

## Gray Matters

The Lord's Supper continues to grow in importance in my life the more I contemplate the gift of God for us in Jesus Christ and understand the great value the Apostles and the Church Fathers attached to it. Presbyterians have tended to have an up and down relationship with this sacrament as we have wrestled with coming to a faithfully Reformed understanding and practice of it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book "Life Together" says, "The fellowship of the table teaches Christians that they still eat the perishable bread of the earthly pilgrimage. But if they share this bread with one another, they shall also one day receive the imperishable bread together in the Father's house." This is a wonderful promise, but is the Lord's Table, only a table in which we contemplate a future heavenly banquet? I believe it is more.

We know that our daily bread is perishable bread because we have to keep on eating it day after day, after day to receive only temporary nourishment. But still we continue to eat the bread in faith, as a sign of the True Bread that has come from heaven to bring us eternal life. For every time the bread is broken Jesus is remembered anew. Every time we share in the communion meal we are reminded by the words of institution that we are eating to remember. But this remembrance is more than just a jogging of the memory to recall who Jesus is and what He did.

The Hebrew concept of remembrance entails a re-experiencing of the thing remembered, rather than retrieving a mental note. A good example is the Passover Seder, from which The Lord's Supper came to be.

Throughout time, when the Passover is celebrated, each person is included in both the bondage in Egypt and the great deliverance through the Red Sea. This is what bonds Jews together. It is an experienced remembrance (the same has become true of Hanukah, and of the

holocaust). And when we Christian believers eat the Lord's Supper we are joining with our fellow believers, of every time and place, to corporately remember Jesus and what he has done on our behalf, and to jointly participate in that first Lord's Supper/ Passover meal that was instituted on the night Jesus was betrayed. Therefore, when we eat the Lord's Supper, we are actually encountering our Lord, as He is being spiritually revealed in the breaking of the bread; and grace is applied to us.

But that's not all, in another place Bonhoeffer says, "The Scriptures speak of three kinds of table fellowship that Jesus keeps with his own: daily fellowship at table (Jesus joins us at every meal that is received with thanksgiving), the table fellowship of the Lord's Supper, and the final table fellowship in the kingdom of God. But in all three, the one thing that counts is that our eyes are opened to recognize Christ's presence among us to minister new life to us.

This meal that we share together is a supernatural meal, not that anything magical happens to the elements that we eat and drink, but that Jesus reveals himself to us in our eating and drinking. And in his revelation we are renewed and strengthened by grace, in faith, to first of all believe that he is alive and with us, even when he seems to be far off. And secondly, to go back to our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members and tell them about this Jesus who has been revealed to us in the breaking of the bread.

This Maundy Thursday, April 13, we will be re-enacting the Passover Seder Meal as a congregation. We won't eat the full meal, but we will have enough of a taste to better understand what Jesus celebrated on that night when he initiated what we now call The Lord's Supper. I hope you will join us for this time of worship and remembrance.