

## **Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 19, 2012**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I read this week of wisdom—that it is the ability to discern between the real goods and the shiny fakes. That writer went on that among the very best of the really good things is the goodness of God. And so true wisdom might be the ability to see the goodness of God wherever it is to be found in our lives. Does not wisdom flow from the goodness of God? Does it not give us courage to live life filled with hope?

Wine and bread are made with crushed grain and grapes. A bit of fermentation leaves the ingredients transformed into a new creation. Bread is common, wine not so much—a bit of a reminder that life is more than hard work and routine—but something to celebrate. In combining the common and the special, communion takes all of life, in its mystery, complexity, goodness, uncertainty, suffering—all of it is taken in and embraced in the gifts offered by Jesus Christ. Clearly, not everything is good, but everything is embraced.

When we take in Christ's body and blood, when we hear the gospel of grace and her call to discipleship, when we listen to Jesus' words, to the wisdom of the Ages—a meal for those who seek it, when we take in Christ's body and blood, we are renewed, refreshed, made new, brought back to life from death's grasp. Spiritual death threatens to drown us in boredom and sorrow, with the temptation to take care of ourselves and crush those who threaten us in any way. Such a life might feel safe, but it is death because it has lost the divine goodness. Those who have protected themselves from all harm, those who are perfectly safe will never know the strength of love. Only bitterness, fear, and loneliness. Here is the wisdom of mercy which has discovered the joy of second chances and true freedom over safety and control.

The Spirit of God is up to something new and life-giving when Jesus says, “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. . . The one who eats this bread will live forever.”

When we eat something, it becomes part of us. If we accept the words, actions, love and mercy of Jesus, take them into the core of our being, our very essence, then we will have found life and hope without end. It's rather simple, if we listen to what Jesus says in the Gospels. If we sit with the prophets and wisdom writers of the Hebrew Bible. If we walk with the apostles of the New Testament.

It's not about praying a correct prayer or believing the right things about God, or fleeing from wrong beliefs. Beliefs about God are things of the head which don't necessarily translate peace into our lives.

“The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh...The one who eats of this bread will live forever.” Wisdom is mercy which gives second chances. I'm not talking about foolishness and unnecessarily endangering ourselves or others. But, discipleship is not defensive. Love takes the first step toward healthy compromise. It forsakes, day after day, unhealthy pride. Love daily partakes of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus who gives of himself freely. He is not driven by fear. He is driven by courageous, faithful love that sees clearly that life is about giving. We take his body and blood into ourselves when we practice the ways of Jesus. When we live in love. When we give of ourselves for our families and friends and

all of creation.

The essence of communion is not about eating a wafer or drinking a few drops of wine, but about opening ourselves to the gift of This One who freely gives himself for us and leads us to do the same.

When we partake of the communion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are sharing and enacting by ritual the essence of our life together. We are what we eat. Even as Jesus loved, we love. Friends and strangers alike.

Richard Rohr (*A Lever and a Place to Stand*, p. 102, 102) writes, “In the Eucharist [the great thanksgiving], we move beyond mere words and go to that place where we don't talk about the mystery anymore, we begin to eat it and chew on it. In the Eucharist, we move our knowing to the physical, emotional, and cellular level.” Slowly it dawns on us that eating and being are one in the same. We are the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Communion “is not a reward for good behavior, but medicine and food for [broken people], for all of us who are slow to recognize that we are the body of Christ.

In communion we enact the story of our common life. Communion is a foretaste of what's to come and a confession of what already is. We know wisdom as we embrace our own death by giving ourselves away for ourselves. The good, holy life is not found in covering up our sin, error, weakness, and broken relationships, but by confessing these and rejoicing that, all the same, we are the body of Christ, set free to live and love without fear.

We are healed by the One who loves, creates, redeems—the One who welcomes us freely into unimaginable goodness which is the beginning of wisdom. Such healing comes through the love of one who gave of himself freely and without reservation. Such healing comes as we receive Jesus' gift of life. “This is my body, this is my blood.”

Here is true simplicity, goodness, and mercy. Thanks be to God. Amen.