

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Appleton WI
October 6, 2024
Mark 10:13-16
Communion Meditation: "A Snack for Everyone"
Pastor Katherine Willis Pershey

When I was a little girl sitting in the wooden pews of my childhood church, I thought communion was a snack for everyone. I actually think I was right.

It is a simple interpretation, but it is still a true interpretation. Communion is a snack for everyone. Communion is ordinary bread that is blessed and broken and shared. Communion is ordinary juice or wine poured out for all people to drink. And Communion is for everyone: for saints and sinners. For young and old. For the skeptical and for true believers. For those who are content, and those who are grieving. For those who are lonely and sick, and those whose lives are filled with laughter and joy.

These gifts are for us to receive even if we don't fully understand what they mean. Perhaps especially if we don't fully understand what they mean. When people argue that children shouldn't receive Communion because they don't understand it, I can't help but think that I don't fully understand it, either. Still, each time I am drawn into the beautiful, ordinary mystery of the Table, my understanding deepens.

Each morsel of bread and each thimble of juice brings us deeper into union with Christ and with one another. We cannot construct a fence of right understanding around the table any more than we can construct a fence made of right belief. There is room for a lot of diversity in our tradition, but there is not room for exclusivity. The openness of our Table is sacrosanct.

According to our tradition, one of the few truly wrong things you can believe about Communion is that it is not for everyone. That it is acceptable for human beings to stand in between Jesus and the blessing he wishes to bestow upon anyone and everyone who comes to his Table.

The child in Jesus's lap couldn't tell you what all of his parables meant or ponder the theological ramifications of the Kingdom of God. But the child knew how to trust Jesus.

The child was not cynical, or suspicious, or mired in misgivings. The child simply allowed herself to be taken up into the arms of Jesus, to be held, to be blessed, to be loved. *Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.*

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he wrote, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

I love these words. They tell me that it is okay that we might not fully understand. It is okay that we don't know fully. But even though we might not understand, we are understood. And even though we might not fully know, we are fully known.

One of the things we contemplate today, on World Communion Sunday, is just how big "everyone" really is. Christian churches everywhere are gathered around tables today.

At wooden altars and marble tables, loaves of bread are being broken and cups of wine are being blessed. And not just in this country. In every country, in every corner of the earth. Christians in Mexico, and India, and China, and Australia. Christians in Kenya and Sweden and Portugal and Ukraine. We don't all understand the meaning of the sacrament in precisely the same way. We don't all use the same kind of bread. We don't all speak the same language. At times, our nations are at war.

But such divisions dissolve at the table of our Lord. When we approach the table, we are children of God, siblings in Christ. Jesus is present. Jesus is drawing each of us and all of us to himself, to receive his love and blessing. Jesus is enfolding us into the care and keeping of the Triune God. And Jesus is weaving us together into one Body, in all times and all places.

Jesus meets us at this table, in that bread and through that cup. And Jesus fully knows us, even if we cannot yet fully know him.

Communion is a snack for everyone, which is just another way of saying Communion is a feast for all Creation.

This is reason to celebrate, this is reason to sing. May it be so. Amen.