

Sermon followed by Service

September 5, 2021

Acts 2:42-47

It's my fault. This whole COVID mess that's keeping people at home, away from church - it's my fault. It goes back to the 1970s, Sunday mornings in the 1970s. In the summertime, after the ushers would usher us out of church, my brothers and I would stand around for a couple minutes and then make a beeline for the door and hunt down the car. Then we'd stand around the car thinking that would force Mom and Dad into hurrying to take us home. It didn't work. I don't think it ever worked. So we, or some one of us, would head back in and make impatient faces and sounds thinking that would force Mom and Dad into hurrying to take us home. That didn't work either. In the wintertime, after church, Mom and Dad would send us to Sunday School while they went to Bible Class. When my brother and I thought we already knew all they were teaching in Sunday School, Dad brought us back upstairs into church for Adult Bible Study. We weren't getting out and getting home on our terms, no way, no how.

Why were we so eager to get out and go home? Looking back, I don't know. It might have been the couch, a book, a TV show, the hope of playing or doing nothing. Whatever it was, we sure got worked up, we sure were in a hurry to get out of church and get home to nothing, to do chores or homework we didn't want to do, like whatever chores or homework or nothing we had going at home was more important than anything that could be happening at church. Or maybe it wasn't so much about getting home to nothing, as it was about getting out of church. Getting away so we didn't have to deal with people we didn't know; getting away so we didn't have to deal with people we did know; getting away so we could just do our own thing, our own nothing.

Now it's payback time. After years of trying to get away, I'm here saying the opposite - get together. After years of trying to get away to chase after nothing, I'm here saying the opposite - sit back, relax, let's soak in God's grace for a while more. And now with COVID, while I'm saying God's People Gather, COVID is saying God's People Scatter. I had it coming, didn't I?

Scattering, getting out and getting away wasn't in Mom and Dad's plan. They wanted to stick around. They wanted to go to Bible Study. They wanted to catch up with those people I didn't know, and didn't care to know. Why? The answer was in our first lesson - it's what God's people do. God's people love to connect with God, not just with a quick thought or feeling, but by listening to him deeply. God's people love to connect with God's family, again, not just with a quick thought or feeling, but by getting together with each other to care for each other. We've talked about that these past few weeks. God's people gather to worship together. God's people gather to encourage each other

together. God's people gather to serve each other together. We see all that in our lesson today. But there's something else there we haven't talked about yet - the connecting power of bread.

We could talk about the connecting power of bread and picnics. We could talk about the connecting power of bread downstairs after church before Family Bible Hour. In the early church we see God's people take it up a notch. They didn't just get together for the annual church picnic. They didn't just get together for weekly coffee in the church basement. They invited each other into their homes to be a family connecting in Christ. Maybe with this COVID-time, this isn't the right time for that. Or maybe with this COVID-time and some beautiful fall days, this is the perfect time for us to be inviting each other - not just old friends and family, but inviting new friends and family over for some snacks or maybe even some sausages in the back yard.

I like that idea. It's not where we're going in our sermon, but I like that idea. Where we're going in our lesson is a different bread connection, the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper. In the first verse of our lesson, Luke tells us how the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Bible Study), to the fellowship (worship), to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. The way "the breaking of bread" is tucked in with Bible Study, worship, and prayer sure seems to suggest Luke isn't just talking about a snack for the body, but the Lord's Supper for the soul.

What's so special about the Lord's Supper? It's not the taste, is it? It's the connections. In this COVID-time when so many people are hungering and thirsting for some real connections, the Lord's Supper comes with just the right recipe. What do we have? Bread, thin wafers of unleavened bread. Wine, little cups of grape wine. But that's not all we have here. The bread is connected with the body of Christ; the wine is connected with the blood of Christ. Where do we get such an idea? Jesus says so: "**Take eat, this is my body. Take drink, this is my blood.**" The Apostle Paul puts it this way: "**Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation, a communion in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread that we break a participation, a communion, in the body of Christ?**" Chew on those connections - bread connected with the body of Christ; wine connected with the blood of Christ. In the Lord's Supper we are connected with Jesus Christ!

