

HOW BEAUTIFUL IS THE BODY OF CHRIST
Communion Meditation –I Corinthians 10: 14-17 May 3, 2015
The Church of the Covenant

I got all emotionally cracked up several months ago when I looked out and saw you, my congregation whom I love. By now, 6 ½ years into being your pastor, I know you all rather well. I know a lot of your trials. I know a lot of the struggles in your life. I know the diseases and infirmities you deal with on a daily basis. I know the monumental struggles within your soul to hang on to faith and hope and love. I can look out and almost see into your heart. In communion, when I have the opportunity to look out and look into your eyes, I see the living presence of the Lord Jesus Christ staring back at me. I see something going on spiritually on the inside of you. It is both hard to see and also beautiful to see at the same time. We are together, collectively, the BODY OF CHRIST here on earth. We are knit together with bonds of faith and Spirit which cannot be broken. Together, as the Bible says, together we are the Body of Christ. How beautiful is the Body of Christ.

And what cracked me up was in a communion service a while back when the music “How Beautiful” was being sung, the same music that will be being sung today, and I was looking out into your faces right before communion, and I kept thinking, “we are broken in order to be made whole”. In the trials and struggles and sadnesses and losses in life we are participating in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The bread which we break today in communion, yes, it is Christ’s body broken for us. The cup of the new covenant which we share in communion, yes, it is Christ’s blood shed for us. But O, how much also the broken bread and the shared cup is our participation in the death of Jesus and His participation in the struggles within our own lives. Our broken-ness relates to HIS. Our sharing in His cup is also His sharing in OURS. It is this reciprocal nature of the spiritual sharing in the cross of Jesus that makes us spiritually whole. As our scripture from I Corinthians 10 for this morning rhetorically asks: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (I Corinthians 10: 16)* In communion we participate in Christ’s sufferings on the cross. In communion Christ participates in ours.

So I look out and I see your face. I look out and I see your struggles. I look out and see your faith. I look out and see your love. I look out and see Jesus staring back at me. I look out and spiritually see the body of Christ. And it cracks me up. And it moves me. How beautiful is the body of Christ...And then I have to get up and speak for communion...and put coherent thoughts together...and stop blubbering...

But Christ’s body was not very beautiful on the cross, was it? He had been scourged and beaten beyond recognition. We will see one day *“the glory of God in the face of Christ”*, as

the Bible says, but at Calvary all we could see was a bruised and bloody representation of the love of God. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, says the Bible, but Jesus' feet were not very beautiful when they were nailed to the cross with a nine inch nail. The hands which blessed the little children were pierced for us. He was wounded for our transgressions. The heart which loves us was pierced by a spear. He chose to go to the cross for the JOY that was set before Him, so He said. He was bruised for our iniquities. Upon Him at Calvary was heaped the sin of the world and the chastisement that makes us whole. And by His stripes...by the wounds He suffered at Calvary...we are healed. (Isaiah 53) By the death He died, He died that we might live. By the broken-ness He endured in love for us, we may find our broken-ness to be made whole. Calvary was ugly. What was done to Jesus disfigured Him and made the world esteem Him not. But Calvary was beautiful, too. Because as Jesus looked down from the cross all we could see written upon His face was the great love He has for us. The body of Christ broken on a cross. Behold the man! Behold the love of God! Yet and yet...how beautiful is the Body of Christ.

Last week while I was in Haiti I was on the de-worming team. Seems like a rather humble task for a preacher, to give individually upwards of 2,000 children a pill that will allow their meager meals not to be consumed by intestinal worms. But as I was giving out the pills to each child I would place it on their tongue and it would be washed down with a little cup of Gatorade. And as I was doing this I kept feeling I was officiating at communion. The big pills were the bread that we break. The little cup of Gatorade was the cup of blessing we share. And I would look into their little faces and think, "Will this little one make it to adulthood?" "Will he be happy?" "Will this child be able to reach their hopes and their dreams?" "Will they know you and love you, Jesus?" "Will you care for them when we go home to our safe homes and comfortable beds?" "Will these little ones be OK, Father?" "Will you watch over them and draw them to yourself?" I was always on the "slow team". They would have to try to speed me up. Our team leader would say, "Let's go, let's go. Move, move, move. We have so many more children to help." But I couldn't help it. I had to stop and look and think and pray. And as I looked into their eyes, I saw the eyes of Jesus staring back at me.

O the brokenness and the sadness of this world! O the suffering! O the loss! O the sufferings of the world nailed to a cross! O your suffering and the sufferings of these little children were carried and borne at Calvary. O how we participate with Christ and O how HE participates with us. O, HOW BEAUTIFUL IS THE BODY OF CHRIST!

Is this sacrament not the participation in the Body of Christ? And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*