

For You

Sermon for Maundy Thursday

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.



In the last two years, I have learned different ways to celebrate Holy Communion. For some, the body and blood of Christ is laid out on a table. Each congregation member, in compliance with social distancing rules, approaches the table and takes the Lord's Supper. In other congregations, members each receive a tiny individual cup. And in other congregations, the wine is sort of already added into the bread at the bakery, obviously under strict hygiene conditions. Even with these special conditions, we talk about the fellowship of the One Lord, Jesus Christ. Jesus, who on the one hand connects us to Himself and on the other hand, connects us Christians to each other, even in the midst of the special Corona conditions. But are we used to being so close? Aren't we even more comfortable keeping social distance from each other? Can we even stand it when a person comes close to us? Wouldn't we rather be all by ourselves? And how is it when the Lord Jesus comes close to me? Is it even possible for Jesus to come to me? Do I even want that? Aren't I more comfortable when Jesus stays far away from me? Isn't it better when Jesus isn't involved in my life? Or asked differently: Can I even be in the presence of Jesus? Aren't I too sinful and unworthy to be in His presence? What if He then acknowledges and reveals all my evil intentions? Or worse yet... what if He changes my intentions and I can no longer do what I want! But perhaps you are one of those people who doesn't worry about this. Perhaps you say something like this: "People go to Communion at church – some do it this way, others do it a different way.

When Jesus invited His disciples to Holy Communion for the first time, it was no different than it is with us today. Among them was a Judas who didn't want fellowship with Jesus at all, even though he sat at the same table and had celebrated Communion with Jesus. There was also a Peter who naturally always wanted to loudly give his opinion. But there were also those who just sat there and didn't give it

much thought. Jesus came to these fundamentally different people. And He still comes to us today too. It doesn't matter if we celebrate Communion under completely different conditions or if we just can't think too much about the meaning of it all. Jesus comes anyway. And He comes to you and to me. And just as Jesus spoke the Words then: "This is my Body and this is my Blood," we say them still today. "For you!" But what does Jesus mean by that? ...Nothing... Yes, Jesus doesn't want to tell us anything at Communion: He doesn't explain anything to us or make things clearer with examples. Rather, He just wants to do! The disciples didn't understand this at all in the beginning. We still don't understand it to this day! And yet, we simply accepted what Jesus said and did for us. And this still applies today: "Take and eat...this is my Body!" "Take and drink...this is my Blood!" Jesus didn't want to teach us anything. He also didn't want to give us anything special or anything else so that we could improve our lives. What Jesus wants with that first Holy Communion and still wants today is only one thing. He wants to give us Himself. One body, one cup, one community... one Christ. Jesus for the disciples of that time. Jesus for us! Jesus for all times! His blood has the power to break through generations and national borders. It also has the power to destroy the sins and rebellion of human hearts and has the power to reach us right where we find ourselves today: Regardless of if we are Judas, Peter, or whomever.... "Given for you." Many years after Jesus had established Holy Communion and many years after Jesus died and rose again, Christians have always regularly met and had Holy Communion. The Words of Jesus were spoken over the bread and wine, just as we still do today and then Christians were immersed in Jesus. They became a part of Him. They became a part of His death and resurrection. And yet, these same Christians went back into the world. Back then, it was a pagan world. Neighbors, friends, and family sacrificed to idols and invited these very Christians to such feasts. That's why this question came up among Christians: Can a person be one with Christ and also at the same time be one with idols? Paul very explicitly stated his "no" to this. Christians served the One God and couldn't identify with the pagan idols at all. Christ united us with His body and blood and therefore with the One God Who is over everything. How horrible to take this all for granted and still serve pagan idols. No! That's no good! Says the apostle. There is one body of Christ and one cup. It is impossible to separate them. For us, the question of pagan idols is no longer relevant. That doesn't mean that Satan suddenly laid down his weapons and gave up. No, the fight goes on bitterly. Sometimes he tries to violently oppress Christians and persecute them. And yet even more often, he sows doubt and disbelief. Quietly and unnoticed, the sinister contradiction arises in the hearts of people as to whether Jesus really comes to us through His body and blood. Does that still apply today? People's hearts are seized and tempted by Satan. And yet, Satan can never win. He cannot win because Jesus remains the same. The same Lord holds up the bread and the cup. An incredibly weak weapon against the mighty forces of evil. But behind it all is Jesus Himself, the One who made the world with His Word is behind it all, and He always remains the same. With this in mind, He still sends us into the darkness today, a sinister darkness, a darkness where betrayal and denial are predominant, a darkness where cruelty, war, and bloodshed dictate the end... and yet the Lord is at the end of this darkness – for you and for me. Amen.