



Theme: 3 Powerful Gifts
"What is Communion"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, October 4-5, 2025, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

²⁶For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. –1 Corinthians 11:26

VIDEO **Sermon Intro**

SLIDE **"What is Communion?"**

Have you ever had a good meal with great conversation to go with it? My birthday was this past week, and I got to have a great meal with our staff on Wednesday and then a great dinner that evening. We had a family dinner on Thursday night and another great meal on Friday. It was an awesome week of eating and spending time in good relationships. It got me thinking about how we gather at most major events in our lives for food. Wedding rehearsals often have a dinner afterwards and there's usually a meal around the wedding. When we do funerals or memorials, there is often a meal for the community that gathers and sometimes then for the family afterwards.

Birthdays and baptisms often include meals as a reminder of what

it means to be in fellowship with one another. We'll be doing confirmation next month which is when our 8th graders and older confirm their faith and many get baptized or reaffirm their baptism and we include a dinner the night of confirmation. Men's retreats and women's retreats and youth retreats have meals where we gather and sometimes, we gather around a campfire and eat things like smores.

We also at many of these events have Communion which is the Lord's Supper. We also call it the great Thanksgiving or the Eucharist and it happens at weddings and retreats and herein worship as we gather on this world communion weekend where churches from all over the world are taking time to remember that this meal belongs to Jesus. We are going to wrap up this series of sermons on these three powerful gifts where we have looked at the church, baptism, and this weekend communion. We do that by gathering around this table together and remembering that Jesus instituted this meal and gave it to us as a gift.

SLIDE The Church, Baptism, and Communion belong to Jesus.

When it comes to the church, baptism, and communion, what we remember is that they belong to Jesus Christ and not to us. They are gifts given so that we might tangibly know what it means to have faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior. Each week we ask not only what these gifts mean but what difference they can make in our lives, and we will do that again today. I also want to answer some of the major questions I get when it comes to this sacrament.

SLIDE Sacraments are a “means of Grace.”

Our sacraments are baptism and communion, and they are a means of grace which is a tangible, physical reminder of God's presence and God's undeserved and unmerited love. We don't do anything to deserve or earn God's love. God's love is a gift in which we just say “yes” and the sacraments, as well as the church, are meant to be physical reminders of that gift to which we simply say “yes.”

With that in mind let's look at the first place we discover in the scriptures what this sacrament of communion means and what it represents for us. It's good to remember that the first documents in your Bible are not the gospels but the letters of the Apostle Paul. Those letters are written about 20 years after the death of Jesus and the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are written 10 to 20 years after that. The gospel of John is written another 20 years after that so the first documents which contain and give us information about this meal come from Paul's letter to the people of Corinth in the letter that we call 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. What's interesting is that these words from Paul are written to a church that is confused about what communion is and what it should be, and he is writing to them to solve a problem they are having. Let's take a closer look.

BIBLE

²⁰ When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. ²¹ For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. ²² What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

What's happening is that people are using communion or the Lord's supper as a party where people eat too much and they get drunk, and they often do it in front of those with very little or nothing because the church was made up of people that were wealthy and people who had very few resources. Paul is telling them that part of coming to the communion table is being thankful and being willing to share food of substance.

The first week of the month is the Thursday that I volunteer to take backpacks to the schools for manna soup kitchen. I was dropping

them off at one of the schools and a young girl walking by stared at the bags and then looked at me and said, “Thanks for bringing my food this week.” It just about broke my heart to remember that while many of us have plenty to eat and don't worry at all about where our next meal will come from, especially me that it had three celebration meals already this week for my birthday, we have many right around us who go hungry while the rest of us overeat and drink too much.

It was a convicting moment for me and then compounded when I arrived back at the soup kitchen to bring them the empty backpacks and heard they were running out of the actual backpacks, and they don't have enough fresh meat anymore in the soup kitchen because of cuts that have happened over the past few months. Many of those who come to manna soup kitchen struggle with mental health issues, and I saw the critical response team from our Police Department working with several clients who are struggling, most of whom probably needed medication to balance out their behavior but have no support. Part of remembering at the Lord's supper or this table that we call communion is being thankful for what we have and then being inspired by what to do next.

