, at the Wedding ceremony. The bride would go through a ritual purification process called **kiddushin**, which literally translates to "being made holy, or being made set apart" otherwise known as sanctification.

During this process of the bride being made pure for her wedding day, the groom would go back to his father's property, and begin to construct a place for them to live. If you're thinking back to when Jesus said in John 14, "In my Father's house are many rooms...And if I go and prepare a

place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" ... you're tracking right along.

Then, when the father decided that the bride was made pure, and the other father approved of the living space that was prepared, the groom and his entourage would go back to the bride's home in a colorful procession to mark the wedding day. The bride and her entourage (who had been keeping watch for the groom - like the parable of the 10 virgins in the Gospels) would run out to meet the groom and return for the ceremony, where the everlasting, marriage covenant would be consummated, they would drink from the Wedding Cup, and a glorious feast would last for days on end.

This imagery is all over the New Testament, when the church is called the bride, and Christ is called the bridegroom, and the Father is given honor through this everlasting covenant. We see this most pointedly in Revelation 19, where John has a vision of this meal, lasting throughout eternity.

Revelation 19:6–9

[6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

[9] And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

What a day that will be!!

So, today. We eat this bread and drink this cup in expectation: of the marriage supper of the lamb, and of the new heavens and new earth, and of all things being made right and new. We drink this cup in the hope and assurance that God will finish what He started. From the past Exodus, to our present Examination, to our Expectation of future glory.

Final Notes

On a couple of final notes, there is so much more beauty in this meal, considering we were also once Enemies of God. Romans 5:10 says:

[10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

So, once we were enemies, now we are seated at His table. It reminds me of the Old Testament story in 2 Samuel of Mephibosheth, who was one of King Saul's sons. King Saul and David were fierce enemies, and as Saul's rule was collapsing, Mephibosheth was critically injured as his family fled. So much so that he was paralyzed.

Years later, David, remembering the love that he had for Jonathan (another one of King Saul's sons), inquired if any of the family was still alive. Mephibosheth was still alive. But especially in those days of dynasty rule, you destroyed your enemy. But David sought him out, and promised him a seat at the table for the remainder of his years. Even though they were enemies, King David extended grace and a place to rest to Mephibosheth.

This is such a fitting story for what the Father does to us, because of our relation and redemption through Christ. It is through Christ, that the Father offers us a seat at His table.

And one last note: We saw in this chapter in 1 Corinthians that although the church in Corinth was abusing the Lord's Supper, they were having a meal. And that looks different than the small cup and juice we partake in when we observe Communion.

But, the point remains that true relationships and intimacy are found when we come together around a table. For meals, for hospitality, for generosity. It is through this intimacy that we really come to know one another, understand one another, and carry each other's burdens.

Our Life Group is currently going through a book by Rosaria Butterfield, entitled "The Gospel Comes with a Housekey: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in a Post-Christian World". In that book, she talks about how even though "radical" and "ordinary" might seem like oxymorons, in today's world, ordinary hospitality can have radical change - both inside and outside our church community. It has been a challenging and convicting read!

Another author Dustin Willis, puts it this way:

"Let's use our homes to be micro representations of that final banquet table—places where believers gather around the food and drink God has graciously provided, celebrating that God has brought us to Himself and opened that sacred space to all who are far from Him. Let's become relentlessly warm and welcoming because we've been relentlessly welcomed in Christ."

So, as we start this New Year, my challenge to you is to be radically, ordinarily hospitable. Let us be a church with open doors and homes, where the fellowship of the body becomes more intimate and precious. Then, when we come together at Communion, our united body can participate in the beautiful, symbolic, amazing meal of Christ's body and blood. A meal on earth as it is in heaven! Amen.