

Sermon October 4, 2026

Children's Time

I'd like to show you something special today. **(Hold up a prayer shawl.)**

Do you see this little shawl? It's soft, it's warm, and it's made with love. When someone in our church is sick, or sad, or lonely, we give them one of these shawls so they can feel wrapped in God's care and wrapped in our care too. This one was given to me before my surgery last year.

Now today is **World Communion Sunday**. That's the day when churches all over the world— in every country, in every language— all celebrate communion together. It's like the biggest table you can imagine, stretching across oceans and mountains, with people of every color and culture all sharing God's love at the same time.

So I want you to imagine something with me.

Imagine God's big table stretching all the way around the world. And imagine that every person sitting at that table has something small and special— just like this shawl— that reminds them they are loved.

Because that's what these shawls do. They are tiny pieces of God's big love. They are small signs of a huge welcome. They are little reminders that no matter where we live or what language we speak or what we're going through, God wraps us up in care.

And when we give these shawls away, we're joining God in that big welcome. We're saying: "You belong. You matter. You are loved."

Just like people all over the world are saying the same thing today as they share communion.

So today, when you see the bread and the cup, I want you to think of this little shawl. Think of how God's love is big enough for the whole world and small enough to fit right in your hands.

Pass out small squares

Let's pray:

God, thank You for Your big table and Your big love. Thank You for small shawls that remind us we are wrapped in Your care. Help us share Your love with people near and far. Amen.

Jesus' parable in Matthew 21:33-46 tells of the tenants of a vineyard who do not respect the landowner and end up killing the landowner's son. This parable reminds us that God sent Jesus to call us to repentance and to believe the Good News. Instead, we seized him and killed him, just as the tenants killed the landowner's son. However God raised Jesus from the dead, so that even humanity's violence could not stop God's love

'Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.'

Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

*"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes"?*

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Message

Bread and wine. Ordinary food that takes on extraordinary meaning when we gather around the Table. Some believe that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ, others see it more symbolically – a way to express our deep connectedness to the person and ministry of Jesus. However you view this time gathered together, we know that something special happens. Whenever 2 or 3 are gathered together and remember over the bread and cup, this is a central act of our faith, and it holds great mystery, again and again.

Soon we will gather and share in the sacred feast together.

Today we celebrate World Communion Sunday and we are reminded of something special. We are a part of Christ's beloved body... cathedrals and country churches, home churches and sanctuaries just like this. Christ's body extends all around this world. Somewhere, in every country in this world someone is lifting up a loaf of bread and a cup and blessing it. Somewhere, in some land, someone is praying for this congregation and all of us. Somewhere, in some land, someone will feel our prayers touch their own hearts.

World Communion Sunday was first celebrated in a Presbyterian church in 1933 and by 1936 the entire denomination set aside the first Sunday in October as a day to remember how connected we are to the world-wide church. It didn't take long for other denominations to join this movement. In those days of the Great Depression, world-wide poverty became a way of life and people looked for hope from authoritarian leaders like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Emperor Hirohito. As evil gained strength and momentum, people of faith were encouraged to remember that our authority comes from a higher power. There was no better time to remember how connected we, the Body of Christ, really are.

And there is no better time to do remind ourselves of our interconnectedness again, than today. The threat of violence, war and cruelty is all around us – in far off lands and here in our own communities.

Today is a day to remember that we are all a part of God's beloved creation and we are all loved. No matter who we are or where we live. God's creative love spreads throughout every region and place. A place where all really are welcome. God's Spirit blows here, there and everywhere and spreads the Good News that this place is "Good."

That's a message we all need to hear, during those times when it feels like so much is not Good. Over and over, God comes to the people to remind them of the Goodness and Love found in every creative moment. God comes when the people need that message the most. As the early Israelites stumbled through the wilderness, God came to them over and over again. Today we hear how gifted the people with the Law... the 10 Commandments etched into stone. Rules that we still live by today. The basic things we need to know to live as members of God's community. Those commandments were treasured by the people, carefully carried through the wilderness and through the Jordan River to the Promised Land. Eventually, put in a place of honor in the Temple... a place where the people could come and remember all that God had done for them.

And, God came to the people again through Jesus. God came to save us all in Love.

In Jesus' parable today, we hear the story of tenants in a vineyard. They have forgotten all that the landowner has done for them – they do not respect him or his servants. Each time someone comes to collect the owners produce, they are beaten, stoned and murdered. Finally, the owner sends his son, certain the people will listen to him. In the end, they kill the landowner's son, too.

