



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week

The Holy Grail

There have been more books, mysteries and adventures written around “the holy grail” that we have become familiar with the term. The trouble is, we have come to think of this as a magical item – at least that’s the way the novelists see it. I guess a common cup just wouldn’t have been so exciting.

We have received incredible descriptions of this cup from a common table cup to one that is gold and shining, covered with jewels. But the novelists fail to tell us why this cup was “holy”.

Things that are called “holy” are the things that are set aside by God for service to God. What makes this cup “holy” is that Jesus used it for a special purpose. He took a common table cup and made it holy.

Now, how does that “translate” to you when we see the communion ware on the altar of our church? We say this is a “feast” but let’s face it, it’s not a feast like we think of tons of food being present. None the less, it is a “feast” in that it is a “foretaste” – a beginning of the feast we will share when we “graduate” to heaven. It is a feast because we remember the words of Jesus and we have placed our communion ware on the altar for use in service to God.

Can we see the small, round cup on the paten, (bread plate!) as a holy grail? Should we? I’m not sure. But what I do know is that I have seen many different kinds of cups, glasses and the like used for times of the communion “feast”. I’ve also seen many kinds of plates or loaves of bread used for the offering of Christ’s “body”.

So, what makes it all “holy” or not? Our faith tells us that the “words of institution”, basically the words that Christ used, remind us that what he gave

us is still holy and important. He said this is his body and blood and our faith tells us this is so.

For some of us, this is the most important time in our gathering for worship. During worship, we confess our sins and accept Christ's forgiveness. We hear the Word given and we listen as the words of institution gather us together to feast in Christ's name. This is offered to all who are baptized (the Orthodox church communes babies when they are baptized), not because we are perfect, but because we believe God's promise of forgiveness and love.

Do you remember your first time at the Lord's table? I had been confirmed the week before and the next week we were "admitted" to communion. The feeling was that we had now been "prepared" properly and could now commune.

Now, think of the disciples. They had just had supper. They sure hadn't had a time of confession. They received the bread and wine because of Christ's invitation. Following the meal, they went out the garden with Jesus to keep watch while he prayed, and what happened? They fell asleep. Really "holy" men, these disciples! We hope and pray that we take the time of confession seriously and our approach to Christ's table seriously, but, on the other hand, it is a time of joy, for the body that was broken and the blood that was shed was for our eternal life. What could be a better celebration?

TMK

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