

## **Devotions for the Week of June 2, 2019**

### **LARGE-PRINT**

#### **North East United Methodist Church**

#### **Message: *A Big, Big Table With Lots & Lots of Food***

**By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

### **Sunday, June 2, 2019**

#### **Read I Corinthians 11: 23-26.**

Laurence Stookey, in his book, Eucharist: Christ's Feast With The Church, speaking of Holy Communion, writes, *“Regardless of the name we give it, many Christians go reluctantly and glumly to that table, determined they will not – yes, dare not – enjoy it. It is something to be endured in order to fulfill Jesus’ command, ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’ And that is all! Yet when we come often enough and stay long enough, unwittingly the faithful find there a banquet whose richness and delight cannot be anticipated. The feast is intended to allure, then compel, and finally draw into true community those who share it.”*

*“Many Christians go reluctantly and glumly to that table...”* In fact, many Christians and church-goers skip Sundays when they know communion is going to be served. Why? Perhaps it is because there is something so sacred in this sacrament... coming to the table and taking the bread, the body of Christ, and dipping it into the juice, the blood of Christ, and knowing that over two thousand years ago Jesus invited His disciples to do this same act. Perhaps it is because people recognize, in the face of Christ, in the face of remembering the sacrifice, Christ's body being broken and blood being spilt, their own sin and shortcomings and sometimes that is very hard to

face. Perhaps it is because Christ shows up in this wonderful moment in the church in such a powerful way...and meeting Him at the altar scares some people.

I don't know why everyone doesn't jump at the opportunity to come to the table Christ has set for us, the table he prepared for us on that night He was betrayed. Georges Duhamel puts it this way, "*Always seek communion. It is the most precious thing men possess...Where there is communion, there is something that is more than human, there is surely something divine.*"

How do you approach communion? Do you come in awe of the fact that God, that Christ, Himself, has invited you to feast with Him? Do you allow that moment, the moment you feast with Christ, the moment you remember the sacrifice Christ made for you...do you allow this moment to change you, to transform you, to lift you up from depression, to bring an end to anger and grudges, to fill your heart with joy? Do you come "reluctantly and glumly to that table" or do you come with anticipation, expecting God to show up and touch your life? Do you come to the table truly recognizing all Christ has done for you? Christ gave up everything that you might come and dine at the table with Him.

### **Monday, June 3, 2019**

#### **Read I Corinthians 11: 27-32.**

Paul writes to the church in Corinth and tells them that they must "*examine themselves*" before they eat of the bread or drink from the cup, before they celebrate Holy Communion. As Elizabeth Seton writes, "*The heart preparing for communion should be as a crystal vial filled with*

*clear water in which the least note of uncleanness will not be seen.”*

Paul’s words to the church in Corinth have caused Christians, as Laurence Stookey writes, to “*engage in untold agony by examining themselves in advance of a Eucharistic celebration and asking, ‘Am I worthy to receive communion this week?’ Usually the answer has been ‘No!’ And logically so. Who is worthy of God’s grace? More to the point, who needs grace if worthiness exists? By definition, grace is only for the unworthy.*”

Yes, we are unworthy...But the word of God is clear... when we come to God with our “*unworthiness,*” our need for grace, God offers us forgiveness. John writes in I John 1:9, “*If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” In Job 11:13, it is written, “*Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear.*” Proverbs 28:13 states, “*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*”

So how do we prepare our heart for communion...how do we allow our heart to be, as Seton writes, “*as a crystal vial filled with clear water in which the least mote of uncleanness will not be seen?*” We confess our sins. We repent. We share openly and honestly with God where we have fallen, where we have messed up, where we have been self-centered. God promises to hear us; God promises us that we will be cleansed and made “*whiter than snow.*” We remember that the

communion itself does not magically take care of our sins; only faith in Christ, repentance, seeking God's forgiveness, does that. Communion is an "*outward sign of an inward grace*;" it is an outward expression of what God does for us when we come to Him with repentant hearts.

Take time tonight to pray...to lift your heart to God...and to be perfectly honest with Him. There is nothing God doesn't already know...open your heart and seek His wonderful grace and forgiveness. God will show you mercy and as Psalm 103:5 states, "*As far as the east is from the west, so far he [will] remove our transgressions from us.*" Thanks be to God!

## **Tuesday, June 4, 2019**

### **Read I Corinthians 10: 16-17.**

Paul reminds the church at Corinth that when we come to the table, when we receive communion, when we are reminded of Christ's great sacrifice for each of us, we become one. By sharing at the table of Christ, Paul writes, "*We become one body, even though there are many of us.*" Paul wrote in Ephesians 4, "*There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called...*" St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "*Form all together one choir, so that, with the symphony of your feelings and having all taken the tone of God, you may sing with one voice to the Father through Jesus Christ, that He may listen to you and know you from your chant as the canticle of His only Son.*"

When we come to the table, celebrating communion, we are reminded that we are members of God's family...each of us belong to God and therefore, each of us belong to one another. We are called to take care of each other, lift each other up, love

each other, and always remember that we are one because of our faith in Christ.