The landowner sends his son, not with the intention that the son will die, but with the hope that the tenants will listen. Just as God sent Jesus in the hope that we will listen.

God sent Jesus to call us all into repentance and to hear the Good News; God sent Jesus to us out of Love. But instead of listening and following him, we seized him and killed him.

But God still didn't give up on us – God raised Jesus from the dead, showing us that even the worst of humanity's violence could not stop God's love. The Resurrection is God's answer to all the horrible things humans do to one another. God's love shining like a light out of an empty tomb.

Jesus tells this story shortly before his arrest. He knows that the religious leaders want to have him killed, he knows that people are plotting against him, but even death cannot stop God and the love of Christ Jesus.

Even death cannot stop God today too. When bombs rain down in places like Gaza, God's love continues. As flood waters rise and wash people's memories away, God's love continues. In the bullets ricocheting in neighborhood streets and schools, God's love continues. God's love built a Kingdom, brick by brick... not for the worthy... but for all of us! This is a Kingdom for the hungry!

And as the Kingdom comes breaking through into our lives, we remember that wherever two or three gather together in the name of Jesus, God's love continues.

As we gather together to share this sacred meal, let us remember that we share it with millions of people all around the world. Let us remember that we are connected to all our siblings because we are all a part of Christ's sacred body. Let us remember this not just on World Communion Sunday, but each and every day. Let us remember because there is more than enough bread and wine to go around!

Whenever we come together and eat at the Table. We eat and drink... and remember. Let us remember those who stumbled through the wilderness in the past... let us remember those who could not recognize Jesus as God's own son. Let us remember those who face life and death decisions in places like China and Pakistan and Liberia. Let us remember, as we share the bread and cup, that Jesus is here with us today.

*Wherever two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.
Amen.*

Sacrament of Communion

It began last night- as you were going to bed...

Asian Christians shared the bread and the wine. Faithful who met in secret so that they would not be arrested. Christians in the Middle East, some of whom were saved only by having dreams of Jesus, met under the watchful eye of the government as they celebrated Communion. In Europe, Christians gathered in churches that used to be much fuller and celebrated the Lord's Supper. In Africa, the sacrament was celebrated in great numbers by a growing number of Christians, many of whom bear scars of persecution as they Commune together.

We celebrate today with Presbyterians, Methodists, Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Baptists, and thousands of other denominations, and even those without denominations.

Christ followers met both in public and in secret. Some met in freedom while others gathered under threat of persecution and death. Some take the sacrament today with organ music, others with simple singing, and still others in quiet so as not to be arrested.

In wealthy churches and in desperate poverty the sacrament is observed. In churches, homes, caves, and in God's creation, this seal of the covenant was experienced. The bread is given to people that could overeat all day and to people who had no idea what they would eat or where they would get it today.

The one thing in common- We all come to the same table of our Lord. Let us praise God in song:

hymn

In many different languages, by ordained clergy and volunteer pastors, something like these words of institution were given.

On the night He was betrayed Jesus took bread. And when he had given thanks and blessed it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "This is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way after supper Jesus took the cup and gave it to His disciples, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Drink you all of it."

The bread is many different types and colors and from many places. Some created primarily from wheat, others from rice or other kinds of grain. Some will have bread left over. Some with very small pieces that could barely give every Christian there a morsel. Still- it represented the body of Christ broken and sustained the body of Christ around the world today.

(Break Bread)

The cup around the world will be different. For many it will be wine, some will have juice, some will celebrate with water that had to be carried from a dirty well some miles away. Some will use individual cups, others fancy goblets, still others have been passing around whatever cup was in the home where they were meeting Still- it represented the promise of God's covenant in their place and in their communities, just as it does in ours.

(Pour Cup)

Let us pray: O Holy One, we thank you for this sacrament of communion shared with Christians around the world. Pour out your Holy Spirit on this simple food and drink and on those who share in this meal, so that we may be your body and the representation of your covenant in our lives and throughout the world. Amen.

Today, we have bread in abundance. There are many different colors and types of bread. In the bread, remember all of those around the world with whom you share the table today.

Meal

The Prayer

All: God of all nations, we thank you for this meal that unites your people across the earth.

May the bread, strengthen us for the work of justice. May the cup, fill us with compassion for all your children. Make us one body: diverse, beloved, and bold. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer