

Maundy Thursday

March 24, 2016

Prayer of the Day: Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion you give us your true body and blood as a remembrance of your suffering and death on the cross. Grant us so firmly to believe your words and promise that we may always partake of this Sacrament to our eternal good; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

1 Corinthians 11:26

²⁶ As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 11:26

“United We Stand.” That phrase really makes a statement, does it not? Being “united” means that individual people bind together as one group. This group does not merely join together for the sake of it. No, this one united group works together for one fully agreed upon issue.

“United We Stand” quickly became a motto for the Revolutionary War. Thirteen tiny, fragile colonies wanted independence from the massive, experienced British Empire. One colony on its own would never have the chance of winning independence. Yet, if each colony united together under this common goal of independence, then they had a fighting chance. So, the motto: “United We Stand!” was sung, printed, and proclaimed.

In fact, “United” is part of our country’s name (The United States of America). So, during the Civil War between the northern and southern states, President Abraham Lincoln stressed that a house divided against itself cannot stand. A nation fighting against itself would crumble. So, a Civil War nation worked towards full agreement to remain one united nation.

Shortly after September 11, 2001 the motto appeared again: “United We Stand.” Millions from the east coast, west coast, and everywhere in between took a united stance to end terrorism. Being “united” means that individual people bind together as one group and work for one fully agreed upon issue.

Do you recognize the unity you have with your fellow believers? You are united in one absolute, common agreement on everything the Bible teaches. Bound together in this faith you confidently walk towards heaven. Because of that unity the devil continually tries to divide you from this family of believers.

Tonight, see the Savior unite himself to you and see how that unites you to each other. **PROCLAIM THE UNITY!** *God makes with you. You make to others.*

In our reading from 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes: **“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”** With

those words, Paul takes you back to the very first Maundy Thursday. Flickering candlelight illuminates the upper room. Around a table sits Jesus and eleven of his disciples. On the table itself lies flat, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, cups of wine, and roasted lamb. Once a year, the Jews were to celebrate the Passover. This celebration was not some mindless tradition; this meal **PROCLAIMED THE UNITY** *God made with them*.

Long ago, God promised an Old Testament believer by the name of Abraham that his family would become a great nation and through them the Savior of the world would come ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). Already then God bound himself to the world.

In the following years that promise looked more like a wish. Abraham's descendants were slaves in Egypt. Life was spent pounding out bricks. They worked under a hot, dry sun without much shade or many water breaks. They pulled large stones across the desert floor while slave drivers cracked whips. Each Israelite had very little to look forward to; they were slaves! Not allowed to leave Egypt. Not free from slavery. Still, God comes to them— and he **PROCLAIMS THE UNITY** *he made with them*. He would set them free from captivity; he would set them free for a new life!

Before his hand would lead them out, he commanded them to celebrate this Passover meal. Each household would a year-old male lamb, unblemished and without defect, and slaughter it. The blood would be drained out and kept off to the side. The lamb itself would be entirely roasted— insides and all. They would eat the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Finally, the blood would be smeared on the doorframes of each individual house. The angel of the LORD would travel through Egypt and strike down the firstborn sons of those who stood against him. Yet, he would “pass over” the homes with blood on their doorframes ([Exodus 12:1-14](#)).

This Passover meal was celebrated every year. The Jews could look back and remember that God did rescue their ancestors from slavery. They could also remember God's promise to send his Son to rescue the world from slavery to hell.

As Jesus celebrates the Passover, he proclaims the freedom he has won for you. Jesus is the final Passover Lamb. His life is unblemished; his obedience is perfect. He does not live on earth chained to hell. Rather, he lives as one set free for life in heaven.

So, the Lamb of God is sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. He places his body under the wrath of God in your place. He pours out his perfect blood to wash away your every blemish and stain. Because Jesus gives his life for you, God's anger “passes over” you. You are set free from sin's captive wages of eternal death in hell. You are delivered, rescued eternally!