This isn't just some make-believe connection to make us feel good. This is the real presence, power, and promise of Jesus! Think of when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper, Maundy Thursday, just hours before he was arrested and then crucified. When all hell was about to break loose against Jesus, when all hell was about to break out around the disciples, Jesus knew what his disciples would need. Jesus knew what his church - that's us - would need "to hold it together." And so Jesus gives us himself - "I'm here for you. And no matter how hell is breaking out around you and even against

you - I'm here for you." And, yes, for those times when all hell is breaking out all around you, and your conscience is eating at you, and you're kicking yourself for the way you've treated Jesus, the way you've run from Jesus, Jesus looks to you, reaches out to you, and says: **"My blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of your sins."** Here, no matter what the world thinks of you, no matter what you think of you, no matter what you've said or done, here you get to savor Jesus' connecting promise: "here you are forgiven!" Here, no matter how hell is breaking out, here no matter how this world is tearing apart, here you get to savor a taste of heaven, a connection to heaven to hold you together, because here Jesus promises: "I'm here for you."

As we relish our connection with Jesus, he connects us with each other - forgiveness wiping away what would divide us, our closeness to him bringing us close to each other. Sadly, we're not always real good at nurturing those connections. It's so easy to get wrapped up in ourselves and those we're tight with, that we neglect our connections with those outside our circle of family and friends. It can take some work, some inconvenience, it can mean leaving our comfort zone (probably no more than Jesus did), to tighten and strengthen the connections Jesus gives us. That's what we've been talking about these past weeks. God's People Gather Together to Worship Together. God's People Gather Together to Encourage Each Other. God's People Gather Together to Serve Each Other. And today our together is tightened and strengthened - God's People Gather Together to Commune Together, Together with Jesus! Amen.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Masked

With the renewed mask mandate across Illinois, we now offer masked worship - Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 9. If you have questions, please ask!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.
- Please join us after Sunday service for fellowship and Family Bible Hour.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- Children's worship bulletins and "church bags" (with paper, colors, and Bible story books) are available from an usher.
- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

September 4 & 5, 2021

Service of Word & Sacrament

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... in so many homes, family meals have gone the way of 8-track and cassette tapes.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... our Lord gathers us for his family meal, and what does he serve up? Himself!

OPENING HYMN

"Blessed Jesus, at Your Word"

Hymn 221

(v. 1-3)

Blessed Jesus, at your Word We are gathered all to hear you.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred Now to seek and love and fear you,
By your teachings, sweet and holy, Drawn from earth to love you solely.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight Lie in deepest darkness shrouded
Till your Spirit breaks our night With the beams of truth unclouded.
You alone to God can win us; You must work all good within us.

Gracious Savior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God proceeding,
Open now our heart and mind; Help us by your Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry your people raises; Hear and bless our prayers and praises.

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

+ CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

- M: God invites us to come into his presence and worship him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask him to forgive us.
- C: **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**
- M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.
- C: **Amen.**

+ PRAYER AND PRAISE +

LORD, HAVE MERCY

- M: For all that we need in life and for the wisdom to use all your gifts with gratitude and joy, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C: **Lord, have mercy.**
- M: For the steadfast assurance that nothing can separate us from your love and for the courage to stand firm against the assaults of Satan and every evil, hear our prayer, O Christ.
- C: **Christ, have mercy.**
- M: For the well-being of your holy Church in all the world and for those who offer here their worship and praise, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C: **Lord, have mercy.**
- M: Merciful God, maker and preserver of life, uphold us by your power and keep us in your tender care:
- C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, in the sacrament of Holy Communion you give us your true body and your true blood as a remembrance of your suffering and death on the cross. Grant us so firmly to believe your words and promise that we may always partake of this sacrament to our eternal good; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

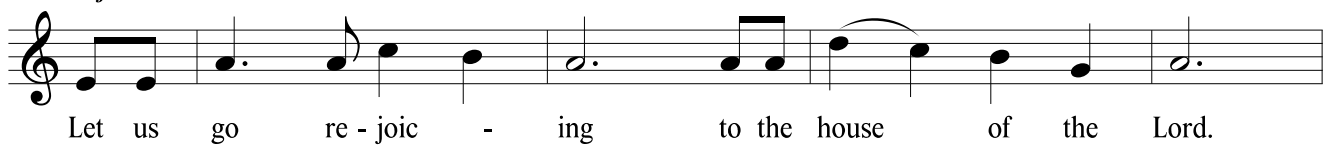
Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

