

Turning Our Faces: At the Table

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Luke 22

It's World Communion Sunday- one of my favorite days of the year. It is on this day that we celebrate, with the church universal, this idea that we are all connected through the common act of the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup, those radical acts that Jesus taught us to do.

In 2019, our world is connected even beyond this table. We can tweet something and have it go viral in a matter of seconds. We can FaceTime with family around the world. We can livestream worship, weddings, tv shows, concerts, and just about anything else from where we are and thanks to the internet, have it on someone else's device instantly. In some ways, we are more connected than ever.

"World Communion Sunday started back in 1936, when the world was deeply fragmented by the conflict that would be later known as World War II. World Communion Sunday (originally called World Wide Communion Sunday) has been an observance to help Christians all over the world affirm their unity in Jesus Christ as it is expressed so beautifully at the Lord's Table. Originating in the Presbyterian Church in 1936, the idea of World Communion Sunday was embraced and promoted by the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches) in 1940.

Those Christians who started World Communion Sunday saw the Table of the Jesus as a place where the wounds in the Church, many the result of a brutal war, could begin to find healing." ¹

And certainly in our world today, there are many wars, many wounds and more need for life together around the table of grace than ever before. This week, we witnessed a mess in our nation's capital, more pain at the border of our country, atrocities in Yemen, and more. Indeed, there are systemic wounds that run deep in this country and this world.

There is so much pain in our world. And that's why World Communion Sunday came to exist in the first place, that we might join in the pain and joys of one another as we break bread around the world. We see our broken selves, brought together around this table and our dashed hopes scooped up and placed on the altar. This table of hope and peace is where we come for a few moments to connect with our family around the world.

This table that we remember first gathered Jesus and his disciples around it In Luke's account of the last supper, he offers a unique story. As Jesus and his friends sat at the table that Passover night, surely they were sharing stories, praying, and catching up. It was a holy night and when Jesus said, "You've no idea how much I have looked forward

¹ [Resources for World Communion Sunday](#), prepared by the Council on Christian Unity, 2012.

to eating this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering. It's the last one I'll eat until we all eat it together in the kingdom of God."

Who knows what the disciples thought about that statement, but Jesus likely knew his time was coming to an end because he had been in trouble with the authorities for awhile. Maybe he'd even been told by someone else that Judas had already sold him out.

But one thing I do know is that all eyes were on Jesus as he took a cup for the first time, and said, "Take this and pass it among you. As for me, I'll not drink wine again until the kingdom of God arrives." The disciples took the cup and passed it amongst themselves.

Then, taking bread, Jesus blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Eat it in my memory."

And again, according to Luke, he took a cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant written in my blood, blood poured out for you."

Surely there was stillness around the table. They had to realize this moment was holy and a new kind of meal. As the holy meal settled in their stomachs, breadcrumbs were still on their table, and the strong taste wine lingered on their lips.

At the table they would center the story and life with Jesus over and over again. At the table, the disciples would welcome new followers who would welcome new followers for centuries to come, including us, on this very morning. At this table, this community of Jesus followers would encounter death, grief, betrayal, hope, resurrection, and new life.

As we heard from Sylvia, we are talking about the CROP Walk today on World Communion Sunday. Our kids and youth have led us to observe and support the annual walk. Today is the perfect Sunday to talk about it because our life together is centered at a table, where we always welcome more people---and that means we are welcoming others to feed them.

"On October 17, 1969, a thousand people in Bismarck, ND, walked in what may have been the start of the hunger walks related to CROP – and raised \$25,000 to help stop hunger. As far as we know, York County, Penn., was the first walk officially called the CROP Walk for the Hungry – and that event has been continuous since 1970. Several other CROP Hunger Walks occurred soon thereafter, and before long there were hundreds of Walks each year in communities nationwide.

Currently, well over 2,000 communities across the U.S. join in more than 1,300 CROP Hunger Walks each year. More than five million CROP Hunger Walkers have participated in more than 36,000 CROP Hunger Walks in the last two decades alone."

CROP Hunger Walks help to support the overall ministry of Church World Service, especially grassroots, hunger-fighting development efforts around the world. And 25 percent of the funds we raise today goes to our partners at ACCA.

CROP Hunger Walks help to provide food and water, as well as resources that empower people to meet their own needs. From seeds and tools, to wells and water systems, to technical training and micro-enterprise loans, the key is people working together to identify their own development priorities, their strengths and their needs something CWS has learned through some 68 years of working in partnership around the world.”²

As a community, we have partnered with Crop Walk for 50 years and with ACCA since ACCA began! The commitment to caring for bodies, by sharing food keeps us centered at the table.

What do we learn at the table during a season of transition?

We come and see an invitation where Jesus simply invites us on the Way.

We know the Lord is near because of the way we love each other.

We weep and laugh and everything in between, and the sound of our worship rises up in a powerful, authentic way to be heard all over.

We recognize that even in the hard times, the embodied visions of Jesus is with us—to love and offer grace to all people.

If we know the source of where we go for nourishment and where the resurrected Christ is likely to show up, we have comfort even in the rocky, shaky times. We are centered at the table that gives us bread and the cup as we remember Jesus.

Today, we celebrate the mysterious connections of the worldwide church as all together, we participate in communion, the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup. We see our broken selves, brought together around this table and our dashed hopes scooped up and placed on the altar. We see the broken world, gathered around this table, with war and heartache, celebration and new life, scooped up and placed on this altar as we hold the sacred space with one another.

As we remember the meal at the table we do so with hearts open to the ever present power of the Resurrected Christ.

At the this table, we commit to welcoming all, including ourselves, and at the table we remember. The breadcrumbs might still be on the table and the cup still on our lips as we move on today, but we do so with the memory of our experience together, which is lived out in so many ways—through commitment to the CROP walk, to fighting in justice, to loving our neighbor, and to being present with one another during a season of change.

² [Church World Service, CROP Walk.](#)

We come to the table this morning, with this blessing from Jan Richardson, "And the table will be wide,"

And the table will be wide.

And the welcome will be wide.

And the arms will open wide to gather us in.

And our hearts will open wide to receive.

And we will come as children who trust there is enough.

And we will come unhindered and free.

And our aching will be met with bread.

And our sorrow will be met with wine.

And we will open our hands to the feast without shame.

And we will turn toward each other without fear.

And we will give up our appetite for despair.

And we will taste and know of delight.

And we will become bread for a hungry world.

And we will become drink for those who thirst.

And the blessed will become the blessing.

And everywhere will be the feast.

Thanks be to God. Amen.