

Come to the Table of the Lord

1. A time for contemplation

When Jesus first instituted the idea of partaking of the bread and cup it was tied into the Jewish Passover. This annual night of remembering takes place in all Jewish homes as a way to remember the deliverance that God provided for His people. In the Old Testament it was deliverance from slavery and oppression. This deliverance took place under the leadership of Moses. To this day every year Jewish people gather to contemplate and remember what God did for them.

Jesus ties in what has become a Christian tradition into what we refer to as the last supper. In reality the disciples and Jesus were celebrating Passover. Passover dinners are filled with questions but the one that runs throughout the evening is why this night is unlike all other nights?

I want to ask you a similar question this morning. Why is this service different than all other services? It is because we are taking time to contemplate what God did through the sacrifice of His Son on our behalf. It is at this time of the year that we remember with greater attention the suffering, death and resurrection of our Savior.

We remember His willingness to come to earth.

We remember His suffering.

We remember His death.

We remember His resurrection.

We remember His availability to meet our needs today.

He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Let us pause for a moment and contemplate our Lord's act of deliverance.

2. A time for consideration

When we enter into the sacrament of communion we have been instructed by our Lord to examine ourselves. We are not to partake of communion unless we are truly followers of Christ.

We use this time as a time to reflect on our lives.

We use this time as a time to reflect on our relationships.

We consider our relationship with God.

We consider our relationship with our family.

We consider our relationships with the people we work or interact with on a daily basis.

It may be in this time of reflection and consideration that you will rejoice in your relationships with God and others. If that is the case let us rejoice with you, however some of us may find ourselves in broken relationships and broken fellowship with God. If this is the case in your life let us weep with you as you consider your ways.

We pause for a moment to allow God to speak to us and touch us at our points of need.

3. A time for confession

In the book of James we read these words, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”*

I John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Confession is an exercise that is good for the soul.

We are being called in this service to confess our unrighteousness.

We are being called in this service to confess that our righteousness is like filthy rags.

We are being called to acknowledge that without Jesus we are nothing.

Let us use this time to confess anything that might be impeding our faith and our lives as Christ followers.

Let us pray:

Almighty God,

We confess that sometimes we have been ambivalent in appropriating what we have received.

We live by faith, but only so far.

We maintain hope, but only to a point.

We readily forgive if it appears a necessity.

We love compassionately when convenient.

We take our mission seriously in certain places.

We too often practice acceptance with certain people.

We convey goodwill to those who return it.

We give sacrificially if it is not too costly.

Called to discipleship, we are sometimes too bound by our selfishness.

Commissioned to proclaim the gospel of good news we are too often barricaded by our narrowness.

Commanded to love, we are surrounded by reluctance.

Pardon, Lord our pale performance and strengthen us to do Your will. Give us a flexible faith and a brave trust in You. Amen.

4. A time to commit

We are faced with an incredible opportunity this morning. We have the opportunity to commit ourselves to Him in a new way.

We will partake of the elements in a few moments and we will in the words of Jesus celebrate the new covenant found in His shed blood.

We don't need sacrifices of animals or rituals of consecration and commitment, we just need to sacrifice ourselves and commit ourselves to Him and His service.

It is as simple as that.

John Wesley included this prayer in his Covenant Service:

“I am no longer my own, but Yours.

Put me to what You will.

Rank me with whom You will.

Put me to doing.

Let me be employed by You or laid aside for You.

Let me have all things,

Let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

You are mine, and I am Yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.”

We now come to partake of the elements that Jesus instructed us to use. Let us enter into this time of communion.

The Lord Himself ordained this holy sacrament. He commanded His disciples to partake of

the bread and wine, emblems of His broken body and shed blood. This is His table. The feast is for His disciples. Let all those who have with true repentance forsaken their sins, and have believed in Christ unto salvation, draw near and take these emblems, and, by faith, partake of the life of Jesus Christ, to your soul's comfort and joy. Let us remember that it is the memorial of the death and passion of our Lord; also a token of His coming again. Let us not forget that we are one, at one table with the Lord.