

THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS.

I Cor. 11:26 ^{as in mission field}
 Acts 2:11 Pentecost: "all of one accord," + v. 42
 INTRODUCTION - Hymn "Blest Be the Tie that
 Binds": "the fellowship of kindred minds
 is like to that above."

I. We are one in recognition of our need for forgiveness

A. MOST of us, but not ALL of us, are one in this recognition of need for forgiveness. One way to tell what I mean by this is to ask the question, "Why are you here in this service now?"

In one Christian community the Lord's Supper is not celebrated according to the usage of the Church of Scotland, a sternly simple ritual since it follows the classical Reformed tradition of Presbyterianism. The chalices are of modern glass, beautifully made, and around the top of each is an inscription: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" --- five simple, soul-searching words.

Let's face it; some of us are here by accident; to be honest about it, we didn't know it was (the first Sunday of Advent) or) Communion Sunday. We just dropped in. Some are rather embarrassed because you would never have come if you had known that it was communion Sunday. But, my friend, don't be embarrassed. Jesus understands your feeling. And there is no need to stay for the communion service or to partake of the elements if you don't want to. But, my dear Christian friend, if you want to stay, stay and feel welcome. The table is the Lord's. It is not man's table. If you hear him inviting you, then (stay and) partake and be his guest.

And others of us are here by habit. (10:00) o'clock in the morning of the first day of the week here (in Bangkok) always sees us here worshipping. So here we are. Is there anything wrong with this? No; this is a sound practice. Jesus would understand and commend it if done in the right spirit.

He himself habitually attended worship "as was his custom" the scripture tells us (Lk. 4:16). Churchgoing is a good habit. So, welcome.

2. And some of us are here by conscious intention. The celebration of Advent and Communion are always a high moments in public worship for us. As we listen to the announcement of the coming of Emmanuel and to the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper and receive the consecrated elements, we experience both purification and renewal. We almost see our Lord in the Upper Room and feel that we are in his very presence. We resolve to live in his spirit as we leave the Holy Table. So welcome, friend.

3. Some of you are here because you have been jarred by something you didn't expect this past week. Something has made you realize that you have been slack in your religious life. You are here to acknowledge your backsliding and to rededicate your life to God. You are here to confess your sins, to receive God's forgiveness, and to renew your Christian commitment. So welcome, friend, to this fellowship of kindred minds.

4. Some of you are here for the first time. You feel a little strange and wonder what the service, the chaplain, and the choir will be like, and whether or not the congregation will prove themselves friendly. We are all members of the same Christian family, by whatever name we are called, and whatever church we have come from. We now intentionally identify ourselves with this congregation of the church of Christ. By this act we make our common confession before God and in this crowd of witnesses, that we are His, and He is ours, and we are all brothers and sisters in His family. So, welcome, friend, to this fellowship of kindred minds.

What a tragedy it is when this feeling of warm Christian fellowship doesn't exist among Christians of all races. It is too bad that black parents have watched their children rebel and join the black militants. It is too bad white parents have watched their children rebel and join the ^{KKK or the Neo-Nazi} counter-culture of revolutionaries. And it is too bad those parents haven't known each other well enough to cry on each other's shoulders. We all have the same problems. And the greatest problem is that of a generation of youth who have not been challenged with the dynamic of the Christian faith.

It's too bad when preachers do not feel free to preach on political or social or economic issues ~~that have Christian ethical aspects.~~ ~~such issues~~ that have Christian ethical aspects. ~~such issues~~ Our people must be led to know that it is not ~~and~~ justice when a giant corporation makes illegal ~~and~~ campaign contributions for selfish purposes -- ~~and~~ and gets away with it -- ~~or~~ ^{breaks the law and} pays only a small fine ~~they can easily afford, yet a poor man~~ found of stealing fruit to feed his family will probably ~~it~~ face a jail sentence.

The church must proclaim the message that you ~~it~~ cannot neglect man's awful predicament in this world, and that you can't preach a gospel of liberty without attacking the things that enslave men in this world. Jesus Christ is interested in the whole life of man. Shallow ministry produces shallow Christians and shallow churches. Preacherettes with sermonettes produce Christianettes! Ministers who compromise the gospel of Christ to human culture, who ignore injustices, and who ~~it~~ ~~are anxious to fill empty pews and get results at~~ any price are responsible for this shallowness.

We need to understand that it takes more than ~~of~~ sophisticated equipment, tools, and programs to reach and win the world for Christ. You can't bring in the kingdom with a computer network and fifty junior executives in a church headquarters. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord." Unless we have learned this lesson we cannot be one in our sense of need for forgiveness by God's grace.

II. Not only are we one in this Fellowship of Kindred Minds when we recognize our need for forgiveness, but we are one indeed when we are one in MEMORY.