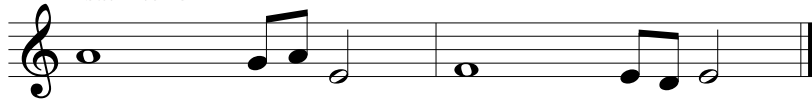
They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

PSALM 84 (CW)

Refrain



Psalm tone



How lovely is your `dwelling place,*
O LORD Al`mighty!

My soul yearns, `even faints,*
For the courts `of the LORD.

Blessed are those who dwell `in your house;*
They are ever `praising you. *Refrain*

Better is one day `in your courts*
Than a thousand `elsewhere;

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house `of my God*
Than dwell in the tents of the `wicked.

O LORD Al`mighty,*
Blessed are they who `trust in you.

Glory be to the Father and `to the Son*
And to the Holy `Spirit,
As it was in the be`ginning,*
Is now, and will be forever. `Amen. *Refrain*

SECOND LESSON

1 Corinthians 11:17-32

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.

No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Alleluia.

(1 Corinthians 11:26)

GOSPEL LESSON

John 13:1-5, 12-17

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

HYMN

"O Lord, We Praise You"

Hymn 317

O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and adore you,
In thanksgiving bow before you.

Here with your body and your blood you nourish
Our weak souls that they may flourish.

O Lord, have mercy! May your body, Lord, born of Mary,
That our sins and sorrows did carry, And your blood for us plead
In all trial, fear, and need: O Lord, have mercy!

Your holy body into death was given, Life to win for us in heaven.
No greater love than this to you could bind us;
May this feast of that remind us!

O Lord, have mercy! Lord, your love and kindness did move you;
Let your supper move us to love you. All our debt you have paid;
Peace with God once more is made. O Lord, have mercy!

May God bestow on us his grace and favor
To please him with our behavior
And live together here in love and union, Cherishing our blest communion.
O Lord, have mercy! Let not your good Spirit forsake us;
Grant that heav'nly-minded he make us. Give your Church, Lord, to see
Days of peace and unity. O Lord, have mercy!

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

(Before and after Communion prayers are found in *Christian Worship*, page 11.)

M: The Lord be with you.



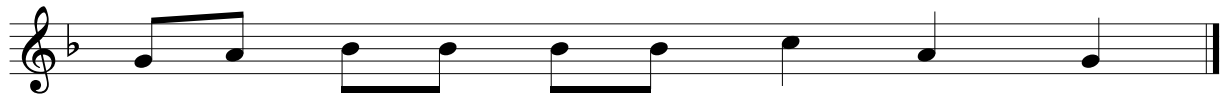
And al - so with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.



We lift them up to the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.



It is right to give him thanks and praise.

M: Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He sends the Holy Spirit to testify that we are his children and to strengthen us when we are weak. Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory for ever and ever.

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.



C: A - men.

O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD



C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



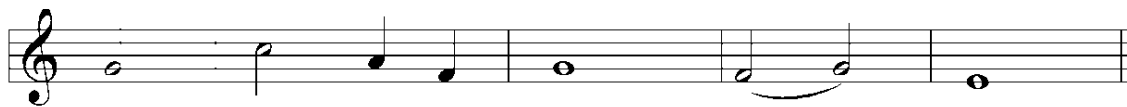
world; have mer-cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you



take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world; grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

CLOSING PRAYER

M: Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”
Hymn 318

Sent forth by God’s blessing, Our true faith confessing,
The people of God from his dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended; Oh, be now extended
The fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of his teaching, Receptive souls reaching,
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.
His grace did invite us; His love shall unite us
To work for God’s kingdom and answer his call.

With praise and thanksgiving, To God ever living,
The tasks of our ev'ry-day life we will face.
Our faith ever sharing, In love ever caring,
Embracing his children of each tribe and race.
With your feast you feed us; With your light now lead us;
Unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living With praise and thanksgiving
Give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

OFFERING

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