

Sacred Rhythms: Communion

John 6:53-60; Luke 22:14-20; John 6:58; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Acts 2:42-47; Revelation 19:6-9

Habits vs Rhythms: Habits are what we do automatically. Rhythms are what we do intentionally with meaning and purpose. Sacred rhythms are not just religious routines. They're invitations to remember, recenter, and realign our hearts with God's.

Most people have the habit of eating a few times a day. It helps us stay alive, but if you intentionally share a meal with others, it can become a rhythm as a time where you connect with others, give thanks, and celebrate life. Sharing a meal with others is intimate and powerful. It deepens relationships and nourishes new ones. It takes something that we have to do to stay alive and gives it purpose and meaning. Communion is meant to be like this.

The Lord's Supper From the Beginning: The theme of God inviting humanity to His table runs through the entire Biblical story. In Genesis, God invites Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Life. This was a symbol of sharing in His life and goodness. He invites them to feast on His Wisdom.

Adam and Eve rejected that invitation by eating from the DIY Tree (Tree of Self). Because of this, they were cut off from the Tree of Life (direct fellowship with God). From that moment, the story of Scripture becomes a story of God making a way for humanity to come back to the table and back to life with Him.

Around 4,000ish years after Adam and Eve got kicked out of the Garden, Jesus invited His followers to join Him for a meal they didn't expect. Read John 6:53-60. Can you blame them for questioning Him at this point?

I love a good metaphor, but I am also a pretty literal person. Most of my life I have struggled to wrap my head around communion. It's a hard teaching to hear and even harder to fully understand. Jesus isn't talking about cannibalism, He is giving an invitation to participate in His divine life.

It starts to come together a bit more at the Last Supper that Jesus shared with His disciples. Read Luke 22:14-15. This was not just any meal. Passover was an established rhythm of the Jewish faith. It was a time of remembering when God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12). Specifically, they were remembering when God had told Moses to tell all of the Israelites to slaughter a lamb (without blemish), roast its meat to eat with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and to spread some of its blood on the sides and tops of their doors to show their obedience to God's instruction. Jesus is celebrating this sacred Jewish festival with His disciples where they are remembering God's provision, protection, and salvation.

Read Luke 22:16-20. This new covenant established through the blood of Christ made a way for humanity to come back to the table. At the Cross, Jesus became the new Tree of Life. His broken body is lifted up on the wood of the cross. His blood flows like the life-giving sap of that eternal tree. Through Him Humanity is invited once again to eat and live. Read John 6:58.

The Lord's Supper Polluted: But like most things, this rhythm that Jesus established quickly became polluted by human ambition. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth admonishing them for the way that they were practicing the sacred rhythm of communion. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The Corinthian believers had turned Communion into an empty ritual

(habit). It was a selfish banquet where the wealthy arrived early and ate first. The poor were left out. Paul told them that they were not eating the Lord's Supper.

Communion was practiced very differently then than it is now. It was a meal that was meant to be shared together in equality with all believers.

Greek Lesson: There are 2 Greek words closely related to Communion. *Eucharisteo* (or Eucharist) means "to give thanks" or "to be thankful". It is used in the New Testament to highlight the connection between grace, joy, and gratitude.

Koinonia means "holding something in common", "sharing", or "partnership". It implies a deep, mutual sharing and partnership among a community of people who are "holding lives in common". In the New Testament, it is used to describe the fellowship among believers that is rooted in their shared faith in Christ. It goes beyond mere socializing to include spiritual, social, and material generosity towards one another. Other words that are connected to *koinonia* are contribution, participation, and communion.

The Lord's Supper in the Early Church: Read Acts 2:42-47. This is the standard of fellowship that communion is supposed to reflect. It is the image of taking part and sharing in the Lord's Supper...equality, surrender, joy, generosity.

Paul is warning the Corinthians that "*Whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on themselves*" (v.29). He is not trying to scare them away but is calling them to wake up! The body of Jesus was broken for us, ALL of us, and together we form the body of Christ (the Church). When we share food and fellowship, we reflect the heart of God. The table we are invited to is not just a place of nourishment, but it's a place where we can encounter the presence of Jesus together.

How Should We Come to the Table?: Who should take communion? It is for those who have accepted Jesus' invitation to share in His life. It is not about being perfect. It's about being willing to participate. You don't have to have it all together. You just have to come hungry for Him.

When should you take communion? Any time that the Church gathers in His name we can remember and participate. It is less about what goes in your mouth and more about what is in your heart. Family dinnertime, lunch with a fellow believer, or a church service can be a time of communion.

It's not the frequency that matters but the focus. Before you come to the table, take time to pause and examine your heart. Is there division, pride, bitterness? Am I aware of Christ's sacrifice and my need for grace? Am I recognizing the unity of the body (my brothers and sisters)?

How do we keep Communion from becoming a hollow habit? Habits can dull your heart while rhythms restore your heart. Communion is a sacred rhythm that keeps us centered on Christ and His sacrifice, His presence, and His promise to return.

Each time we take communion, we are:

- Looking back to the Cross
 - The New Tree of Life
- Looking around at the body of Christ
 - Recognizing our unity in Him
- Looking ahead to the feast that's coming

- The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

The Future Lord's Supper: Communion is a sacred rhythm that keeps our lives in sync with eternity. In Revelation, John is given a vision of what will happen when Jesus returns. After the fall of Babylon (Evil) he wrote:) *“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud pelts of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reign. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.) Then the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’”* (Revelation 19:6-9)

Summary: Communion is so much more than eating a cracker and drinking some grape juice. It represents the unity and fellowship of the body of Christ, the body of Jesus that was broken for our spiritual healing, and the blood of Jesus - the perfect Lamb - that bought our salvation. It connects us to God's story of redemption - from Genesis to Revelation.

From the beginning to end, God's rhythm has been the same. He invites us to His table to share in His life. At the first table in Eden, we turned away. At the table of the Cross, Christ turned toward us. At the final table in eternity, we will sit down at the table with Him forever.

Every time we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are practicing the rhythm of heaven: Loving God, Loving others, and remembering that our story ends in a feast.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between a habit and a rhythm? Is communion a habit or a rhythm for you?
- The teaching of communion can seem weird and hard to process. In John 6:53-60, Jesus was saying that his life has to become our own. He is speaking about spiritually taking Him in, not physically.
 - How did the people hearing this teaching react?
 - How do you process it?
- Taking communion won't save you. Drinking the juice won't make Jesus live inside you. It is a way of remembering and refocusing ourselves upon Jesus's sacrifice and our need for Him.
 - Before partaking in communion, what should our attitude be?
 - Where should our focus be?