The Lord's Supper is a constant illustration of what the sacred memory of a great sacrificial love can accomplish in transforming lives.

A. Can you really discern the Lord's body in the broken bread? Paul wrote "For he that eats and ~~and~~ drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation ~~to~~ to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

To discern the Lord's body means to distinguish between the normal eating of merely ordinary bread for physical nourishment, on the one hand, and to have the spiritual insight of seeing more than mere bread but seeing by faith the broken body of our Lord and Savior, and partaking by faith for your spiritual nourishment and grace.

For some--such as young children who have not come to the place where a meaningful personal faith and understanding have melted into genuine commitment, the table could only be an odd, unmeaning observance.

For some who have only an "historical" or "intellectual" faith--an outward acceptance of the historical facts about Jesus--this Lord's Table could on occasions be only like a national Memorial Day casually observed.

For some who approach Christ in ~~unbelief~~ and distrust, the Communion Elements could only be an act of conscious and deliberate irreverence.

But when true Christian believers meet around this table they find that Christ offers not simply the benefits of his death and resurrection, but the whole body in which he suffered, died, rose, and ascended to the right hand of his Father. Back into the presence of his Father, he took that gloriously resurrected body. This is the body of his present Lordship over the Church and over all things. And this is the body we are to discern at the Lord's Table as we remember his brokenness and sacrifice for us. This is another important element of the tie that binds our hearts together in the fellowship of kindred minds. He is present with us at all times.

III. In addition to all these things, About the Lord's Table we are one in FAITH.

But perhaps some of you will say, "but Chaplain, how can you say this when there are so many different Christian churches and denominations with such different faiths?" My answer is, "How many points of faith do these groups disagree about, and how many points do they agree about?" If you examine the total content of their faith, you will discover that 95% of all professing Christians agree basically about 95% of all their theological doctrines.

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There are many things we believe or accept by faith which we cannot "prove" in the same sense that we can prove scientifically other things.

How do we know that God was in Christ at Bethlehem? We don't know in the same sense that we know our name and age and address and a few other certainties in the whole mystery of creation.

But we bet our lives on the truth that is the Christian revelation and faith.

We know the alternatives, and if we have to take the choice between faith and despair, we choose faith.

It may come down to a gamble, a wager that God is as the Scriptures teach that he is.

As Pascal argued, it is wiser to wager that He is.

For, if I wager that He isn't and it turns out that He is, then I have lost everything.

If I wager that He is and it turns out that he isn't, then I have lost nothing.

But if I wager that He is and it turns out that He is, then I have gained everything.

Again,

IV On this first Sunday of Advent 1974, which is also our Communion Sunday here, we celebrate the fact that we are one in Expectancy and Hope.

A. Advent reminds us that Christ is near. The Hope of the Lord's Coming

When Christmas comes, we are reminded that Christ

is HERE.

In the meantime we wait upon the coming of the Lord, even though we know that in fact he has already come. Just as during Lent we anticipate His resurrection, even though we know that He is already alive.

It is the season during the church calendar when we observe all the main events in the life of Christ and his church.

This is a time of expectation. What do you expect? What do we expect of ourselves? - Self image. What do we expect of others? What do we expect of God?

The Psalmist said, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (62:5).

Rarely do our souls throb with a great spiritual expectancy when we approach the living God. And unless we expect from God those great spiritual benefits we desire of God, and which He wants to give, He cannot bless us with them, for our very lack of expectancy betrays a lack of faith.

~~D. And the Communion service tells us that Christ will finally come in triumph. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"~~
We are to observe this ordinance until he comes again. Are you living in constant expectancy of his coming, possibly at any time, and praying continuously, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"
About the Lord's Table we are one in hope for the future.

~~V. Furthermore, In this Fellowship of Kindred Minds About the Lord's Table, We are One in His Service.~~

Sometimes in our advent services we are so concerned to use the bright new candles that have never been lit before. But an unlit candle is like some people today who have never let their light shine for Jesus in the darkness of this world. On the other hand, candles that have been burned considerably are like people who have burned out to give light to others -- being consumed that they might bless, giving themselves in utter and unselfish abandonment that others might find and know and follow the paths that lead from darkness to daylight.

To escape with our lives is to lose our lives. To be burned out in doing the will of Almighty God is to shine on forever -- as the stars that never go out, as the light that never fails, as a lamp whose oil never diminishes, as a star which midnight cannot dim or hide.

~~CONCLUSION: So, my dear Christian friends, let us say to ourselves now that we are going to light our candle and let it shine and burn on and on till Jesus comes.~~
The call now is for the church to be the church and for Christians to be Christians.

Thus in the Fellowship of Kindred Minds we shall find a unity that ties us together in Christian faith, memory, expectancy, hope, and service.

