

**WHY COMMUNION?**  
**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

**Critical Searching Inquiries Series**  
**November 4, 2012**  
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This morning we continue our series of messages on Critical Searching Inquiries (CSI) with our focus today on “Why Communion?” This, of course, is an appropriate Sunday to focus on this question since it is a Communion Sunday at Messiah. It is an important “reality check” of why we do this ritual so often in our worship services.

Let us pray—It is our prayer today, Lord Jesus, that you would open our eyes and hearts to your word, that we may truly see your real presence and promise in this sacramental meal, and that it may transform us forever. Amen.

*“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’*

*“In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’”*

Now there are three actions I want you to think about this morning. First Jesus took the bread, then he gave thanks and then he broke the bread to share. We’re going to return to these three points a number of times in this message as we prepare to actually share in the Lord’s Supper.

Now something that every parent goes through is that ominous time when you say goodbye to your children for an extended period of time. For Kim and me, of course, we went through this three times when we brought our kids to college for their freshman years.

I still remember those move-in days for our two oldest, Zachary & Karis, at Concordia in Moorhead and for Isaac at the Cincinnati College/Conservatory of Music on the University of Cincinnati campus.

I distinctively remember moving them into the dorms, running errands to Target for odds and ends to get their rooms wired and ready, attending parent orientation meetings, etc. And I distinctly remember finally saying goodbye to each one and driving away.

You know for 18 years you are with your kids night and day except for a few camps, overnight retreats and extended stays with grandparents. You’re now going to go for possibly 3-months or more between visits and it is a totally new thing.

So there are two things that many parents say at those times that can also help us better understand Holy Communion. One thing we say to our kids is “Remember,” just like Jesus is saying. Remember who you are and whose you are because everything your mother and I have tried to build into you—faith, values, strength of character—will be tested.

The second thing we say is remember on a regular basis to stay in touch. With our oldest kids we got the “Call Home America” phone plan for long distance; with Isaac we got a family plan cell phone. We encouraged them to keep in touch—so that we could keep reminding them of who they are, and whose they are, and still give them support and guidance.

And one of the things we always asked when we talked to them on Sundays was, “Did you go to church today? Where did you go to church? Was it a good experience; what did you learn; did you bring other students with you?” Worship, my friends, is an important way to help our kids remember who they are and whose they are.

Now in asking why communion, this word remember is so important. Jesus said, “*Do this in remembrance of me.*” Communion reminds us in a ritual physical way, with bread and wine, to remember who you are and whose you are. It reminds you of God’s love and promises for you.

Remember those three parts I mentioned—He took the bread; gave thanks for the bread; broke the bread? The first thing Jesus did was to take and receive the gift of bread. The first thing we are to do when we come to this table is remember this gift of God.

Bread, of course, is one of the most basic elements and needs for human existence. All around the world people of every culture have some form of bread that is an important part of their diet. When you go out to eat bread is often one of the first things brought to your table.

I don’t know about you but I love to go into a bakery and smell fresh baked bread. It brings me back to my childhood when my mother and grandmother used to bake fresh bread. It is kind of a transcendental feeling, isn’t it? We can almost get lost in that smell.

The problem, however, is that we can easily worship the bread rather than the giver. See, bread is a gift and yet it can be easy to focus on the gift rather than the giver of that gift. You see, things like sex, our jobs and our material things are all gifts from God our creator.

And yet many today are focusing on, and letting their lives be consumed by, the gift rather than the giver. That’s why our culture today is so absorbed and obsessed with themselves and with things/stuff. It is also why there is so much selfishness and dysfunction in all this.

It is only when we worship and keep our focus on the giver that we treat these things as special gifts of God. So many today live to eat rather than eat to live. This, of course, is how evil works—to worship the bread. Jesus said to Satan in his temptation, “*No, you cannot live by bread alone; but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.*”

Jesus said in John 6:27, “*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life...I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.*” Every time we come to this table we are to remember that Jesus is the giver—he is the bread that truly satisfies.

And when we come to this table we also remember that God is the source of all my needs. Remember when Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, and how there were 12-baskets leftover? Jesus says when you’re traveling with me, focusing your life on me, not only do you have enough to eat—you have an abundance. You have leftovers if you will.

When you come to this table, my friends, focusing on Jesus; when you're trusting him as the living bread of life; as you're focused on his life and mission not only do you have everything you need but you have leftovers. Your life is filled to abundance and is overflowing. You are filled with bread and life the world cannot give. It is all a gift from God.

The second thing Jesus does when he takes the bread is give thanks. To come to this table is to do an attitude check and to remember gratitude. It is a time to remember the magnitude of what God has done in you.

One thing I think of when I come to this table is the blessing of relationships in my life. You see Jesus in his life on earth changed the metaphor from temple, and altar, to table. In Acts 2 it says the early church broke bread in their homes with glad and joyful hearts.

You know there is something amazing that happens around a table. I know many things I learned about life and about living as a Christian were shared at my family table growing up, and as I have spent time eating with other believers. The table has been a place I have felt accepted, where I could laugh and cry, where I could share love and have love shared with me.

And every time I come to this table, this "Lord's table," I come with gratitude for the relationships I have with you, and with countless other people who I've shared life and ministry with. God calls his church into authentic relationships and this table is a celebration of that love, and caring.

So first Jesus took and received the gift of bread, then he gave thanks, and third he broke the bread and passed it around. The reminder is that each time we come to this table the purpose is not to keep Jesus and this bread for ourselves—but to be generous in passing it around.

In going back to the Acts 2 church it says that they ate the bread with glad and generous hearts. Listen carefully—greed is the cancer today of the human spirit. And this greed is the fruit of fear and distrust. What do we fear today?—that there's not going to be enough.

But God is a God of abundance, a God of the banquet. You know hoarding is when we keep more resources than we need—which others depend on to live. And yet Jesus shows us in this meal that generosity is never hoarding but breaking our stuff down and passing it around.

The visual image is that we are the loaf of bread, that we are part of the body of Christ in all the world and that we are to break out our blessings, our gifts, our love and share them with others. To come and share in Holy Communion should remind us of the joy of generously sharing our money, our gifts, our love with others.

It is interesting to think that this morning there are over one hundred of us at Messiah who will be sharing in this bread and wine of Holy Communion. And yet as we do there are hundreds of thousands in Haiti, in Tanzania and all around the world who are also sharing in this bread.

When we share in Holy Communion my friends remember that Jesus took the bread—it is a gift from the giver; he gave thanks—we have so much to be thankful for; and he broke and passed it around. May we remember these truths whenever we share in this meal, so God's love and generosity may be passed around in this congregation, and in everything we do.