

Sermon: February 8, 2009
“Where is the Lord’s Table?”

I was so tempted this morning ... oh, it was about 7:30 ... yes, I was tempted to fill the Communion glasses and chalice ... get out some bread ... and have Communion at worship today ---- even tho’ this is not a so-called COMMUNION SUNDAY!! I was reflecting a bit about Communion today ...

Last Sunday ... one of you gave me a bulletin from another church ... yes, YOU STRAYED. Not only did you go to another church ... but it was a different brand of Lutheran. You asked me to read the part about Communion. Now ---- this bulletin from “the other church” is huge. You could take a month’s worth of our bulletins ... along with a newsletter ... staple the bunch together ----- and it still wouldn’t be as big as this one bulletin from “the other church.”

Later in the day ... I read the bulletin ...

Here is what is said about Communion ---- *Anyone who is a member of this particular Lutheran Church is welcome to come to the Lord’s Table. If you are not a member ... then please refrain from taking the sacrament unless you have previously received permission from the pastor or a deacon.*”

None of this “happy stuff ... all of you are welcome ...” that you get here at All Saints!!

This causes me to reminisce. I remember back in the old Augustana Synod days ... we had Communion 4 times a year. Had to keep it infrequent and special. Then the controversial move ---- having it once per month.

Some people said – “Oh, my gosh ... this is so Catholic!!”

About 25 years ago ... we started having Communion twice a month ... and the whispers started --- “Don, what’s going on? ... we are more Catholic than ever!!” Now --- we have Communion on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays ... and occasionally when I feel like it ... for no reason!!

I must admit ---- I miss it when we don’t have Communion. It’s kind of ironic ... it used to be ... when we had Communion ... people would look at the altar and say ---- “Oh, no ... it’s a Communion Sunday!!”

Now ... more often than not ... folks will look at the altar ... see it kind-of empty ... and say ----
“You mean ...we’re not having Communion today???”

Maybe it’s all we are going through lately. Communion is such a powerful symbol of all of us coming together. I’m not sure what it looks like from where you are ... but standing at the altar ... Communion is very moving: walkers and wheelchairs ... canes, suits, flannel shirts ... the young and the old ... dresses and blue-jeans ... kids and babies ...

You don’t have to be Lutheran ... ELCA, independent, Missouri Synod ... you don’t have to be a member or pass a test or fill out a form ... and you sure-as-heck don’t need my permission!@!!

Your ticket is your humanity.

Your invitation is God-given.

This is God’s house ... this is the Lord’s table ----- no black or white, gay or straight, saved or unsaved, abled or dis-abled ... we are all God’s people.

We are the body of Christ ... born of his blood ... saved by his grace and goodness.

So, the two of us are at a coffee table in downtown LaGrange. An ordinary table ... God’s table, perhaps? ... well, it’s all about perspective. Have you had a moment like this????? You are with someone ... there is a bond between you ----- all you have left is your HUMANITY.

You are not defined by what you do ... by who people think you are ... by your 401k, your job, your money or lack thereof ... religion, color, status ---- hey, “it doesn’t matter” ...

He’s an entertainer ... who hasn’t been able to entertain.

His livelihood ... at least for the past year ... has been taken away. The applause has died down. Battling cancer has stripped him of almost everything.

At the other end of the table is a small-time preacher ---- known for strong coffee & average sermons.

We had no bread and wine ... no holy words were uttered. Just black coffee and a bagel.

“Take and eat, Kieran ... this is for you.”

“Take and eat, Don ... this is for you.”

I thought of the words in that bulletin ----- “if you are a member, you are welcome ... if you need permission, see me ... if you are good enough, come on down!!”

So much of life is a game we play. So much of religion is hocus-pocus. We invent rules ... we make-up guidelines ... we have doctrines ... we give people (like pastors) power and authority they don't deserve.

Jesus' invitation ----- so simple, so broad, so basic.

“Go into the highways and byways ... invite the sick and the poor ... the down-trodden ... those possessed by demons.” Check your pride at the door ... check your self-centeredness at the door ... put your man-made rules in the biz-bag. COME FORWARD ... EAT AND DRINK ... TASTE THE CUP OF SALVATION.

Come to my table ----- Orland Park, LaGrange, Afghanistan, Africa, Peotone or Tinley Park come to my table ----- the altar, Starbucks, the nearest truck-stop.

You can bear your soul ... share your humanity ... shed the roles you play and who people think you are.

Yes ----- taste the goodness of God's grace.

We live in tough and turbulent times. As I leave “the Lord's table” ... temporarily housed in a LaGrange Starbuck's ... I realize that Kieran's tired face is a road-map of the human spirit. So is yours ...

so is mine.

These tough times have helped me discover and re-discover what is most precious in this crazy world of ours.

--- Cancer can take away my hair ... even my life.

--- The economy can strip away what I thought was my security.

--- Foreclosure-court can eat at my pride.

--- Alzheimer's can consume my life.

--- S-minuses on a young kid's report card can make him feel like he's not good enough.

But none of this can take away my pride, my dignity, my God-given humanity.

Everyday ... somewhere ... THE TABLE IS SET.

a coffee shop

a kind word

a nod from a stranger

a nursing home hallway

mash potatoes and gravy at a homeless shelter

The Lord's table has many names:

Kieran ... Paquito ... Dawn ... Andy and Gail

Yes ---- I could have used a bit of Communion today ... the altar seems a bit baren.

But ... the Lord's table is a lot closer than we often think.

Your name is on it ... so is mine.

Don Borling

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