What can you do for your brothers and sisters in Christ this week? What can you do for those who also shared at the table of Christ this past Sunday? Is there anyone who you are angry with, disagree with, have had difficulty with, that you need to forgive? Are you causing division in the body of Christ or are you doing everything you can to build unity? Pray that God will show you where you can reach out to others, if there is anyone you need to forgive, and how you might build unity in the church by refusing to gossip, getting to know the stranger, and listening to others.

### **Wednesday, June 5, 2019**

#### **Read John 17: 20-26.**

Jesus' final prayer in the garden of Gethsemane had to do with us being ONE. Jesus prayed, "*That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you...*" Why? Why did Jesus pray that we might be one?

One reason was so the world would see our unity, our togetherness, our love for one another, and in seeing that love would "*believe that [God]...sent Jesus.*" George MacDonald once wrote, "*Division has done more to hide Christ from the view of men than all the infidelity that has ever been spoken.*" Laurence Stookey writes, "*The church has the potential to be a model of community for a fractured social order – one of the few models, it seems, and one with congregations literally in millions of places around the world. Thus positioned, the church has the potential to show society what community is and the power to make the world homesick for the community it has*

*too readily surrendered – or has never known. This potential will not be realized so long as the churches are at odds with each other...*”

When we come to the table in communion we are reminded that we are One in Christ...we are reminded that the world is watching us and that the world needs the food and “*living water*” we have discovered. As we eat the bread and drink from the cup, we are reminded that Christ made the ultimate sacrifice, giving up His life for us; therefore, we are called to do all we can to attract the world to the church that they may meet Christ, the one who died for them. We do this by loving one another and showing the world a clear picture of what life with Christ can be like. We do this by dying to self and living for one another because Christ loved US and THEM first.

How can you die to self, your desires and wants, putting others first, and creating a community of love...a community that attracts the world, not to us, but to Christ...to God...to eternity?

### **Thursday, June 6, 2019**

#### **Read Matthew 25: 31-46.**

Jesus teaches His disciples that one day the King will say to those who have served, who have believed, who have reached out...”*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.*” Our inheritance.

The kingdom prepared since the creation. The heavenly banquet. As Stookey writes, “*Feasting with Christ on earth is done, as we have seen, in anticipation of feasting with Christ in*

heaven.” Revelation 19 declares, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

One day we will feast at a “*heavenly banquet.*” Wow! What an awesome picture...a picture that is beyond our imagination. Paul writes in I Corinthians 2:9, “*What God has planned for people who love him is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds!*”

When we come forward on a Sunday morning and receive communion, we look forward to the day that we will feast at a “*heavenly banquet.*” We are reminded that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. As a gentleman once told me as he lay in the hospital and I said to him, “*You’re having a rough day... aren’t you?*” ...He replied, “*Yea...but there are better days ahead.*”

There are better days ahead and we are reminded of that whenever we take communion together. We are reminded that Christ died for us and He died for us so we could spend eternity with Him, so we could feast at a heavenly banquet (communion is only a slight glimpse of what is to come).

Take time tonight to reflect on eternity, on heaven, on the heavenly banquet, the Holy City. Open your eyes and your heart to what awaits all who believe in Jesus Christ.

### **Friday, June 7, 2019**

#### **Read I Corinthians 11: 23-26.**

Paul says, that when we share in communion together, we “*proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*” Stookey writes, “*It must also be said that “until he comes” is for Paul a very hopeful phrase – indeed an invigorating one. The Eucharist is not a holding operation in which Christians engage to keep*

*from being bored while they wait for something else to happen...but rather a divinely given increase of faith – faith that God controls the future and that the saving ministry of Jesus on earth is but the beginning of God’s great good news.”*

Just the beginning. “*Until he comes...*” When we take communion we remember, we stand up and stand firm in our faith...we proclaim faith in Jesus Christ...and we look forward, through time, preparing ourselves, our hearts, our lives, for His return. What a day that will be!

How can you prepare for His return? If you knew Christ was coming back next week, what would you do differently? What would you seek forgiveness for? How would you serve others? How would you prepare to meet Him?

We don’t know when He will return so let us prepare...let us, as we take communion, be reminded, that we are to get ready and help as many others as we can get ready to meet Jesus face to face. I can only imagine what that day will be like.

### **Saturday, June 8, 2019**

*It’s a big, big house...with lots and lots of rooms...*

*A big, big table...with lots and lots of food...*

*A big, big yard...where we can play football...*

*A big, big house...It is my Father’s house.*

-Audio Adrenaline

Take time to pray, to simply sit with God for a half-hour today. Give God thanks for all God has done for you, for the “*big, big table*” God invites you to, and for your adoption as a



child of God, allowing you to one day enter into your “*Father’s house.*”

**Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!!!**



**Akiane Kramarik – *Prince of Peace*  
Painted at Age 8**



**Akiane Kramarik - *Supreme Sanctuary*  
Painted at Age 11**