

"The Means of Grace: The Holy Communion" Ex 12:1-16, 1 Cor 11:23-26, Mat 26:26-30 (10/06/24)

In the last three months, I have shared about God's presence and getting to know God. For the previous three months, we focused on "What should we know?" This month, I hope to share, "How should we know?" "The way to know God."

If someone asks me about the Methodist denomination, I will say, "Methodist is the denomination of grace." Wesley mentioned that all spiritual events in Christian life happened by God's grace. Wesley not only taught doctrine and theology to the people but also encouraged people to live as Jesus taught. So, Methodists were people who wanted to know about God and were people who did something to be with God. Wesley said, "But the main question remains. We know this salvation is the gift and the work of God. But how (may one say, who is convinced he hath it not) may I attain thereto? If you say, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved,' he answers, 'True; but how shall I believe?' You reply, 'Wait upon God.' 'Well. But how am I to wait? In the means of grace, or out of them? Am I to wait for the grace of God which bringeth salvation by using these means, or by laying them aside?'" Wesley taught people that God gave us things to do to get to know God and to receive God's grace. And he said it was "The Means of Grace."

He said several ways to know God's grace were "Prayer, the Scriptures, and the Lord's Supper, which is the Holy Communion." Those practices are not the ways of Salvation. Those are the ways that help us to know and to encounter the only way of Salvation, Jesus Christ. This month, I hope to share how "Prayer, the Scripture, and the Holy Communion" can be the methods to experience God's grace. Today is Communion Sunday, so I will start by explaining how we can experience God's grace through Holy Communion.

When I decided to attend church in New Zealand, I found one interesting ceremony in the Sunday worship service. The pastor invited all church members to come to the front. People lined up in the sanctuary, and then each person picked up and ate a small piece of bread and a small cup of grape juice. During this ceremony, I could see people being so serious and looking so sad. Even though I was not clear about what they were doing, I knew it was a very important moment in the worship service. Yes, the ceremony that I saw was the Holy Communion. At that time, I could not remember what the pastor had said before he invited people to the front. I was just curious about the taste of the bread and grape juice. I thought the taste would be very special because it was a very important moment for Christians. However, at that time, the Korean Methodist Church only opened

the Communion for the baptized people, so I could not receive the Communion.

During my church life, I could learn about the meaning of the Holy Communion. My expectation about the Holy Communion shifted from the curiosity of the taste of elements to the grace of the Holy Communion. So, I was really looking forward to receiving the Communion someday.

I still remember the date of my first Holy Communion. It was December 17th, 2006. The day of my baptism. I do not remember the taste of the bread and wine on that day, but I remember the first Holy Communion was full of God's grace. It was a great joy and excitement because I finally could join the Communion with my church congregation. So, I am sure that Christ's sacrifice prepared this Holy Table and is full of the grace and glory of God.

In today's Scripture, we can see three orders. Actually, two orders and one encouragement. In Exodus, God ordered Hebrews to celebrate the Passover. In the gospel, Jesus ordered his disciples to share the bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus. In Corinthians, Paul encouraged the Corinthian church to join the Communion to remember Jesus. Those three contexts are very different. Different times and different places. However, we can see that those three orders

are given to people to help them remember something in each context. In Exodus, God ordered Hebrews to celebrate Passover to remember how God saved them from Egypt and from the 10th plague through the sacrifice of the lamb. In the gospel, during the Passover meal, Jesus ordered his disciples to remember Jesus's sacrifice. In 1 Corinthians, Paul encouraged people to join the Communion to remember Christ's sacrifice, which unifies them, which was for Jews and Gentiles. So, if we think the lamb in the Passover implies Jesus, those three Scriptures show that Communion is to remember Jesus Christ.

Yes, God gave us this Holy Communion to remember Jesus Christ. Like we celebrate our birthday, wedding anniversary, or Memorial Day to remember our life events, we join this Holy Communion to remember Jesus's sacrifice.

When I tried to raise my children, I often remember my wedding day and the first day with my wife. Then, I could be in a moment of beautiful memories with my wife. However, those memories cannot come to my reality and present day. Memories are just in the past.

However, the Holy Communion is not in the past. The Holy Communion is the way not only to remember Jesus Christ but also to experience the grace of

Jesus Christ in this present day and here today. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Communion, we can experience the grace of Christ and the sacrifice of Christ in this communion today.