

“This is my body” – a COVID-19 Communion...

By pastor Jerry

The phone rang and I inwardly groaned at the caller-id. I hate it when I do that. I’ve experienced God’s blessing at unexpected times from unexpected people. Perhaps, you have, too. Someone once quipped: “You’re one of two kinds of people. The one people are happy to see come or the one people are happy to see go.” I’m sure I’m both to many people.

The phone call was about ruffled feathers, it usually was. Someone had said that communion had to be “done” by an ordained elder and my young friend was new in the ordination process. Of course we believe in “apostolic succession” – not in the sense that pope Francis is the direct descendent of the apostle Peter but, as Elijah passed down the Lord’s blessing to Elisha so, too, has the authority of Christ been passed down to the generations.

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26, For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.” For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.*

I hope those words sound comforting and familiar. We say them when we share in communion whether once a month, weekly, or when a pastor visits your home or hospital bed. But, we fuss over who can “do it” or what kind of bread and juice to use. The speaker in 1 Corinthians 11 is the apostle Paul, not Peter. He’s a trained Pharisee who’s encountered the risen Christ. Today that would make him a seminary trained, born again, non-ordained pastor.

Maybe, just maybe, we need a few more like Paul today – ones who’ve had a “Jesus Encounter” and, while their education informs their faith, Christ is the author and perfecter of it. Not my idea – check out Hebrews 12:1-2, “Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith...”

Why is this important now when COVID-19 is disrupting so many lives? Because it need not disrupt our witness to the power of Christ – His death and resurrection – in Holy Communion, not a contentious ritual. My friends in isolation read 1 Corinthians 11 and ask our Lord to bless your cracker and milk, to make them BE the body and blood of Christ for you. And, God will. To some, I’m a heretic; to others, a hero. Either way JESUS is the Christ, and WE are the great cloud witnessing to God’s great grace.