

**SERMON: "WILL YOU DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD"**  
**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT EXODUS 12:1-11, 14-17**  
**NEW TESTAMENT 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-26**

**June 2, 2024**  
**Churchwide Confirmation Series**

**Dr. Dave Kivett**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Two pastors serving the same church. Both changed how communion was done. The first pastor (me) noticed how overly formal it was. What really got me was how the communion table was draped with a cloth. It covered everything. Then just before the invitation to the table, two elders removed the cloth and right there in front of the table, folded it up like soldiers do a flag.

Then we went on with the sacrament. We changed that practice pretty early on. I actually showed some patience and asked them why they did communion the way they did. Did not accept "That's the way we've always done it," as an acceptable answer. We did things decently in good order, talked about the how and why and what of the sacrament. Made a few changes.

Some twenty years or so later, the new pastor, Wes, who serves the church now noticed some things he wanted to change. I'm sure the pastor and people in between me and Wes, made some changes too. Wes did things decently and in good order and made a big change in how they do communion. No, he didn't bring back the cloth folding. He changed when they do communion.

That church, like this one, celebrated the sacrament of communion once a month. Now they do so every week. They have been doing so for several years now.

I tell you about those two changes not to propose a change here. I'm not suggesting we celebrate communion every Sunday. Worship committee, sorry if I raised your blood pressure there.

I mention it because I want you to think about how many different ways you have taken communion – in this church, in different churches in different ways, different types of bread, different juice or wine, different liturgy or language, different messages or methods.

Here's the point of the sermon. I'd suggest all those different ways of doing communion and thinking about communion, including what you call it: the eucharist, the last supper, the Lord's supper, a memorial, a foretaste ... All these different things are good (except the folding the cloth like a flag thing).

Here's a conversation I'd encourage you to have with family and friends. Talk about some of your most memorable times at the Lord's table. What made it memorable, meaningful? And another question: What is your preferred way to celebrate the sacrament ... and why?

## A SHARED MEAL

Today we consider the question, “will you devote yourself to the breaking of bread?”

Yes, this can be and is about table fellowship in general, a shared meal  
For our sake this morning I’d like to focus on that being a devotion  
to the shared meal that is holy communion – communion with God  
and communion with God’s people

Before I go on to mention how great it is to think of communion in more than one way  
There are lots (lots) of good ways to celebrate the sacrament. I want to talk  
about one unifying thread in all those different ways of doing communion  
Whatever, however and whenever ... It is a shared meal. It is communion  
as in common ground, as in communication, as in community

They had a little problem with that in Corinth. Paul had to give them a talking to

**Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you proceeds to eat your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have households to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!**

It was and is meant to be a shared meal, not self-serve, not grab and go.

You may be wondering about the picture on the screen for the sermon  
Maybe thinking, “What on earth is Dave thinking?” I wanted a communion image  
seeing that we are talking about devoting ourselves to the breaking of bread  
with an emphasis on the sacrament of holy communion. Thought about a  
picture of bread and cup, or people just enjoying a meal together

But I settled on this picture. You ever have a shared meal like this?  
Where everyone is together ... but on their phones. They may be checking email  
looking something up, or even texting each other. I’ve seen that, done that  
When I talk about communion as a shared meal ... this is not it!  
Even if you might suggest they are using their phones to commune with God

Communion is a shared moment with God, even a private quiet moment  
But is not just me and Thee. It is also me and we.

Maybe you have rules about phones at the table. Those might work here.  
Think of that quiet time with God as doing what you’re supposed to. Take the call  
But step away from the others for a little bit, then come back to the table.

## SUMMARY

About this being a shared meal, let me suggest one way to focus on  
that togetherness, that communion with God's people – Look for that togetherness  
You might even think of our time together at the Lord's table as time travel even  
Look back, look around and look forward

This shared meal is rooted in the Passover celebration  
Both with our Jewish siblings and with Jesus and the disciples as they  
celebrated Passover together just days before Jesus would be crucified.  
We can look back to and connect with the story of the exodus. Look back  
and connect with the story of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter

This shared meal is rooted in that Last Supper with Jesus and his followers  
We can look back to him and to them. Their anticipation, their anxiety.  
This is a memorial meal. But it is not just that. There is more!

Look around at this communion table. Think about other tables, other churches  
other days and other people ... those most memorable times at the Lord's table  
look around at your siblings in Christ here with you today  
people who are part of your life today as part of this 'Place for Everyone,'  
look them in the eye as you walk back to your seat. You're connected

Look around and think of all the others who share this shared meal  
Look around and across town, across the tracks, across the pond  
And most especially across any lines we might have drawn between peoples  
We're connected to God and through God to them, with them.

And look ahead, let your mind drift to think about sitting at the Lord's table  
Imagine what God's kitchen table must look and feel and smell like  
Imagine the fancy table in the dining room, in the great banquet hall  
Think of it as a party with all the people on Jesus' invitation list

And not just in the here and now ... but from back then and in the time to come  
Think about a meal where the whole family gets together. This shared meal  
Shared with those who went before us and those who will come after us  
This shared meal is both a memorial and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet

I'll tell you one of my most memorable communion celebrations. It was the first time  
we had actual bread following the COVID years and those little cups  
with bread and juice. I asked several people to bring breadmakers  
so the church smelled like bread. I remember that smell

I asked Jeff to bake the communion bread. I remember eating that communion  
bread and thinking to myself, "Wow, that is good. I want more of that."

I pray each and every time you celebrate communion with God and God's people  
even if it is that bread and juice in a cup, even if the table is covered in a cloth  
that gets folded like a flag ... you'll know, "Wow, this is good! I want more!"