

Eucharistic Homily

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2020

Most every Christian knows that Jesus died to forgive our sins and was raised to give us new life. But I think we often think of justification and sanctification in strictly individual terms. Our default as 21st century Americans is to think of the Christian life primarily as a private piety, with the church as an optional add-on or accessory.

Just as Jesus called His disciples into fellowship with Him and with one another around that fire by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calls us into communion with Him and with His Body at this Table and in the life of His church. We are members of the body of Christ and, by necessity, members of one another. The primary way we grow in our knowledge of Jesus and in fellowship with Him is through living together as the body of Christ in the fellowship of the church. This Table nourishes with the body and blood of Christ so that we can grow together as one body.

If you've been baptized into Christ and are seeking to live faithfully and obediently for Him, you are invited to partake of this feast that our gracious God has provided for us. These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

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There are many reasons why the church meets weekly for worship, but proclaiming the Lord's death at this Eucharistic Table is the main one. As we eat and drink together, we proclaim the Lord's death to one another. This sacramental meal reassures us that we are at peace with God and members of the body of Christ. This Holy Communion nourishes us with the body and blood of Jesus and forms us into one body.

But that's not all. The church's Table fellowship is a proclamation to the world that Christ's sacrifice was accepted by the Father, that the whole world is being reconciled in Him, and that Jesus is still Lord and King. The church's corporate worship is a key part of her witness.

But this Lord's Supper goes even further than that. Our proclamation of the Lord's death is a proclamation to the God the Father of Christ's saving work. Like so many covenant memorials in the Bible, this memorial feast calls on the Father to have mercy upon the world for the sake of Christ. This holy food that we eat in the Lord's presence reminds God to deal with us and with this world on the basis of Jesus' atoning work.

Ever since the Second Great Awakening, it's become customary for many evangelical churches to have an "altar call" at the end of the service so that people can respond to the message. In that sort of setting, the focus is on what you are going to do for God. The pressure is on to do something right then and there.

But ever since the earliest days of the church, God's people have practiced a very different sort of altar call—the call to come to the altar of the Lord to commune with him. We have an important role in worship, but the invitation that Jesus gives us each week is not primarily an invitation for you to come and do anything for God. The call to worship and especially the invitation to the Lord's Table each week is to come and receive the gifts of salvation, life, glory, and peace that Jesus has already secured for us. There's plenty to do in the Christian life, but the whole point of worship is to receive God's blessings so that we can take them with us out into the world and share them with others.

So the altar call today is that same as it is every week: come and receive the gifts of our generous God. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Rest in the gracious provision of God so that you can then go and share them with others in service.