

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

October 25, 2020

Lesson 8

One With Christ and One Another

Luke 22:14-20

By F. Belton Joyner

Sneak a look at the verses that follow today's text. In Luke 22:21-23, Jesus says someone is going to betray Him. In verse 24, the disciples start arguing about which one was the greatest. In verse 34, Jesus predicts that Peter will betray Him. In verse 45, he finds the disciples sleeping, overcome with grief. In verses 47-48, Judas betrays Jesus. In verse 50, one of the disciples turns to violence. In verses 54-61, Peter denies Jesus three times.

Reading all these, I am left to wonder: How did we ever come to think that being in covenant with Jesus was going to be a smooth, easy, uncomplicated thing?

In today's text, Jesus remembers the ways in which blood (a signal of life) was used by Moses to mark God's covenant (Exodus 24:8) and points again to what the prophet Zechariah said about the blood that marks Israel's covenant with God (Zechariah 9:11). The new covenant is to be signed with the blood of Jesus himself (Luke 22:20). He is really present when we come to the Table to partake of his body and blood. When we come to the Communion Table, we are in fellowship not only with those who gather there with us; we are also holding hands with Moses and Joshua and Ezra and with our Lord himself.

The apostle Paul got upset because some in the Corinthian church abused the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-22). In Corinth, Holy Communion was part of a larger banquet and some of the wealthier folks were stuffing themselves before the poorer members even got to the gathering. Paul even saw the Lord's Table as a social justice issue! The covenant we have in Christ Jesus speaks to how we get along with one another. As the old saying reminds us, "The ground at the foot of the cross is level."

Jesus took the unleavened bread of Passover (Luke 22:19); it points back to how the Israelites had to rush away from Egypt, not even having time for their bread to rise (Exodus 12:39). In this way, our Lord linked God's saving covenant to the continuing story of God's prevenient grace seeking and saving and sending a people. May it be so.

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Come, Lord Jesus, meet us again as we gather in Your name.”

F. Belton Joyner is a retired elder in the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. He has served in a variety of local church and connectional responsibilities. His publications range from church school curriculum to theology popularization to mystery novels. He has written these weekly thoughts on the lessons in Adult Bible Studies for his conference newsletter since December 2001. They are printed here with permission.