Here is how Paul continues, and let's recognize that this was shared with Paul by Jesus in one of those encounters he had with the risen Lord.

BIBLE

²³ For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread ²⁴ and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.”

This last line is our memory verse for the week so let's say it together out loud.

BIBLE

²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

There are four very important parts of this scripture which I want us to remember today.

SLIDE The Body of Christ Given and Broken for you

There is this big idea when we break the bread that Jesus is the bread of life and it is a gift that we need. The apostle Paul and the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, talk about the Lord's supper and the words that are said on the night that Jesus is arrested. The gospel of John has several chapters on that final night, but we don't find the words of institution in his version because it was written 20 years after the other gospels and 30 years after the letters of Paul. The church had been using these words that we read earlier and there was no need for John to repeat them.

The gospel of John is more concerned about helping us understand what these words mean for us. Instead, we find him talking about the bread and the cup, the body and the blood of Christ, in John 6 where Jesus feeds the 5000. After performing this miracle, we read these words in John's gospel.

BIBLE

²⁶ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. ²⁷ But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval."

BIBLE

³² Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, Moses didn’t give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. ³³ The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

This powerful idea is that there is a spiritual food that we can't live without. We remember that when Jesus was tempted by the devil when he was fasting just after his baptism, the devil told him to turn the stones into bread so we could have something to eat. Jesus replied that we don't live by bread alone, but by something more. We have these existential needs for meaning and purpose and joy and hope and grace and mercy and love and acceptance and forgiveness.

SLIDE What are we feeding ourselves?

Yes, we do have the basic needs of food and drink, but we also have something more for which we earn. We go out of our way and do things we should never do just so someone might like us. We post pictures and opinions on social media hoping someone will pay attention and give us a click. We want to be accepted and Jesus understands this which is why he tells us that he is the bread of life. The things that we've been looking for and searching for deep down is Jesus, God in the flesh, who came to satisfy our hungry heart.

One of my favorite hymns for communion has this for its refrain.

**SLIDE You satisfy the hungry heart
With gift of finest wheat
Come give to us, O Saving Lord
The Bread of Life to eat**

GRAPHIC Sara Miles Take This Bread - A Radical Conversion

Sarah miles wrote a book several years ago entitled, “*Take This Bread - a radical conversion.*” It's her story about being a follower of Jesus and her conversion. She was an atheist and raised by parents who didn't believe in God and so she was never exposed to church. She was

living in San Francisco and one day she wandered into St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in the heart of the city. She noticed the building because of its architecture, and she wondered what happened inside. She wrote these words about that experience.

"I had no earthly reason to be there. I had never heard a gospel reading or said the Lord's prayer. I was certainly not interested in becoming a Christian, or as I thought of it less politely, a religious nut. The woman at the front said, 'Jesus invites everyone to his table.' I found myself drawn up with the crowd, standing around the table, with people singing. Somebody put a fresh crumbly piece of bread in my hand and said, 'The body of Christ.' They handed me a goblet of sweet wine and said, 'The blood of Christ.' Then something outrageous, terrifying, happened to me. Jesus happened to me. I still can't explain my first communion. It made no sense to me. I was in tears and physically unbalanced. I felt as if I had just stepped off a curb or been knocked over painlessly from behind. Holy Communion knocked me upside down and forced me to deal with the impossible reality of God."

This is the power that this meal can have for us if we are willing to give in to the mystery of what it means to taste and experience the goodness of God and the grace of God and the bread and in the cup. It's a gift that's been given to us and the Holy Spirit can use it to grab a hold of us and touch our hearts. We are meant to bring our faith to this table and realize that Jesus offers us what we need. If we're not thinking about those things and aware of what communion can mean, sometimes we just come up and get our piece of bread and some juice in the cup and we go back to our seat and nothing happens because we are meant to bring our yearning and our faith, our doubts and our

fears, our joys and our sorrows, to the table.

