

We Reserve the Right to Serve All

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16 – 18 and Matthew 25:31 - 46

Oct. 1st, 2023

In our scripture reading from 2 Corinthians 4:16 it says – ‘*Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.*’

Let me share a story I read – a friend of the writer was dying from cancer. The cancer had ravaged her body for more than two years. The doctors had told her that there was nothing more they could do. Despite all this news and prognosis, she refused to become negative about life and God. Her focus was on continuing to live the way God desired of her. She realized that while she was still breathing, God was still working on her and through her. When she became too weak to do much, she prayed for others. Many people came to know Christ because of her unwavering trust in God despite her unfortunate circumstances. Her life was truly a testimony and a reminder to others of the most important things. She reminded others of things that count and of things that are eternal!

So Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians two things:

#1 - *Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.*

#2 – *So we must fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

May each of you not focus on the difficulties of life, despite the difficulties life brings. May each of you refuse to get negative about life and God. May each of you focus on finding ways to continue to live the way God desired of you. May each of you realize that you are still breathing and serving God and this community of faith here on the beach. May your leadership. May each of you understand that God is still working on you and through you.

I can personal testify that each of you are here today for the right purpose, not to serve yourself but to serve others. I hope that each of you have an unwavering trust in God. May each of you be truly a testimony and a reminder to others of the most important things. May you remind others of things that count and of things that are eternal!

I am sharing this message with you on the World Communion Sunday because today millions of people around the world will come to the communion table to remember and celebrate this meal.

It is in our DNA to come to this table each week.

A sign in a sandwich shop read - 'We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone!' Think about that in the history of our denomination.

Our two dominate founding fathers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in America around the time of our independence from England, did not abide by this rule - We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone! Alexander Campbell & Barton Stone served communion to everyone! Let us explore our early history of our denomination.

Alexander Campbell in Bethany West Virginia at a church called the Brush Run Church was serving communion to everyone who came to worship. Alexander Campbell was a Presbyterian minister and the Presbyterian Church had rules at that time like the sign in the sandwich show - We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone! Alexander was instructed by his leaders to only serve communion to members of his Presbyterian church only. If you came to worship at the Brush Run church and were a guest or a member of another Presbyterian church, Rev. Campbell was told not to give you communion. Only those who were members of his church could receive communion.

Rev. Alexander Campbell gave communion to everyone and when the area Presbyterian pastors, churches, and leaders found out this practice; they fired Alexander and took his standing away from him. He was no longer a Presbyterian minister. He then started a new congregation and called the Disciples of Christ at Brush Run Church. Our first church of the Campbell Movement.

At about the same time in Kentucky, near Lexington, at a church called the Cane Ridge Church; Rev. Barton Stone, also a Presbyterian minister, was doing similar things. He was giving communion to everyone includes blacks. Barton Stone's church was on the edge of the wilderness of that day and he gave communion to each and every one that came to worship.

Barton Stone and many other Presbyterian minister and other ministers from many different denominations were have revival meeting at Cane Ridge. At these week long revival meetings, they would have an evening worship during which Rev. Barton Stone would serve communion to everyone present which would include Presbyterians, Methodist, Lutheran; men, women, children, and slaves. Everyone who professed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior was invited to come forward and take communion.

Rev. Stone and the other Presbyterian ministers decided to leave the Presbyterian Church so they signed the 'Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery'. They became the Christian Church. They did not believe the sign - 'We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone'! They served everyone!

As a follower of Jesus Christ, do we also have the right to refuse service to anyone? Sometimes we may act as though we do. Our critical eyes make quick judgements. We judge - Is the person male or female? Is the person single, divorced, or married? Is the person rich or poor? What about the person's religious background?

We have to admit, we prefer to lend a hand to those who attend a church that is similar to ours. We prefer to help a person who holds similar beliefs to ours. We prefer to come to the aid of a person of the same social class as ours. We prefer to reach out to a person of the same educational level that we have. If you are like us, we will help you. But if you are different, well maybe not.

If we are to serve Christ according to his standard, it means we have to set aside our preferences and be willing to serve anyone whom God sends our way. That would include strangers, the poor, the ill, and the prisoner.

There will come a day when God will judge all the nations. God will sort out those who will inherit the kingdom and those who will not. In the meantime before that day comes, God is asking each one of us - will we serve everyone who crosses our path? Does the sign on our door say - we reserve the right to refuse service to anyone - or does our sign say - we reserve the right to serve everyone!

Keeping with our tradition to serve everyone, following the example of Alexander Campbell in western PA, following Barton Stone's example in the wilderness of Kentucky, and following the ministry of Jesus Christ - WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO SERVE EVERYONE!

Are you a follower of Jesus Christ? If so come one, come all to this table of remembrance. Let us share together the Lord's supper. Let us be faithful servants of Jesus Christ and welcome all to this welcoming table.

As the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one Body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's table as God has welcomed us.

On this special World Communion Sunday, we refuse no one access to this table.

I have said our denominational communion words to you each and every Sunday that I have been with you. For 100 YouTube services during Covid and for all our parking lot services and for all our Chapel services I have said these words.

So today, on this World Communion Sunday 2023, Let us hear our denominational communion words in French by Marc Theriault

Let us hear our denominational communion words in German by Mary Johnston

Let us hear our denominational communion in Japanese by my grandson Grayson Plocinski from Masawa Japan

And final finally let us hear these words in English by Grayson

Remember everyone is welcomed to the Lord's Table – we reserve the right to serve everyone!

Our communion hymn is in our Blue Hymnal #393 'One Bread, One Body'.

Communion Meditation

For over 65 years, this celebration of World Communion Sunday at the table of Christ has expressed our solidarity with Christians worldwide and serves as a sign of hope for the oneness to which we are called.

Think about it: At this time millions of Christians are taking communion. Today, throughout the world millions will receive the bread representing the Body of Christ and the cup representing the Blood of Christ.

We do this every Sunday. Meditate this morning on the millions doing this in unity. All this is possible because of what Jesus did for us.

Christ did not die for one special group. Christ gave his life on the cross so that people of every tribe, every language, and every nation can find life through faith in Him.

This morning you will hear our communion words in three different languages. I will speak it in English, ___ will speak the same words in Spanish, and _____ will speak the same words in German.

Let us in union with the whole church join with Christ to eat and drink with him. (Spanish then German)

May the bread we eat be to us the very bread of life. (Spanish then German)

May the cup we share be to us God's wine of salvation. (Spanish then German)

Let us celebrate that Christ is alive and in our midst throughout the world. (Spanish then German)

Remember everyone is welcomed to the table - we reserve the right to serve everyone!