

“PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE”

Luke 22:14-23 (NIV)

Kailua Christian Church

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Good morning. My name is Yumiko Nakagawa, an ordained minister of Evangelical Covenant Church. I have served at an ECC church in Boston for over 10 years and recently moved to Hawaii. I'm grateful to be able to worship with you this morning.

While this is the first time meeting you all, you have been in my prayers, in light of the great loss at KCC earlier last month. I've heard a great deal about Bev from various people including Pastor Dale, and I can't imagine how much you all miss her.

What is one thing you miss about Bev? It may be all too raw for some of you, and if it is, no pressure at all to share. But if you would like, would you tell me a little bit about her? Go ahead and type it in the chat, or yourself to share.

[1 minute]

Thank you for sharing wonderfully sweet things about Bev. Unfortunately, I haven't had a chance to meet her on this earth, and she's now someone I look forward to meeting in the future. And let me assure you, we will all see her. Though it doesn't ease the pain you are feeling today.

I say this because I came to accept Christ as my Savior after losing my close friend. And hope of seeing her someday is what I held onto. Miyuki and I were on the same track team all throughout middle and high school. She and I got close because we ran together every day. She was the sweetest person with the most gentle spirit. Very different from me who is loud.

Out of the blue, when we were seniors in high school, she was diagnosed with leukemia. After a transplant and spending the following 3 years in a hospital bed, she was taken. I was a strong atheist back then, but eventually, in the place of pain, question and anger, the Holy Spirit led me to Christ.

Even to this day, I miss her. I kept wondering what would have happened to her if she had survived leukemia. Every time I visit a new city that she hasn't been to, I often talk to her and tell her how I wish she could see this with me. And I hope and pray that I will see her again. And she is just one of many people I look forward to seeing in heaven.

I am sure you have people you look forward to seeing in heaven as well. Who do you want to see? Your parents, siblings, friends, or spouse? Bev?

For John, Peter, Paul, Mary, Thomas and the rest of sisters and brothers in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, it was Jesus.

We read the passage from Luke 22. At the last supper, Jesus instructs His disciples about how to celebrate Communion.

Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so the disciples did. In the following days and weeks, the disciples broke the bread, and shared with each other and remembered Jesus. And talked about what they miss about their teacher, messiah, Savior, and friend. They talked about what they would do when they get to see Jesus. Jesus promised to come back, and the disciples thought the days were coming in a matter of weeks and months, so I imagine they talked about how much they looked forward to seeing Jesus, perhaps as much as we look forward to seeing our loved ones, if not more.

And it wasn't just the fun memory that they remembered as they celebrated the Communion.

What they also remembered was the sacrifice of Jesus. When Jesus came to the earth, He had a mission that was to bring salvation to all by becoming the ultimate and eternal sacrifice.

Jesus' mission was to become the everlasting sacrifice for us, so He received the consequence of our sin and His blood covers us. As a result, despite the unchanging sinful nature of our own, we are able to enter into the relationship with God.

From the very beginning, God had desired to be in relationship with us. He had tried so many things so that we would share life with Him.

Sending Jesus to earth and Jesus sacrificing Himself, was God's final and ultimate attempt to invite us to be in the relationship with Him.

And that's what the Last Supper depicts. The final and ultimate invitation from God. And the cost of the invitation was Jesus.

Jesus, the Lord of the Universe, lived among humans, captured, beaten, mocked and humiliated. He was nailed and experienced the prolonged pain on the cross. His disciples, his close friends, left Him. He had to leave his mother Mary behind. Not only He experienced the physical and emotional pain, He had also experienced total separation from His Father and the Holy Spirit.

*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?
On the Cross, Jesus experienced the total separation from God.*

But, it was supposed to be us,
It was supposed to be us who would be deserted by God.
But instead of leaving us, God sent Jesus to us.
He did not leave us. We did not have to experience the separation from God, and we are with Him, precisely because Jesus experienced the separation.

That's / the gift /of the New Covenant, / salvation for all.
We did not bear any cost, did not earn this salvation. But it was freely given to us.

That's what Communion reminds us: Taking Communion, we remember the cost and gift of our salvation. As our teeth crush the bread, it reminds us that it was our sins that broke Jesus' body. As we drink the cup, it reminds us that the blood of Jesus covers us and we can now enter into the relationship freely.

When we look at the bread,
we remember the cost of my salvation, why Jesus had to die;

when we see the cup,
we are reminded of the gift we received, and how He redeemed us.

Communion points us to what Jesus has done.
It also points us to what Jesus is doing today.

We call Communion The Lord's Supper, but people we see at the table of the Lord's Supper are not really the people we usually eat supper with, are they?
Once a month we share Communion with the people who are not family members and people we don't necessarily have that much in common. One thing we have in common of course is the blood of Christ. As we take Communion, we remember Jesus is the one bringing us to the table today.

Not all of us are friends, not all of us are close, some of us have just met, some of may not care for each other that much, but there's one thing we have in common. That Jesus brings us together.