Sometimes, people ask me how old we must be to take communion here and we don't have an age limit or an age requirement because Jesus invites everyone to the table. I have had parents tell me they are not sure they want their kid's taking communion because they are not sure they know what it means to which I simply say, "So what? Do any of us know exactly what it means? Do we have it all figured out? I can tell you that communion meant something different to me as a child than it did as a youth than it did as a young adult than it does today. That's the beauty of this meal. It is a sacred mystery, and God meets us in our questions because there is no faith without doubt."

Stories like Sarah's I have seen happen before which is one of the reasons that our communion is an open table and you don't have to be a member here or anywhere to receive the gift of the bread and the cup. I had a student bring a friend on a retreat that we did with our youth in my previous church and he had never been to church before, let alone a youth retreat. I remember him trembling when he took the bread and he asked aloud if anyone could really love him enough to sacrifice for him. He heard the message at home constantly that he was worthless and good for nothing. When Communion was over, he asked if he could have more bread, and I obliged. He admitted that he didn't fully understand how it worked but the bread tasted so good that day. He would later do confirmation and get baptized and that moment of communion changed his life.

Jesus Points towards that, and another challenge we find in this meal, when goes on with these words.

BIBLE

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

⁵² Then the people began arguing with each other about what he

meant. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they asked.

⁵³ So Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you.

What do we do with this? Even those with Jesus were confused by these words. This is where we find a bit of a difference between those of you who grew up in the Roman Catholic tradition and most Protestant traditions that includes Methodism. The understanding in the Catholic Church when it comes to communion is what we call transubstantiation. This is the idea that the bread and the cup literally become the body and the blood of Christ when the priest praised the prayer of the Holy Spirit over the elements. This also meant that all the elements must be consumed or disposed of properly, which did lead to the issue of priests sometimes having struggles with alcohol. The host needed to be consumed; however they have new ways of doing that today, but the idea is still the same.

If you go to a Catholic Church, they will typically have you cross your arms in front of you when you come forward and they will pray over you instead of taking the elements because it's required that we become Catholic and part of the church so we understand this doctrine and take it seriously. In our Methodist tradition, we understand these words symbolically, much like how we understand Jesus talking to Nicodemus the Jewish religious leader when he tells them he must be, “Born Again.” Jesus didn't literally mean to go back into your mother's womb, but meant it as symbolism, understanding we must be born of water and the spirit, born anew in Christ Jesus.

You maybe have heard me use the image of my wedding ring, which is a symbol of the vows of marriage I took and the covenant relationship I have with my wife. Just because I take it off doesn't mean I'm not married, correct? No, it's a symbol, and the same is true with both communion and baptism. They are powerful symbols and physical

reminders of a covenant relationship we have with God. This leads to that next piece of this sacrament which is meant to be a powerful one for us.

SLIDE The Cup of a New Covenant Poured out for you for forgiveness of sins.

This cup is meant to be a physical and tangible reminder that Christ has taken all of our brokenness to the cross and we don't need to carry it with us anymore. It doesn't mean that there aren't consequences sometimes to our actions, but it does mean that we can let go of the bitterness and the anger and the sorrow that sometimes we feel in life when we hurt others or when people hurt us. It is meant to remind us of a new covenant that is created in this meal. The sharing of the bread and the cup makes us a part of the body of Christ.

There was a gentleman who came to church in his 40s and asked to meet with me. He had come a few times and had been there on a communion weekend but wasn't sure it was OK for him to come forward. He got a girl pregnant when he was 17 years old and he was required by his parents and compelled by his faith to get married. He is grateful for his son from that relationship but the marriage only lasted a year after the child was born and he got divorced. He and his wife both agreed they were better not together, but they were told by the church they could no longer receive communion and they were excommunicated. He hadn't been to church since and he wondered if that disqualified him from having communion here at our church.

I assured him that this was exactly the place he was meant to be and while the covenant relationship he had with his wife didn't work and needed to be broken, this meal offered him a new covenant and a new relationship that could never be broken. I will never forget watching him come forward for that first communion in more than 20 years and the tears streamed down his face as he received forgiveness truly for the first time and he no longer had to carry the burden with

him of a broken covenant.

The apostle Paul would say it with these words in Romans 8.

