

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tonight we celebrate the first communion for
Caleb, Clarissa, Averie,
Gracie, Lu and Mia.

We spent three Sundays after church learning about Holy Communion,
about the many times Jesus fed others,
about the miracles of Jesus' ministry.

The theme of tonight is love, our Savior's love for us
expressed in giving himself in bread and wine,
in the washing of the disciples' feet,
and in dying upon the cross.

At the center of this extraordinary night,
one thing was ordinary—
the meal they shared,
using the same items as many other shared meals.
Meals were the center and the ground of their common life—
as it has been for human beings over the centuries.
Gathering around the table is a ritual that knits together family life.
Gathering around the table is to enjoy and
to strengthen our community at church.
In our homes, we gather around the table to celebrate birthdays,
to welcome friends, and to share good times.
And then too, we gather around the table in times of trouble and loss—
we turn from an open grave,
leave the cemetery,
and share our grief as we eat and drink together.

Eating and drinking together is at the center of our worship life, too—
the sacrament of holy communion,
where God comes to us in bread and wine.
We share a meal of ordinary bread and wine that
become our Savior's body and blood.
How? We don't know.
It's a miracle and mystery.
Jesus promised to be in the bread and wine and we believe he is.

The words, “take and eat, take and drink”,
so familiar and comforting to us now,
were new and mysterious and confusing as
Jesus commanded them to
“take and eat this is my body given for you...
take and drink this is my blood shed for you”.
In those solemn moments,
our Lord promised to be in
the bread and wine celebrated as a Holy Meal by his disciples.

Holy Communion reminds us it’s not about us and what we do,
but about God’s amazing grace.
It’s about the God who comes down to us to share our life.
God, who comes to us in bread and wine.

Knowing he is nearing the end,
Jesus surrounded himself with his closest friends.
That night, Jesus did something else with his disciples.
He washed their feet.
It was an act of humble service.
Though he is very aware of who will betray him,
he doesn’t exclude Judas or Peter from the table or
from the washing of their feet.
In our times, we might have canceled Judas, maybe Peter, too.
but Jesus chooses to care for them instead,
offering them bread and cup and loving care.
Jesus doesn’t define Judas by his worst act.
If we put ourselves in Judas’s shoes,
it really is good news that nothing can separate us from God’s love.
We are not judged by our worst actions,
which means we are called to extend grace to others too.
The good news is that God’s radical,
unstoppable love extends to all people—
even to those who wrong us,
even to us on our worst days.

After Jesus has washed the disciples’ feet,
he prepares them for his leaving.

He says, "Where I am going, you cannot come".
And, the instruction, he gives is to love one another as I have loved you.
The Good News of Jesus will only be spread through love.
Love of God,
love of God's people.
As the song says,
"They will know we are Christians by our love. "

Caleb, Clarissa, Averie, Gracie,
Lu and Mia, welcome to the table.
People of Covenant, welcome to the table.
We will eat and drink together on our way to the
life-giving cross of Jesus Christ our Savior.
Let us also love and serve one another as Jesus commanded.

At the end of this service,
we participate in our Lord's betrayal.
The symbol of Christ in our midst,
the altar,
is stripped bare.
Christ is stripped of his power and glory.
Good Friday is inescapable.
And, the Good News will soon be shouted far and wide.
Thanks be to God.
Amen.