

World Communion Sunday (Year C)

---

*2 Timothy 1:1-14*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,*

*To Timothy, my beloved child:*

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.*

*Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.*

---

World Communion Sunday was started in 1930 by a Presbyterian minister in Pittsburgh named Rev. Hugh Thompson Kerr. Although it was officially endorsed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1936, it got off to a slow start. It wasn't until nearly a decade later that the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches (which would later become known as the National Council of Churches) endorsed it and it truly became a world-wide ecumenical celebration.

Perhaps the timing of that endorsement is important to note. The National Council of Churches endorsed World Communion Sunday in the thick of the Second World War. World Communion Sunday, after all, is all about unity. And we tend to talk about unity more in our moments of disunity, don't we? I suspect one of the reasons that World Communion Sunday went viral in 1940 is that many Christian churches were trying to hold the world together as it seemed to be tearing itself apart.

It's interesting, isn't it, to celebrate today's witness of unity when we don't feel particularly unified as a nation? Some folks say that we've never been as divided as a country as we are right now. I have a feeling that some historians might disagree with that statement. However, you can't argue against the truth that we live in divided times. The lines of division run deep. Within our workplaces and our schools. Within our social media. Within our news consumption. Within our families. And, yes, within our congregations.

And, to make things even worse, much of the divisive rhetoric that we see tearing our communities apart has risen to power at the endorsement many Christians in this country. And, yes, even those of us who do not consider ourselves “evangelicals” are not free from blame. We have caused division as well.

And, in the midst of all this division, here we are. Gathered around a table. A table where we dare to proclaim one faith, one hope, one Lord. In the midst of division, we are called, by God, to this table. And it is very important to note that this Table does not belong to us, nor to our denomination, nor to our country. Everyone is welcome at this Table. However, one thing is most certainly not compatible with the theology of communion and that’s Christian nationalism.

Do you know what Christian Nationalism is? It’s the notion that A) this country was founded as a Christian nation (which is just *not* true) and B) that God has ordained the United States of America to be superior to others and because of that we should impose a Christian agenda upon all its people.

Friends, such a notion is blatantly antithetical to the Gospel we proclaim. On World Communion Sunday, as we gather with Christians around the world, we are reminded that here in this room and, as Christians, out in the world, we do not proclaim “America First,” we proclaim *Jesus* first. On this World Communion Sunday, we are reminded that Jesus Christ was not a white dude. Jesus Christ was a brown skinned Jewish man from the Middle East.

And that brown skinned Jewish man from the Middle East, resurrected in glory, calls us to this table.

On this day, we gather with folks around the world - brown, black, white, and every color in between, gay, straight, bisexual, cisgender, transgender, male, female, young, old, liberal, conservative, moderate, and every other characteristic you can imagine. All together, invited as one body, to one Table, the Lord’s Table.

Friends, this Table, this proclamation of resurrection, is the good treasure, I think, that today’s passage compels us to guard. Last week we talked about fighting the good fight and this week we’re talking about guarding the good treasure. And friends, we do not guard it as if we are hoarding it for ourselves. Rather, we guard it in order to share with with others!

So come to this Table on this World Communion Sunday, knowing that you are a small but beloved and vital part of God’s plan for the redemption of this world. Come to this Table, a table not just set here in Kentucky, but also set in continents around the world. Come to this Table, friends, for there’s plenty of grace for all!

In the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, may all of God’s people say, Amen.