One of the things I lament about this pandemic time is that we can't really celebrate the communion in the way we used to. It used to be a tangible reminder for me to see all people coming to the table to share Communion. Just like in any church (but I am sure KCC is an exception), all churches have their own troubles and dramas. Every time I see someone I haven't received their email, see folks who don't get along come up to take the Communion, I am reminded that we ought to love one another despite whatever the good reason I may have not to.

And we can't really do that now, we are all sitting separate in our own home, not sharing the same bread, not sharing the cup. And this sad state of the Communion

table is also the reminder of our present reality - we are all disconnected and isolated. But it is not in the bread and the wine that has a magical power to unite us, but the bread that's already broken and the blood already shared that we are united. It is not the physical presence that matters, but the work of the Holy Spirit among us that makes Communion as a shared communal experience. What matters is our obedience to follow the command of Jesus even when it's hard to share the bread and the cup with the brothers and sisters you don't agree with, or when we can't share the cup and bread physically. And we lament what we lost this past year of pandemic.

Communion reminds us about the past and present..... and future.

The Last Supper reminds us that there are greater feasts in the future. The Last Supper was taken place during the unleavened bread feast (Luke 22:1). Unleavened bread feast is the day, the harvest has began feast. One year of hard work has literally come to fruition, and people see the year of hard labor being golden in the field. So, when they begin the harvest, they have a feast with the very first crop. The first seven days, they don't eat the old grain, and just literally feast in the new grain! Tastes so great. So that's a great feast and that's when the last supper was taking place.

But, this is nothing compared to the feast at the end of the harvest season. At the end of the harvest season, there is a feast of weeks. That one is huge! They really are done with the work, they have a year-long supply of food – this is like a payday times 24! You don't have to get up tomorrow morning, you have done enough work. It's an eternal aloha Friday.

And we will have the feast of weeks in heaven. When the kingdom comes, when Jesus will finally drink the cup of the vine with us as he promised (Luke 22:1), the feast will be incomparably awesome. All of your hard work of trying to reach out to your friends, your many prayers for your family, you swallowing your ego to forgive our brothers and sisters, and your seemingly endless search of God will be no more and all we will have is the harvest. So many moments in history that broke God's heart, Father sending Jesus to the earth, Holy Spirit working in so many unnoticed miraculous ways. Jesus living as a man, enduring the humiliation even though He is God. Jesus, the Lord of all the universe, was spitted, laughed at, beaten, broken, and killed. When we are at the feast with Jesus when His kingdom comes, we will look back at all of the pain, hard work, the joy and stories, and will see the faces at the table. And well, hear our Lord say, well done.

Communion gives us a hope/there is a greater feast at the end.

And I want all of us to be at the table. Some of you are seeking God, but hasn't accepted Him as your Lord. I want YOU to be at the table. And Jesus does too. He gave you everything. Now what would be your response? What would be your response proportional to his desperate invitation?

Now, you may have questions – then ask Him. You may have hesitation, search. You can also come to the table. With your questions, frustrations, and hesitation, just bring them all to the table and to Him.

We should not take the meaning of participating in Communion lightly. But maybe, you are more ready than you think. You are sitting here in the temple on a fine Sunday morning of a long weekend. You may have been earnestly seeking God, if you have been seeking Him earnestly, and still have questions, I don't see how that should stop you. Jesus invites you. Now what's your response?

You don't have to have all the answers and be fully convinced about Christianity to respond to Jesus. Come as you are and bring your questions to Him.

And if you are an old-timer believer, who had responded to Jesus' invitation long time ago, great. If it happens that your spiritual life is not so swell right now, be encouraged!

Jesus knows. He left us a very tangible reminder, bread and wine, and a clear action item, take this and remember me. He knows that our feeble mind has its limitation and we may not be able to understand God fully, our emotion is not reliable company to our spiritual walk. We may not "feel" the passion, or closeness to God. But He knew, and He left us brilliant instructions. His invitation to come and take Communion demands response. When your mind confuses you, He is simply asking you to respond with participation in Communion. So, please come to the table.

If you are doing well, maybe Communion challenges us to remember the promise for the future. There will be a greater party at the end.

How are we preparing ourselves to this party with Jesus in heaven?

Brothers and sisters,
our Lord Jesus commands us
to break the bread, shared the cup and remember Him,
so we shall do that together as a community today.

Before we do that, let's take a couple minutes of reflection.

(Communion Instruction)

(prayer)

Let me pray. Whether you are taking the communion or not, please join us.

When Communion remind us of the past,
may our hearts of repentance be genuine.

When communion remind us about the present reality,
may it humble us and challenge us to love and forgive one another.

And when Communion remind us of the future,
may joy fill our hearts.
May the hope of the future inspire us.

On the night when Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread, broke it and said, this is my body, do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after the dinner, He took the cup and said this is my blood of the new covenant.

My brothers and sisters, this is what our Lord Jesus had commanded. He died on the cross, His body was broken for us, His blood shed for us. Today we take Communion in remembrance of Jesus. Let us take and eat.

[END]