And our highest reward will be to hear our Lord say, "Blessed are you, children of my Father.

You have been faithful in a few things; now I will make you co-rulers and fellow heirs with me over all things."

~~1 Dec 74 - Bangkok; June 76 M.S.C.I. 1987~~
Pasadena B.C. July 19, '87

THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS

1 Cor. 11:23-26

Acts 2:1 (Part of the miracle of Pentecost), they were "all of one accord," & vs. 42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes great spiritual truths are expressed more clearly in the great hymns of the church than they could be stated otherwise. This is the case with the following:

"Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above."

This marvelous christian fellowship of christian minds makes us one in several ways:

I. We are one in recognition of OUR NEED FOR FORGIVENESS.

II. Not only are we one in this Fellowship of Kindred Minds when we recognize our need of forgiveness, but we are one indeed when WE ARE ONE IN MEMORY.

I am speaking now of our memory of the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior for us on the cross, which we remember in the Lord's Supper. At the last Passover Supper with his 12 apostles Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

The Lord's Supper is a constant illustration of what the sacred memory of a great sacrificial love can accomplish in transforming lives.

A. Can you really discern significance of the Lord's body in the broken bread?

B. Can you really discern significance of the Lord's blood in the fruit of the vine?

1. To partake of the cup in faith means to try to understand the symbolism involved in this cup and the Blood of Christ, which is the thing symbolized in the contents of the cup.

2. The Christian believer needs to keep in

mind some basic truths about the Lord's Supper, as we believe it.

a. The bread does not miraculously and actually BECOME the body of Christ, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

It SYMBOLIZES the broken body of Christ.

b. The grape juice does not actually BECOME the blood of Christ, while only APPEARING TO BE grape juice or wine, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. It remains grape juice, but it SYMBOLIZES the blood of Christ.

This is why we prefer not to say some liturgical formula such as "The body of Christ" and "The blood of Christ" when the bread and cup are served.

They ARE NOT the body and blood; they merely REPRESENT the body and blood of Christ.

c. Neither is the actual substantial PRESENCE of Christ any more manifested along WITH the Lord's Supper any more than his spiritual presence is with us all the time. He is not any MORE PRESENT or PRESENT IN ANY SPECIAL AND DIFFERENT WAY DURING THE LORD'S SUPPER than he is present with us in this worship service a few minutes before or after the Lord's Supper.

d. Other Christians may believe in these theories of Transubstantiation or Consubstantiation, but WE DO NOT BELIEVE in these particular doctrines of the Lord's Supper.

e. Neither is there any special sacramental grace in the Lord's Supper which is not otherwise available to christians.

Other christians may believe this, but WE do not. In some other churches they call this observance a SACRAMENT. WE DO NOT. WE CALL IT AN ORDINANCE, which means something commanded by our Lord.

Other Christians in other churches like to have people come forward to the altar to receive Communion. That usually goes along with a tendency to consider the altar as a more sacred place than the pews, and the belief that the communion is a sacrament. Perhaps that is why, for them, it seems more appropriate to have people come forward to the altar and receive the bread and the cup directly from the hands of the minister or priest. It is OK for other christians to believe that if they want to, if they think their doctrines can be

justified by the New Testament scriptures,
but WE DO NOT VIEW THE SCRIPTURES THAT WAY.

To us the pews where the believers sit are just as sacred territory as the place where the communion table stands before the pulpit. If you partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper reverently and prayerfully as you sit in your chairs in the congregation, you will get just as much blessing from the service as you can by coming forward to an altar to receive the elements directly from the minister who whispers some magic words to you.

Let us not be misled by sentimentality in these things. There are sound doctrinal reasons why we do some things in certain ways in our churches.

We must study our Bible carefully and thoughtfully, and consistently relate practice in our ordinances to doctrinal and theological meaning and beliefs.

CONCLUSION

The call today is for the church to be the church—as nearly as possible to conform to the pattern outlined in the life and teaching of Christ and of his apostles. Yet we are to be the church speaking meaningfully to the people of our generation in terms and concepts that they can understand and relate to, without offending either their intelligence or personal dignity.

And the call today is for the christian believer to live IN this twentieth century world without being A PART OF its evil nature, when it comes to a way of thinking and a style of living. In these respects we answer to no man but to our Lord Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we be real christians and find peace of mind and minister to our fellow human beings on this planet.

Thus in this special FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS we shall find a unity that ties us together in gracious forgiveness and in blessed memory. And our highest reward will be to hear our Lord say "Blessed are you, children of my Father.

You have been faithful in a few things; now I will make you co-rulers and fellow heirs with me over all things."

If this is your commitment and decision, then make it public and take your stand openly for Jesus Christ. and come as we stand to sing.

6-13-93 HCC St. Pete