BIBLE

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

BIBLE

³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul is in many ways pointing to these words that Jesus continues with in John 6 when he is talking about being the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

BIBLE

⁵⁴ But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

SLIDE Christ will Come Again

This meal is also about the promise of eternal life. In John's gospel, eternal life starts now because the Kingdom has come with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our life doesn't end with what we experience here, no matter how difficult it might be, which is why we

say this at every Easter. The worst thing is never the last thing. This meal symbolizes that we have the gift of eternal life, and we belong to Jesus Christ. Life to the full begins now according to Jesus, and it continues in full abundance when we leave this life and take our last breath. Some of the most powerful moments of my ministry have been spent with people at the end of their lives sharing Holy Communion.

Our Care Ministers we'll bring communion into your homes during the season of Advent and Lent if you request it as I pray over those elements before they bring them to you. They also bring them to the people in the hospital when I can't make it. This is the communion set I received when I was ordained more than 30 years ago. When you open it up you find a small plate and cup that I use to prepare the elements. We talk about how this signifies life that is eternal and carries us beyond this moment and a cup which signifies forgiveness, and I ask them to confess anything they want to give me before they take their last breath.

GRAPHIC Portable Communion Set

I did this with my father when I met with him before I headed to the Holy Land and he was in Hospice. He died while I was in Bethlehem And one of our last moments was having a meal together where he shared with me many things that were on his heart that I had no idea he had been carrying. We were not close for more than 50 years and then we had this moment together because that is how the mystery of this holy meal works. It binds together what has been broken and it connects this life to eternity. I often say that worship is a place where heaven and earth touch and that is certainly true of this meal.

SLIDE Remember and Give Thanks

Finally, this meal is about remembering Jesus Christ and what he has done for us and giving thanks. I remember going to someone's church for communion when I was a kid and you had to be a member of that church to receive the elements. The usher blocked me from going

up while the family I was staying with went forward. No one explained to me why this was the case, and I was a bit miffed and so the next time I spent the night at his house, and we went to church in the morning, I came prepared. I brought a little brown paper bag like this one and I got out my own element of bread and a juice cup. I even brought several extras in case someone else was left out, which maybe should have been my first sign that I was going to be a pastor. It was a most definitely a sign that I was going to annoy people in church. The usher had no clue what to do with me.

I would love to tell you I understood communion at that age, but really, I just didn't want to be left out. I'd like to imagine that one of the reasons Jesus blessed something as simple as a meal with his disciples and changed it forever was because he wanted them to stop before every meal and give thanks. He wants us to remember at every meal that we belong to him and that life is more than just food. He wants us to remember the bread of life that brings us true life and the cup of faith which brings us forgiveness.

GRAPHIC Psalm 118 Plate and Cup

Darry and Juanita Ferguson are members of our church and on Easter in 2014 they gave me this gift of a plate and a cup with a favorite memory verse of theirs, and one that I have memorized since I was a child when my grandmother taught me to say it before every meal. It's a blessing I still carry with me. **"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."** That was a simple one for me, and I brought that plate and cup for us to do Communion with.

I wanted to encourage you, as we close today, to say a prayer before every meal that you have and remember the bread of life and the cup of salvation offered to us by Jesus. While it's great to come on the first weekend of every month and have communion here, it's even better to stop several times a day and remember and give thanks. So, we have made two different sheets for you to grab as you leave today.

One is for adults and the other is for children. We have some four children when you pick up your kids today and also the ushers have them in the back.

GRAPHIC Mealtime Prayer Cards for Adults

GRAPHIC Mealtime Prayer Cards for Kids

My prayer is that you will remember these powerful ideas every time you gather around a meal. Even if you eat out in public, you can pray with your eyes open and simply give thanks or stop and be quiet if you're worried about people watching you and being embarrassed.

SLIDE Communion

We're going to begin our time of communion today with the liturgy that I use regularly here when we do this in a more formal manner like the early church would have done. There is a document from the first 200 years of the church called the Didache and it contains many of the words that we are going to use today as we prepare our hearts to celebrate communion. Your words are in the bold on the screen and so I invite you to come with an open heart ready to remember and give thanks as we receive the bread of life, the cup of salvation, and the assurance of eternal life. I invite those of you at home to have your element prepared and before you as we pray over them at the end of this liturgy.

