

From the Pastor

When the Apostle Paul talks about the church being the body of Christ—and he does so at Romans 12:3-8 and at I Corinthians 12:12-31—he means pretty much just what he says. He isn't just talking symbolically or metaphorically. He means just what he says. The church is the body of Christ. He means that we, gathered together as the church, are the earthly body of the risen Christ. Through the church, the earthly ministry of Jesus continues. Through us together does that ministry continue.

It is at the communion table that we become the body of Christ. Paul writes this at I Corinthians 10:16-17: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread.” At I Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul writes of the tradition that had been passed down to him, the memory of what happened on the night of Jesus' betrayal: Jesus “took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” At the communion table, we, who are many, eat of the same loaf of bread, which is the body of Christ, and become one as we do so. We become one in the body of Christ. We become the body of Christ. At the communion table, Jesus Christ brings us together and joins us together as his body.

That's what the bread on the communion table is, but what about the cup? What about the blood of Christ? Well, in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, blood means life. (I could cite chapters and verses, but this is turning into more of a Bible study than I intended.) Blood is life. Blood coursing through arteries is life. And blood donated at the blood bank can mean life for someone else. So, when Paul writes that the cup of blessing which we drink is a sharing in the blood of Christ, he means that we are sharing in the life of Christ. And when, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave the cup to his disciples saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood,” he was giving his life to them. At the communion table, Jesus Christ gives his life to us. We are given his life to live. His life is now our life so that we can say, with Paul, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20)

This isn't just a matter of Jesus instructing us, or commanding us, or even calling us, to live our lives a certain way. It isn't just us chickens here at the church. It is Jesus living through us. Paul says at I Corinthians 12:13 that we are “all made to drink of one Spirit.” That cup is life and it is Spirit. It is power. It is power to so live, the power to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

The love and the power of Jesus being made real through us and in our midst, that sounds like a pretty good deal to me.

Pastor Neal