

4-8-18

Matthew 26: 26-30, 28: 16-20

First Communion

I hope that all of you had a wonderful celebration of Jesus Resurrection last Sunday on Easter. Just a quick show of hands – how many of you had either ham or eggs to eat on Easter Sunday? Quite a few of you.

While the fourth graders were studying what Holy Communion is (during Lent) we had a discussion one day about why food is such an important part of celebrations and what kind of food people have a celebrations. Some of the fourth graders talked about having Turkey and Cranberries on Thanksgiving or having cake on their birthday. One of the fourth graders mentioned that his family makes pierogis for Christmas. If you don't know what pierogis are they are sort of a filled dumpling that you can put meat and potatoes in or other things and then boil them or fry them up.

I just realized myself last Easter Sunday that there is a special dish that my Mom makes for every holiday at her house. It is called Raspberry Rice Salad, but don't let the name fool you! It is not really a salad. It is a creamy, rich, delicious,

rice pudding with a raspberry sauce on top. And it only gets made on special occasions because it is a ten step process that dirties every mixing bowl and kettle in the house before it is ready. It takes my Mom a lot of time and energy to make this dish which is what in part makes it so special.

The Last Supper, which is another name that we have for Holy Communion, is also a very special meal. Now it isn't special because it took so long to cook or because it dirtied every dish in the house. IT is special because in this meal we receive gifts that are even better than a sweet rice pudding. We receive forgiveness for our sins, love from God to us, and the promise of eternal life. Because as Martin Luther wrote wherever there is forgiveness of sins there is also live and salvation. It is also special because it took Jesus a lot of time, energy and suffering to die on the cross for our sins and in this meal he offers us forgiveness.

This meal is called a sacrament. And if you want to know what a sacrament is I am going to ask you to put your detective hat on and do what we call a Sacrament Scene Investigation. Question 1) Is it something Jesus commanded us to do? Jesus said, "Take and eat this is my body and this is my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins." Question 2) Does it use a physical element something

we can see, touch, and sometimes taste? Yes the bread and wine. Question 3

Does it give us God's grace, love and forgiveness. Yes it does.

We could also do this Sacrament Scene Investigation and find out that Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. The physical element we can see and touch in baptism is water. And when we learn to obey everything Jesus has commanded we learn a whole lot about the grace, love and forgiveness that God offers us. So in the Lutheran Church both Communion and Baptism are sacraments.

Now for those of you who are adults, I want you to think back to when you were a kid and a parent or grandparent was tucking you in at night. Kids you can think back to last night or last week so this should be easier for you! Remember when someone tucked you in and then leaned over and said, "Goodnight. I love kids." Has that happened to you? How did that make you feel?

Usually when a parent or a grandparent tuck a kid in they say I love you, not I love kids. They are very specific. Jesus is also very specific. Jesus does more than love people. Jesus loves you. Jesus does more than give his body and blood for people. Jesus gives them for you.

Alright now I want you to look at the five fingers on your right hand and think of the names of five people you love. When you have them in your head raise your hand. Now I want you to look at the five fingers on your left hand and think of the names of five people that you maybe don't like so much. It might be somebody at work, or at school, or someone you see on the TV. When you have thought of those five people raise your left hand. Jesus loves all of the people on both of these hands and he gave his body and blood for all of them.

I sometimes read a blog called scarrymommy.com. One particular post told about a mom leading a group of 25 Sunday school kids into the sanctuary with another teacher. She talked about the sanctuary being the house of God and then they were all supposed to be silent for a few minutes. In the quiet the other Sunday School teacher nudged her. The Mom looked down and a small boy was looking very upset. "Do you have a question she asked him?"

He said, "Is this when God shows up?"

"That might be the best question ever let's share it with our friends," she said.

Everyone was silent and then she said, "Remember the cartoon of How the Grinch

Stole Christmas? Remember when his heart grew three sizes bigger? When I feel my heart grow bigger that is when I know that God has shown up.”

Are you at church this morning waiting for God to show up?

I don't know if people's hearts have grown unless they tell me, but sometimes when people come forward for communion and I see their eyes. I suspect that their heart is growing because in communion God shows up!

I know that there are some days for all of us when Jesus feels very close when we pray or sing or read the Bible. I also know that there are some days when no matter how much we pray or read the Bible Jesus feels very far away, very distant.

The Good News is that in communion Jesus shows up every single time and we can taste his love for us in the bread and the wine.

Gracious God, as we receive the body and the blood of your son Jesus Christ today help us to be lifted up and encourage by the gifts you give us in this meal. Love, forgiveness of sins, life for today and life forever. Thank you for all of these gifts. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN.