

Look At What You Get Inside One Communion!

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." ²³ They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

What is your favorite candy bar? In case you haven't heard, mine is Snickers. I like other candy bars, but Snickers is my favorite. It looks like any other candy bar on the outside outside. But if you bite into you, you get so much more. I looked up the ingredients for a Snickers bar. I am not listing every single thing (I am afraid to go into that much detail because I am sure there are things that are not the best me), but there are three main ingredients: peanuts, caramel, and a nougat. Maybe the saltiness of the peanuts complements the sweetness of the caramel and nougat and chocolate, I don't know, but I love that taste.

Tonight is Maundy Thursday, a night we talk about the meal Jesus gives us. It has all sorts of names. We call it the Lord's Supper because it came from him. Others call it Eucharist which means "blessing" and refers to how Jesus blessed the bread and wine. Some call it Last Supper because it is the last meal Jesus had with his disciples. But a common name is Communion or Holy Communion. That is my favorite name because of the meaning of Communion. Communion and community have the same idea where you have a unity going on. Arlington is made up of all sorts of people who are all different, yet we form one community.

There is a unity or community thing going on in Holy Communion. Actually, like a Snickers bar, there are three things we find inside. Let's bite into it and see them. The first is the unity or communion of bread and wine with the body and blood of Jesus.

I. Communion of bread and wine and the body and blood of Jesus.

I told you what is in a Snickers bar. Of course, I figured it out without researching it. I know there is chocolate on the outside. I taste the peanuts. I taste the caramel. But that other stuff, what is it? I taste it, but I don't really know what it is. So I looked it up and learned it is called nougat. Now nougat can refer to a lot of things, but generally it is sugar and honey and egg whites. I am not a candy maker. I didn't know what it was until someone told me.

Anybody knows what ingredients are in Holy Communion. You can see it, smell it, and taste it. There is wine, not apple wine, but grape wine, "fruit of the vine" as the Greek says. That's what Jesus used, and so do we. The other is bread, unleavened bread without the yeast. Again this is what Jesus used.

But there is something else there. You will not taste it or smell it. You have to look up the recipe to learn what it is. And what is that recipe? ¹⁹ **And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; ... he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, ... Really? Bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ? That is what the recipe says. But we taste only bread and wine.**

We are going to go into theology here for a moment because we have to. There are Christians out there who say there is no way Jesus' body and blood can be in this wafer and wine, let alone in every wafer and wine in every church throughout the world on any given Sunday. This can't be. How can Jesus be at the right of the Father in heaven and then in every wafer and cup of wine during Communion? Unless he is made of rubber and stretches across the solar system, this can't be.

It can't be, they say. But the words are plain, "... is my body, ... is my blood." So what do they do to explain these simple words? They have to change the words. "Jesus meant to say "symbolizes" my body and blood." People do that. How many times has a politician said something controversial and his staff spends the next three days explaining he meant something else? I would buy that, only we are talking about Jesus, the Son of God, and not some politician. Jesus doesn't need a staff cleaning up his gaffs. He is not a man that he should lie. Jesus means what he says, and if he says this is his body and blood, well, it is. And for those who argue he can't be in heaven with his body and on the Communion table at the same time, well, I listen to Matthew 28 where he says he is with us everywhere we are. His body is not some suit he hangs in the closet until he needs it. He is present as true man just as he is present everywhere as true God.

When Mary asked the angel how she, a virgin, could give birth to a son, the angel simply said, **With God nothing is impossible.** It is not impossible for Christ's body and blood to be with the bread and wine of Communion. Now let's see what it does.

II. The Communion of the communicant with God.

How well do you get along with your neighbor? Maybe you are very close. Maybe you are on friendly terms but that is it. Maybe you have never been in your neighbor's house. Maybe your neighbor is annoying. Maybe you are glad there is a fence between you and him.

How does God feel about being a neighbor with the world? There is something wrong with the relationship between mankind and God. It is not because God is some grumpy old man who yells at kids who cross his yard. He isn't. The problem is with us. We are the annoying, obnoxious neighbors. God is the guy who asks his neighbors to turn down their loud music only to have them turn it up louder. He is the guy who loaned his neighbor some power tools, but when he asks them for them back, you tell him to get lost. God says to love him and others and we say no. He tells us to stand up and we sit down. He tells us to sit down and we stand up.

There is a wall between us and God, only he didn't build it. We did. It is our sins which separate us from God. As Paul explains in Colossians 1, **Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.** Yet, what does God do? He doesn't reciprocate and ignore us. Rather, he invites us over for dinner, for a special meal he has prepared for us. **Take and eat ... take and drink,**" he says. And what does he give us? His own body and blood which was, as Jesus says, **given for you ... for the forgiveness of sins.** Here God makes up a brand new contract or covenant with us. The old one is broken where it says God will be our God if we are his people. We broke it. We refuse to be his people as we ignore and flat out disobey him. So he makes up a new covenant where he says, "I am your God." He put the burden of living a sin free life on Christ and he did it for us. He then put the burden of the guilt of our sins on him and with his body and blood he paid for them. **For the forgiveness of sins,** Jesus assures us.

How many times can you say you love someone? And how many ways can you say you love someone? In pre-marriage classes I have the couple read a book entitled the *Five Love Languages*. It basically says that people can show and feel loved in different ways. Sometimes all it takes is to say well done or thank you. Other times it might be touch like the holding of hands. How can God show you his love? He can tell you and he does. He can show you as he does with the cross. He also gives you Communion to tell you how much he loves you.

Right now, those words, "you are forgiven in Christ," mean so much. The release you from your guilt. The open wide the gates of heaven. You are forgiven. But God finds other ways to show us he loves us. He gives us Communion and that very body and blood which won our salvation. It is no different than hearing him forgive us, but here we can taste it, see it, even smell it. It is like a young man proposing to his girlfriend and he not only got on one knee, he gives her a gorgeous engagement ring and a bouquet of wonderful roses all at the same time. In Communion tells you in a thousand different ways that everything is fine between you and him, your sins will not keep you out of heaven, that he is close to us and our shepherd.

So that is the second communion going on here, the sinner and a holy God forming a community or being one with one another. But there is one more Communion.

III. Communion between believers.

Arlington is full of people and they are all different. Some like poetry, others don't. Some like sports, others don't. Some work blue collar jobs, some work white collar jobs, some are retired. Some like yard work, others hire someone to do it for them. But we all have one thing that unites us. We are the community of Arlington.

Jesus had that. Among his disciples he had fishermen and tax collectors, eager beavers and doubters, ambitious go getters and laid-back people. Yet they formed one body, one community, united around one word, Jesus. That that is what unites us and all believers. Imagine who comes up here for Communion. You will have farmers and office workers, men and women, Republicans and Democrats and Independents. I suppose we could have favorite football team Sunday. You will not have all Viking purple up here. You will also have Packer Green and Lion blue, even some Kansas City red. You might yourself disagreeing on politics, or how to plow or whom to cheer for. You may have very little if anything in common with the person standing next to you. And yet, we are one. We are united by one word, Jesus. We are united in our faith in him. We are fellow saints because of him. And as 1 Corinthians tells us, all who come to Communion and share the same bread and wine also are one another. We are in fellowship with one another. We know we will stand next to each other in heaven along with a lot of people who are so different than us, but are still part of the one body with Christ as its head.

I know what is in a Snickers bar. I have for a long time. That is why I always reach for one. I know what it is. You know what is in Communion. There are three communions there: the communion of the very body and blood Christ sacrificed for you, the communion between you, a sinner, and a holy God in heaven because God forgives you because of that body and blood, and sense the unity you have as the body of Christ. Tastes good, doesn't it. So, young folks, be eager for the day you are confirmed and you can take Communion. And for those who are instructed and know, reach for it every time. Amen.