

Pastor Jon Mark
Maundy Thursday
April 1, 2021

Meditation

Communion has many names. One is the Eucharist, which is Greek for thanksgiving. Another is the love feast. And of course the word I am using today, communion means coming together.

What does it mean for us to come together at this time? Right now we are in a transition period, a time when, a lot of us here are vaccinated and we are at 8 people infected per day per 100,000 in Fresno county, much better than the 70 per day per 100,000 that we experienced this winter. With masks outdoors, we are safe. We can go on farm walks, we can go to prayer meetings, we even can come to this church to celebrate with one another. And now it is not really the calculated risk that we make for our mental and emotional health. It really is fairly safe. Which is all to say, that I thought about what community means, what it means for us to love each other and respect each other's choices. And I could not think of a better example than this year. We have remained committed to this community. Sure, I may have preached some sermons and set the technological table so to speak, but you came. You all made community work in strange times. And you have loved each other in how you all stayed connected, talked during fellowship time and communal sharing, and education hour. Last night I had a gratitude ritual where I asked you all to share what you are grateful for. And I do not know if y'all just had this church in your mind, but the thing I kept hearing over and over again was how you felt like this church was somewhere where you felt like you belonged. Where you could be yourself and did not have to change in order to fit in. If love is anything. Then love is that feeling of belonging and safety.

As I read this passage the verse that stuck in my head was, Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. It is love that is at the center of this communion meal and maybe in future years the practice of foot-washing. Jesus knows that this is his final time to be with the ones that he loves. Even Judas, who will betray him is beloved. And so what he gives to his loved ones is one final gift. And being a teacher at heart, his final gift is a lesson that will help them deal with his passing. How do you be a leader? Jesus answers if you are going to be a leader you have to serve and love the people who serve you. For Jesus, love is a verb, it is shown in how you take care of people, in literal and symbolic ways.

So, I hope that we will continue to take care of one another. That we can continue to be there for one another and sacrificing social connection for the sake of health. We have given up so much in this year of Lent. And nothing will replace this year we spent a part, we will have to work to figure out how to be in crowds again and how to budget in driving time so we make it to events on time. However, what we will get back is each other, minus the ones we have tragically lost. However, I do have one suggestion, one caveat to add. When we do return, let us receive the gift that Jesus gave his beloved disciples at the end. Stoop down, stoop down and wash the feet of

those who we think should serve us. Receive council from our young people. Attend to the needs of our elderly when they cannot hear well. Listen to people who only come a few times a year, they are a part of us. Cast your thoughts and prayers to our long-distance congregants, they are a part of us. And most of all to us pastors, we are your servants, we provide you with leadership, point out paths and how we can walk them, but we are your servants.