Because you proclaim this trust in Jesus as Savior, it means that the devil will strive to pry you away from God. Puffing up love for yourself can quickly blur that unity *God made with you*.

He does all he can to tempt you with love for other things. To have hobbies or family or personal-time take priority over time with God! You see, if our hearts no longer care about the unity God has made with us, then it does not take long for us to stop coming to the table. Then we stop cherishing God's forgiveness. Then we stop listening to his Word (law and gospel). Then we stop caring about our relationship with God at all. Soon, we will

only follow our own thoughts and feelings on how we are able to get right with God. The truly scary thing is: divided from God, we will never be able to stand before him and live.

Make sure to continue **PROCLAIMING THE UNITY** *God makes with you*. Continue receiving the Lord's Supper and hearing the assurance that your sins have been forgiven. Continue strengthening your faith by feeding it with God's unbreakable promises. Whenever you kneel at the altar, you are proclaiming that Jesus died for you. You **PROCLAIM THE UNITY** *God makes with you*.

In the Lord's Supper, you not only **PROCLAIM THE UNITY** *God makes with you*, but you **PROCLAIM THE UNITY** *you make to others*.

You do not come up to the altar alone; you stand beside your fellow believers. You are united in everything the Bible teaches. You (and they) believe that Jesus' true body and true blood is given along with the bread and the wine. You (and they) know that Jesus is the only reason that sins are forgiven. You (and they) call Jesus, the only Lamb of God, who takes away the world's sins, the only Way to eternal life ([John 1:29](#); [14:6](#)). As your fellow believers kneel at the altar, it is as if they are saying to you: "We share the same belief about Jesus." So, **PROCLAIM THE UNITY** *you make to others*.

You also **PROCLAIM THE UNITY** *to others*. Not everyone has this complete, full unity of faith with you. Sadly, many have stripped forgiveness from the Lord's Supper and reject the unity God makes with them. Some congregations make the Lord's Supper into something people do for God (not what God offers them). That by going up to the altar, a person promises God to be a better person. This only adds guilt and responsibility. If this commitment is not kept, then they must appear again, offer an excuse as to why their life was not better, and then figure out a plan to become better. By the end, Jesus' forgiveness is nowhere to be seen.

Do you see the difference? You believe that Jesus offers, gives, and seals the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through this sacrament. Others believe the Lord's Supper simply teaches us to work harder to become more moral. Still others believe that the Lord's Supper just symbolizes body and blood. That Jesus does not give you forgiveness in this meal. Rather, remembering what he did for you means that you must prove to God that you deserve his forgiveness. Three major views; three different beliefs!

Remember what "unity" means: *full agreement*. That is what we as Christians work for. Unity does not come from ignoring disagreement or changing what the Bible teaches. Unity comes from proclaiming what God teaches you! That is why God wants us to teach others about the forgiveness which comes from the only Savior in the Lord's Supper. So, we take the time to instruct teenagers what the Lord's Supper is and what they are receiving in it. That is why we kindly ask visitors to learn what we teach about the Lord's Supper first, so that they can state whether or not they agree with the same teaching.

Someone might call you "rude," "arrogant," for upholding God's Word. Remember, God has united himself to you. You seek to share God's complete unity with others. By teaching, you are actually providing an opportunity to do what God says: **PROCLAIM THE UNITY!** ([1 Corinthians 11:27-29](#)).

Being “united” means that individual people bind together as one group and work for one fully agreed upon issue.

You recognize the unity you have with your fellow believers. You are united in one absolute, common agreement on everything the Bible teaches. God has united himself to you. He has given you his only Son as your Passover Lamb. By his wounds you are healed. Bound together in this faith you confidently walk towards heaven—and you do so with your fellow believers. See the Savior unite himself to you; see how you are united to each other. **PROCLAIM THE UNITY!** *God makes with you. You make to others.*