

1) COMMUNION MEDITATION:

"Christian Unity Around the Lord's Table"

Scripture: Eph 2:11-22

Text, vs 16: "One body through the cross"

INTRODUCTION: Sometimes this theme in Ephesians about the conflict between the Jews and the Gentiles has little appeal to the modern reader.

But these verses can be made applicable to the problem of Christian unity as we face it today.

For example, Can Christians of different races and of different denominations have tablefellowship in the Lord's Supper?

The outstanding symbol of disunity among Christians today is the fact that they do not sit down together at this Table of the Lord. (cont.)

I. Jew And Gentile United in the Church.

Gal. 3:28, no racial or social boundary in Christ.

II. Christian Unity Today Must Overcome Two Forms of disunity

1. Sectarianism

(Illustration of Alexander Whyte)

2. Racism, Gal. 3:28 "no such thing as Jew & Greek, slave & freeman, male & female" but all one person in Christ.

II. Evidence of Unity

1. In Combat

2. On the Mission Fields

3. Unity in the Holy Spirit

"ESPRIT DE CORPS" -- "SPIRIT OF THE BODY"

Military unit or orgn.

A fraternal lodge

A communist cell

A labor organization

A school or college

In the O.T. the Jews felt they were the chosen people of God (Deut 14:2). This was not all bad.

This sense of privilege sustained them.

A sense of privilege ought to be a possession of every Christian also. It is a great loss for Christians to lose this awareness of corporate chosen sainthood, and of destiny under God.

III. cont- next page/sheet

III.2. Political. . . .

The word "sacrament" means the oath of loyalty. The word comes from the old Roman days when loyal citizen swore the oath of allegiance to the Emperor. They vowed unswerving obedience to his leadership. That is the meaning of the word "sacrament", and it is good to keep that meaning in mind. When we observe this sacrament we vow absolute loyalty to Christ as our Lord of Lords. We commit ourselves to his way of life, to his teachings, to His call and purpose for us.

Such commitment is the one thing that seems lacking among our present generation. Everything is uncommitted, free, unrestrained, and individualized to the extreme. Yet in the commonwealth of Christ Christians are fellow-citizens of the Kingdom of God, and as such are loyally committed to Christ as King and Ruler of our lives.

This explains how Christians of different political ideologies have a warm unity in Christ which transcends all narrow nationalism

III (Cont) ~~Two~~ Further evidences of unity are found in the metaphors used as pictures of the church:

1. Physiological - "the body" (1E23, and 2:16 "One body through the cross"

2. Political - the commonwealth, fellow-citizens, the "sacrament" 2:12,19

3. Architectural - a holy temple, building, 2:21-22.

For over 200 years the Gentile Christian groups around the Mediterranean had no houses of worship.

They worshiped in private homes.

The Christian Congregation itself was God's temple.

This paradox of the church as a people-temple needs recovery in every age.

The church of Christ is first of all a spiritual and a social, and not an architectural, creation.

It is a people-body, a hard, and sometimes a hard-
~~and~~ unpleasant thing, human, sinful, made up of men and ^{women} whom we may not like.

But such a group of Christians is literally a habitation of God through the Spirit.

It is a holy temple in the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to a PEOPLE

and not to a collection of bricks and stones.

Men can build temples and shrines & cathedrals.

But only the Holy Spirit can build a Christian church.

A relationship founded on divine forgiveness is supernatural. It is a miracle.

Two or three humble Christians,

gathered together in the name of Christ,

sharing together the symbols of his broken body and shed blood,

knit together by the bond of forgiving love,

are a wonder before which even the angels of heaven stand in awe.

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON:

WE THANK THEE, O LORD, FOR THIS (WORLD) COMMUNION SUNDAY
TODAY AS ON NO OTHER DAY WE FEEL THE KINSHIP DEEPER
THAN BLOOD BROTHERHOOD THAT BINDS US TO ALL OTHERS
IN THE WORLD WHO CALL UPON THE NAME OF CHRIST.

IT IS MARVELOUS TO US THAT THAT LITTLE FELLOWSHIP
OF THE UPPER ROOM IS NOW A GREAT BODY OF MILLIONS
IN EVERY LAND UNDER THE SUN.

LET THE BREAD AND THE CUP OFFERED (THROUGHOUT THE WORLD)
THIS DAY BE RECEIVED AS FROM HIS OWN PIERCED HANDS,
AND IN RECEIVING THESE SYMBOLS INTO OUR BODIES GRANT
THAT WE MAY TRULY RECEIVE CHRIST INTO OUR SOULS.
IN HIS NAME WE PRAY. AMEN.

July 1969 - COCEC, Ch. Fb. Ord -
March 1979 - WAC mem. 2 Centurion Chapel, Ft. Meade
Oct. 6, 1974 - Bangkok Chapel Center, Thailand

INTRODUCTION (CONT)

We say in the Apostles Creed, "I believe in the communion of Saints; yet we do not practice the communion of saints..

The Lord's Supper, which should be the Christian's dramatic demonstration of unity,

as walled Christian brother from brother for scores of generations and continues to do so. Unity has become picayunity.

We debate about whether to use individual glasses or a common cup.

We differ about the questions of "How often to observe it?"

and "How to observe it"

and "Who should observe it?"

and whether to stay in the pew or go to the altar rail?--

and whether to use wine or grape juice?--

and whether the elements become actual flesh and blood

or merely symbolize the Lords body and blood--

(which in no way changes the facts in any case).

Great controversies have developed over whether to call the observance a Sacrament, or Holy Communion, *Eucharist*, or The Lord's Supper,--

(as if the name really makes that much difference).

We have forgotten our need to identify ourselves with the Lord, and to commune in truth with Him,

and to do it together.

This is a family-style meal;

for this is a Christian family.

We have made it into a spiritual drive-in restaurant,

where we never get out of our shells,

never relate to the rest of the family

and particularly not to our religious in-laws.

II.1. Sectarianism

Alexander Whyte had supreme confidence in the power of the Lord's Supper to transform lives.

He felt that those who partook of it sincerely received into themselves the very life-blood and self-sacrificial spirit of the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world.

During a bitter controversy in Scotland, a controversy which threatened to split the church, he made this appeal:

"In the Lord's name, let the table be spread and let the seat at the head of the table be left empty to the eye of sense, but filled to the eye of faith & love, and as we eat and drink, let us hear him say, as he said in the Upper Room, 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.'"

They agreed and sat down together at the Lord's table. A feeling of peace and harmony replaced hatred and strife, and the newspaper reporters waiting at the door told with wonder how those who had entered as enemies came out as friends.