

# **“Jesus – The Bread of Life”**

John 4:10, 6:35, 6:53-56, 7:38; 1 Corinthians 11:27-28; Psalm 42:1-2, 8

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**Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked me, and I would have given you living water." (John 4:10) “Let the one who believes in Jesus drink. As the scripture has said, “Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38)**

Today we gather to feast upon the bread of life and quench our thirst with the living water. In order to better receive God’s blessings we need to let go and be reconciled with our self, all people, and God through confession. Let us pray together the prayer on the screens.

## *Prayer of Confession and Letting Go*

Examining your life, being reconciled with all, and confessing your sins is a critical beginning to celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

When I was serving at the First Presbyterian Church of Maumee, I came across some session minutes from 1820. They took preparing for the Lord’s Supper very seriously. To receive Holy Communion you needed a token. The week before communion the elders would gather and look over the rolls of the church sharing any potential sinful behavior of each member. Every member was visited by an elder. Speaking the truth in love they were asked to confess their sins. If the elder was satisfied

that it was a full and sincere confession and that they were truly repenting and would strive to sin no more they received a token to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Today we have open communion. All who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior are welcome to partake of the spiritual nourishment that Jesus has prepared for you. However, we sincerely hope and pray that every person prepares themselves for Holy Communion by self-examination, confession and repentance. The Apostle Paul wrote **“Anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of Jesus irreverently is like part of the crowd that jeered and spit on Jesus at his death. Is that the kind of "remembrance" you want to be part of? Examine your motives, test your heart, come to this meal in holy awe.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-28)**

Come to this meal in holy awe for the bread and juice is fortified with the Holy Spirit, a medium for God's grace to forgive, heal, transform, and redeem you. **“Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I abide in him.” (John 6:53-56)**

The Lord's Supper is a holy mystery with an abundance of blessings, experiences, symbolism, and transformations. It is impossible to capture all that happens in this feast by just calling it “The Lord's Supper”, so we use many names. One of such is the Agape meal. Agape means supreme, sacrificial, perfect, eternal love, therefore this is a meal in which we feast upon God's love, are filled with love, and enabled to love one another and God. Another name is Holy Communion, for the Holy Spirit unites us with God, each other, and all people across time and space. John Calvin shared that sometimes when he celebrated Holy Communion he felt that he was in heaven, united with God, and reunited with family who had died and gone to heaven. Several people have shared with me that in their celebration of Holy Communion, they felt the loving presence of someone they love

who was living in a faraway place. Others have felt the loving presence of someone in heaven. Another name is the Lord's Supper, for we are nourished by God with all we need, nourished with hope, peace, grace, love and joy. Another name is the Eucharist which has the same meaning as another name we use, the Great Thanksgiving. Jesus thanked God before sharing and partaking in this meal. We are invited to thank God for all God is doing in our lives and the world. When we celebrate this feast we remember God loves us and thank God.

There are several views of what happens as we celebrate the Eucharist. Some denominations and people believe that the elements, the bread and juice, undergo a physical change and become holy, sacred, a vessel for the grace and blessings of God. This is called transubstantiation. Another view is that Jesus is omnipresent, that Jesus is physically present in the bread and juice. This is called the doctrine of ubiquity. Still another view is we celebrate the Great Thanksgiving to remember. The bread and juice remind us of Jesus and all God has done for us through Jesus. Many Presbyterians believe there is a Holy Spirit presence in the bread and juice. As we partake of the bread and juice we are inviting the Holy Spirit to forgive, transform and bless us. As we partake we receive abundant life, are enabled to serve God and are sustained by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of being a cherished member of God's family who will be resurrected with our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus. The bread and juice are a sign of the new covenant, the gospel, the good news, the kingdom of heaven, and a foretaste of the banquet of heaven where we will feast with God, the angels, and all the saints for eternity.

We celebrate communion in two ways. One way is that we use our best linen napkins and silver trays symbolizing the holiness of the meal, and that we are striving to give our best to God. This way needs to be prepared, the bread cubed, the juice poured into cups, symbolizing how we are to prepare ourselves to celebrate the meal. We pass the trays, serving each other, symbolizing that we are a family and are eager to serve like

Jesus served washing the disciples' feet. We partake of the bread and juice at the same time symbolizing that we are reconciled and united. During the time the bread is shared we can reflect and give thanks to God. During the time the juice is shared we can imagine how God is nourishing us, transforming us and calling us to abundant life.

Another way we celebrate communion is intinction. This way symbolizes our unity, community, and being a family, for there is one loaf of bread and one pitcher of juice from which all are nourished. This way is simple as it is symbolizing that all are welcome, all are invited. The table is on the floor, at the same level as everyone, symbolizing that God comes, finds us and meets us where we are. The walking symbolizes the movement God is doing in our lives forgiving, healing, transforming, redeeming, moving us from darkness to light, moving us from sin to righteousness, moving us from broken to whole. The singing enables each person to voice their thanks and praise to God and symbolizes our desire to live in harmony.

Jesus said I am "The Bread of Life" and "The Living Water". The psalmist declared. **"As the deer pants for streams of water so I long for you O God. I thirst for God, the living God. Through each day the Lord pours God's unfailing love upon me , and through each night I sing God's songs, praying to God who gives me life."** (Psalm 42:1,2 & 8)

Jesus has compassion on everyone. Jesus healed the sick and made people whole, therefore a large crowd followed Jesus. The crowd was starving so Jesus fed a crowd of over 10,000 people from a few loaves of bread and fish. Everyone ate until they were satisfied and there were twelve baskets left over. The crowd was amazed. Jesus satisfied their physical hunger. Jesus longs to do much more, to satisfy all our needs physical, emotional and spiritual. Jesus longs to nourish us so we can experience God's extravagant love and abounding joy.

Ken Gire prayed, “Help me, O God, To live the recipe before I give the recipe. Give me the kneading strength to work your words into the doughy recesses of my life. Help me to leave it alone a while so it can rise. Help me not to fear the oven so it can bake. And grant that in the baking, the world would be able to roll down its window and savor the aroma of freshly baked bread. Amen”