



Week 5
April 29-May 5, 2018

"Shared Meals & Means of Grace"

Sunday

Acts 2:42 *The disciples devoted themselves to... the breaking of the bread...*

This week we focus on ways we experience Jesus' work of grace in our lives. Ways we experience grace are called "means of grace." Hundreds have been identified, but traditionally the means of grace include practices such as prayer, holy communion, bible study, baptism, serving and fellowship. We will look at some ways we experience God's grace. This week corresponds to "shared meals" or "breaking of the bread" at Acts 2:42.

The shared meals were feasts during which the Last Supper was shared. Picture it like a thanksgiving meal celebrating and remembering Jesus. Everyone shares their memories and their food with others as they gather around the emblems of Jesus' presence. At some point, the story of the Lord's Supper is told, and all share the bread and drink.

Pastor Keith

*Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time, with one accord to make our common supplication to you;
and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his name, you will be in the midst of them.
Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us;
granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come, life everlasting.
Amen. Prayer of John Chrysostom, after The Book of Common Prayer, 5th century*

Monday

John 15:1-8

A smart phone is designed, built and activated to facilitate communication. It is of little or no value when out of cell tower range and unable to connect. Jesus explains to us that we need to stay connected to him. Unless we stay connected to Jesus we are unable to glorify God; we cannot do what we are built to do. When we stay connected, however, we enjoy all the benefits, downloads and updates of a relationship with God. The means of grace help us stay connected. Connected, we can experience the nearness and presence of Jesus.

We best experience Jesus' work when we are near him.

Note a time when you experienced the presence of God in your life. What was a means of grace that helped you feel connected with him?

Prayer: Help me, Graceful Master, to seek you more than the benefits you give. Help me stay connected with you. Amen.

Tuesday

1 Cor 11:23-26

The Apostle Paul describes some of the ways people interfere with each other experiencing Jesus through Holy Communion. Nonetheless, he states what is possible: remembering Jesus, experiencing His presence, and telling of his redemptive death. Jesus promises to also be with us when we break the bread and share the cup (Matthew 26:26-30).

We experience Jesus during Communion

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for making your grace constantly available to us. Help me receive your grace and be an instrument of grace to others. Amen.

Wednesday

John 21:1-14

The disciples grew in their understanding after experiencing the resurrection of Jesus. They returned to daily work. While performing the usual tasks of their jobs, Jesus showed up. He surprised them in the middle of their daily routines.

The story indicates that they wanted to ask Jesus something like, "Are you really you?" At the same time, they knew it was He.

Jesus shows up anytime, anywhere. You may be surprised. When His urging touches your mind or heart, you might ask, "Is it really you?" But you know. Be ready to drop everything to be with Him and to obey.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you that you are present with us. Help me be alert and aware of your presence and responsive to your promptings. Amen.

Thursday

John 15:9-17

When we read the first part of John 15, we likened "staying in" Jesus' presence with remaining within communication distance of a cell tower. Today, we read one of the benefits of staying close: love. Not only love, but also joy, acceptance, friendship and answered prayer.

We experience God's love when we remain receptive to him. How do we stay receptive? Obey him. Obedience is a means of grace.

Prayer: Lead me, Christ Jesus, in your ways. Help me obey and love you. Thank you for the benefits of walking with you. Amen.

Friday

John 13:1-18

Foot washing is treated as a means of grace in some Christian churches.

Peter had difficulty accepting Jesus as a menial servant. Yet Peter was willing to accept Jesus as a servant if it is necessary to have a relationship with him. Peter received Jesus on Jesus' terms, and thus as a foot-washing servant. Only after receiving Christ's service could Peter pass on the servant nature of Jesus to others. Jesus would soon serve by dying on the cross, paying the price to wash away our sin and purchase our freedom.

Receive his washing. We cannot pass on what we have not received.

Prayer: Suffering Servant Christ, give me opportunities to serve others with the attitude and possibilities with which you have served me. Amen.

Saturday

Tomorrow, we will share the means of grace of Holy Communion during worship services. Prepare for this time together with Jesus. Some ways to prepare include confession and repentance, thanksgiving, and fasting. If you choose to fast, the fast is broken when you receive the bread and cup. His meal satisfies our hunger. Jesus is the Bread of Life that satisfies the longing and hungering of our souls.

Prayer: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden.

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer before Communion, Word and Table I, United Methodist Hymnal