

**New St. James Presbyterian Church
World Communion Sunday
Sunday, October 5, 2025**

**“Until the Kingdom of God”
Luke 22:14-23**

The Rev. Dr. David Clark

Today is World Communion Sunday, which gives us this opportunity to reflect on what it means to approach the Lord's Table and to share in this meal. The Scottish theologian Donald Baillie said this about the Lord's Supper: “we stand between a memory and a hope, looking backward to the incarnation and looking forward to the final consummation.” “[A]t this sacrament we have the presence, the memory and the hope all in one.” That is, in the Lord's Supper, we glimpse our past, our future, and—in between—our present.

To begin, the Lord's Supper teaches us about our past. The liturgy of this Sacrament—that is, the prayers and readings as we approach the Table—these words retell and recite the story of the Last Supper, the meal that Christ shared with his disciples shortly before Good Friday, when Christ commanded that his disciples continue to share in this meal by faith. As we heard from St. Paul in our Epistle Lesson, words that we will hear again as we approach the Table: “The tradition which I handed on to you,” Paul says, “came to me from the Lord himself: that on the night of his arrest” (1 Corinthians 11:23)... Before we can come to the Table, we first need to retell the story.

And whenever we retell this story, it's never neutral or detached. No, when we retell this story, we do this in order to renew faithful memory; we retell the story in order to rekindle our shared memory of redemption through Christ. We retell this story as a matter of vital importance, because this story tells us who and whose we are—that we are people who have come to know God's redemptive love through Christ. We retell this story to remind ourselves that this story of Christ has become our story; that this story is our redeeming grace; that his body was broken for us.

And in this way, as we retell this story, this always directs us toward the future. The words we hear from St. Paul, that begin, “The tradition which I handed on to you”—those words conclude with future expectation: “For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup,” Paul says, “you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.” This story we retell—this rekindles our memory of the past in such a way that it points us, with hope, toward a promised future.

The hope and expectation of a promised future—this is at the heart of the Lord’s Supper; and nowhere do we find this hope more clearly expressed than in our Gospel Lesson from Luke, where Jesus speaks of “eagerly desir[ing]” this meal. And why? Jesus explains: “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. [...] [F]or I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (vv. 15-16, 18).

Jesus shared this meal with his disciples as a foretaste of the banquet in the world to come. This meal—that Christ began with his disciples; this meal, that the church continues to celebrate now; this meal points us toward an eternal celebration. This simple meal, that we will share together this morning, this is indeed a foretaste—an appetizer—for the banquet of the kingdom of God... And Christ promises the disciples that he will not share in this meal again until everything has been “fulfilled in the kingdom of God,” that he will not again taste this bread and cup until the longed-for promises of God have at last been fulfilled.

This is Christ’s promise to the disciples then—and to his disciples now. And one way to imagine this promise of Christ—this promise that he will not share again in this meal until “the kingdom of God comes”—is this: Christ has promised that he will not share in the banquet again until all the promises of God have been fulfilled, and the nations have been gathered in, *and you are seated at your place*. Your seat has been saved by Christ, who will host the eternal banquet: but the celebration can’t start without you; the banquet will not begin until all the guests have been seated and welcomed into the Father’s joy. And so, in this way, the Lord’s Supper is a glimpse and a foretaste of a promised future, an everlasting banquet, hosted by Christ.

And even as the Lord’s Supper teaches us about our past (which is our redemption in Christ) and our future (which is our hope in Christ), this meal is also—and always—about the present. In this meal—poised between our past and our future—we find strength for today. It can often happen—in the messiness of day-to-day life, with our problems and worries—that we lose sight of the grace and goodness of God, that we lose sight of what God has done and promises to do. Yet then we gather at this table—rekindling our memory and our hope—and at this table, we find the strength to live by faith today.

Once—nearly 20 years ago—Meredith and I went hiking around the Isle of Skye in Scotland. One place we hiked was the Quiraing, a famous outcropping of hills and rocks and cliffs. At one point, we were hiking along a narrow path with a sharp drop off to our left and rockface rising up to our right. Tired, after hiking for miles, we decided

to stop for bite to eat; we climbed up into a cleft in the rocks, and laid out a little meal: some Scottish shortbread, and mugs of tea poured from a thermos.

When we sat down to eat, we couldn't see much of anything anywhere, because the fog, the mist was so thick... From our little cleft in the rocks, we could barely see the path below. Yet then, while we were eating our simple meal—and only for a few minutes—the mist suddenly lifted, our view became clear, and these sweeping vistas opened up all around us. We could hardly see anything before—then suddenly, we could see everywhere: looking back, we could see where we had been; looking ahead, we could see where we were going. Suddenly we could see the long path bending behind us, and the long path leading ahead.

And there, midway in our journey, pausing between our beginning and our ending, between our past and our future, we were strengthened by a simple meal; and as we shared that meal, we had this glimpse that made the whole journey clear. Soon the mist returned, and we could no longer see much of anything; then we climbed back down to the path, and continued on our way; but as we resumed our journey, we now knew what lay ahead.

It was, in that sense, a lot like sharing together in the Lord's Supper. In this meal, the mist lifts away, and—ever so briefly—we see clearly: we see the past (which is our redemption); we see the future (which is our hope); and in between, we are strengthened to live by faith today. We come to this table, reminded that our past is shaped by Christ's redeeming love; we come to this table, sharing a foretaste of that banquet when Christ will gather us to himself; we come to this table, and find the grace and strength to continue in the journey ahead. Thank God. Amen.