

Agape Meal

Hi everyone! This Sunday we are celebrating the sacrament of communion in our Zoom worship. Now, we can't do communion through a pre-recorded video, we need to be celebrating it together at the same time. But for those of you who can't join us on Zoom, I'm going to lead you through a similar practice called an Agape Meal, or Love feast, which remembers the meals Jesus shared with his followers. So I invite you grab a snack, or to watch this before a meal. Any food can be served during an Agape Meal, because it's not just a remembrance of the Last Supper, but all the times Jesus gathered with his followers at table.

So we'll begin by hearing some words from scripture:

Matthew 9: 9-13

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Response

Jesus gathered at table and shared a meal with disciples and sinners. And the key is that these were not two different groups of people, there were disciples who were also sinners welcomed by Jesus then, and now.

So let's imagine ourselves today as guests at that meal.

Remember that we are also sinners, that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, sometimes our sin is individual, and sometimes, it is systemic sin, like racism, that we are all a part of. But, just as he welcomed the tax collectors and sinners to dinner, Jesus welcomes us as well, he reveals God's presence to us, and we are nurtured, and blessed, and loved.

But we are not only sinners, we are also disciples, we seek to follow Jesus' Way, to love and welcome as he did. And so Jesus welcomes us just as he did to his early disciples, to have our spirits nourished by God so that we can continue our journey.

So let us now give thanks for the blessing of the food we are about to receive.

Table Grace

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.

We thank you that during his life, Jesus sat and shared meals with people: women and men; fishers, Pharisees, and tax collectors; sinners and disciples.

After his death, his followers would continue to gather together over a meal, to worship and remember, just as we are doing now.

Today, through your goodness we have this food to eat, and the fellowship of this church family, joined in Spirit, to enjoy.

Bless the food for our use.

Bless us in your service,
that we may help those who are in need,
for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Meal

I invite you now to enjoy the gifts of God in this meal.

Offering

And now that we have received God's gifts, let's take a moment to think of the gifts we have to offer, not just financial, but the gifts that are in our personality, our skills, our time. Put them in your hands. And when you are ready, take those gifts and offer them up to God.

Let us pray:

Loving God, we thank you for all the blessings you have given us. May we use the ways we have been blessed and gifted to bless others, in our church family, in our community, and in our world. Amen.

Closing

Thanks for joining me in this simple Agape Meal. I encourage you to check out the rest of the videos for this Sunday, Stephen has recorded the sung version of the Lord's Prayer which would be a good way to end this time. There are also several other beautiful pieces of music, and a very meaningful video created by the Black Clergy Network of the United Church of Canada, which is important for us all to watch and listen to.

Blessings to you all today and this week!

Blessing

Go forth now,
as sinners, forgiven by God,
as beloved children, welcomed by God,
and as disciples, called by God.
Amen.