SLIDE GREETING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also, with you.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
Christ has prepared a feast of love.

SLIDE CONFESSION AND PARDON

My sisters and brothers,
Christ shows us his love by becoming a humble servant.
Let us draw near to God and confess our sin in the truth
of God's Spirit.

SLIDE UNISON PRAYER

**Most merciful God,
we your Church confess
that often our spirit has not been that of Christ.
Where we have failed to love one another as he loves us,
where we have pledged loyalty to him with our lips
and then betrayed, deserted, or denied him,
forgive us, we pray;
and by your Spirit make us faithful in every time of trial;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ.
But Christ suffered and died for us,
was raised from the dead and ascended on high for us,
and continues to intercede for us.
Believe the good news:
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

**In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
Glory to God. Amen.**

SLIDE THE INVITATION

This table does not belong to any denomination,
church or community.

It belongs to Jesus.

We are here because Jesus has called us –
strangers and friends,
locals and visitors,
believers and doubters,
the certain and the curious.

It is always a mixed company that Jesus gathers
and invites to this table where, in bread and cup,
he meets us and through him we, who are different,
are joined to each other.

So come,
not because you understand,
but because you are understood.

Come, not because of how you feel,
but because God has food for you.

Come, not because you deserve a place,
but because Jesus invites you,
just as you are.

SLIDE THE STORY

On the night of Jesus' arrest,
he sat at supper with his disciples.
Gathered round the table,
and while they were eating

Jesus took bread,
and when he had blessed it,
he broke it and said,
“This is my body. It is given for you.
Do this to remember me.”

Later he took a cup,
blessed it and said,
“This cup is the new relationship with God
made possible because of my death.
Drink it, all of you, to remember me.”

So now we do as Jesus did and invited us to do.
We take this bread and cup,
the ordinary things of the world which Christ,
in his own way, will make special,
and as he said a prayer before sharing, we do so too.

SLIDE THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you

All: and also, with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

Leader: Let us give thanks to God our Maker.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Leader: Let us pray:

O holy God, all that we are, all that we have,
all that we know and all that is yet to be
comes from your care.

Therefore, to the unending song
of earth, sea, and sky, we join our praise.

To the anthems of the company of heaven –
the angels and archangels,
the saints of every age –
we join our praise.

And as one with your people on earth,
north and south, east, and west,
we join our praise,
singing the song of your eternal greatness.

SLIDE SANCTUS

All:

**Holy, holy, holy God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest!

**Blessed is the One who comes
in the name of the Lord.**

Hosanna in the highest!

Leader:

Because you, gracious God, have been faithful to us,
we will be faithful to Jesus.

He promised to be with those who met in his name:

All: This we believe.

He promised to hear the prayers of faithful people:

All: This we believe.

He said that in the communion of bread and cup
he would be present to us
as we remembered him:

All: This we celebrate.

**So, send now your Spirit among us
and upon this bread and cup,
that we may taste and see your goodness,
be embraced by your love,
and be engaged in your service.**

All: Amen.

As Jesus did, so we do.
We break this bread (*the bread is broken*)
We share this cup (*the cup is raised*)
We believe that he who lived,
died and rose again for us
will meet us here.

**All: Graciously nourish us, O Christ,
so that we who try to follow you
may receive food for the journey
and be bound in solidarity
with all who walk in your way.
Amen.**

Instructions are given for Communion.

Leader:

Take this bread, share this cup.

In these Christ comes to us with love from God.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

COMMUNION MUSIC

People come forward to receive the bread and cup.

October 4-5 Order

1. Nathan welcomes people.
2. Song: "Great Things"
3. Jeff welcomes people:
 - a. QR Code and Connect Card
 - b. Communion is an open table
 - c. Invite people to greet each other, however comfortable and be seated.
4. Sermon
5. Communion
6. Song: "Gratitude"
7. Song: "Holy Forever"
8. Prayer and Lord's Prayer
9. Offering (**Fresh Meat for Manna**)
10. Med Moments
11. Care Ministers
12. Connect with Us
13. Closing Prayer