

Matthew 26:1-30

## The Tastes of Christmas

Last Christmas we had what Ken and I have come to call our International Family Christmas. God had brought people into our lives from Nigeria, India, and Mozambique, all now living in Thunder Bay as Lakehead University students and the family of one of the students. Being their first Christmas in Canada, we planned a feast with the turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, gravy, salad, and green beans sautéed in butter, along with freshly made cranberry sauce. I had never made cranberry sauce before. I didn't even think I liked cranberry sauce, but figured we better get that in there to make it more traditional. Myself and one of the other guests made it together with joy and laughter. Neither of us knew what we were doing. We ate it warm as I hadn't read the directions carefully ahead of time to know you are actually supposed to chill it. Having said that, I discovered I like it warm.

Not only did we have what is known as traditional fare for Canada, we got to enjoy other dishes and desert as we had invited the guests to make or bring something that would make it feel more like Christmas for them. It was so good. The aroma of food in the oven as it cooked, the joy in the room as we played games and shared in conversation, the anticipation of the meal, then enjoying what was familiar along with the sampling of new flavours and textures was wonderful.

The reason for gathering together was mostly to share in the meal, to taste and see the different dishes and variety of food that would warm our hearts and fill our stomachs. Hopefully as you have listened to my story you have been reminded of tastes you associate with Christmas.

This Advent we are going to explore the Christmas story through our senses of taste, touch, hearing, smell, and sight. So one might wonder why our reading today was not part of the Christmas story but rather from passages that we would normally hear at Easter. Truth is the Christmas story is not complete without the story of Jesus death and resurrection and it was in Jesus dying that we most fully experience the taste of Christmas. The communion table with bread and wine is the taste of why Jesus came in the first place. Jesus came out of love for us.

Around the world, in different cultures and different churches, the Lord's Supper is celebrated in various ways with different foods and traditions. Even here we have used different kinds of bread and have joined in communion by being served the bread and juice with people bringing it to those in the pews. We have had communion by intinction where a piece of bread is dipped into the chalice of juice and then partaken of. We have sat around tables and share the cup and bread. There is no one right way to do this.

You may have noted that I have even used different words to describe the sharing of bread and wine. The Worship Sourcebook describes the different ways we can understand communion.

“Lord’s Supper” conveys that Jesus himself is host of the supper and that we celebrate this feast in obedience to Christ. “Communion” highlights the intimate union we experience with both Christ and fellow believers. “Eucharist” [not a word that we use often in this church but still in important way to describe the meal is] (based on the Greek word for “thanksgiving”) it names this feast as a meal of gratitude, just as the last supper was, for Jesus and his disciples, a meal of thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup>

No one way is the only way to think about this meal. Each points us to and conveys an aspect of the meal that, taken together, broaden our experience and understanding of the deeper meaning of being invited to this meal in the first place and what it is to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Looking at this from the perspective of Advent and using the words of Mark Vande Zande the pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Orange City Iowa, who developed this particular worship series, “The tastes of the Lord’s Supper speak to the reason why Jesus came.”<sup>2</sup>

In the scripture we heard. “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take eat; this is my body.” (Matt. 26:26 NRSV)

### **The taste of bread reminds us of**

- the life of Jesus, who humbled himself to become a baby
- the incarnation – God becoming flesh
- Jesus’ humiliation – his suffering, the betrayal, the beating, the cross
- Jesus’ death<sup>3</sup>

Jesus went on and “he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to the disciples saying, “Drink from it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt. 26:27-28)

### **The taste of juice or wine reminds us of**

- the blood of Christ
- the sacrifice of Christ
- the drops of blood Jesus sweated in Gethsemane

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Vande Zande serves as the pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa. [Reformed Worship 121 © September 2016](#) Worship Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. Used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

- the beatings, floggings, nails, and crown of thorns that resulted in Christ's bleeding
- the piercing of his side

### **Tasting the bread and juice when we celebrate the Lord's Supper**

- reminds us that our sins are forgiven (Matt. 26:28)
- unites us to Christ
- unite us together (1 Cor. 10:16-17)
- encourages us to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again (1 Cor. 11:26)<sup>4</sup>

This meal is at the center of our Christian faith. It is what we do as followers of Christ to be reminded that Jesus came because of love, out of love, and for love. It is a celebration of God's grace and has nothing to do with our own goodness. It is about God's goodness, grace, and faithfulness to us. It is about God's work through the Holy Spirit in our lives. The meal is about relationship, it begins with God's invitation to us then moves into a prayer of thanksgiving and hope. "It is deeply personal, but never private. It is a communal action of the gathered congregation, which represent the church in all times and places."<sup>5</sup>

Today, when you taste the bread, the body of Christ's love for you, and drink of the cup which is the blood of Christ's love for you, savour its meaning and the impact that God's love, grace, forgiveness, joy, and hope that is promised has had, is having, and will continue to have on the way you live your life. May you be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit as you taste and see that the Lord is good. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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