

Sermon Title: **Open Communion**

Bible: Luke 24:28-35

Where & When: Sunday Worship at Gilroy UMC on September 2nd, 2018

Audience: about 30 English Speaking Church members

Opening Prayer

Let us pray! Gracious God, your grace invites us all the time. Your grace is overflowing! Please cover my mouth and this time with your grace! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

1. Picky? Passionate?

The following question is not good. But I would like to ask you: Are you picky?

What are you picky about? (Eating? Clothes? Sound? Etc?)

Let me ask you another question: Are you passionate? Where do you have passion in your life? Where do you want to spend more time and energy? (Church?

Children? Homeless? Books? Sports? Etc?)

Am I picky? Yes, I am picky. You don't know yet? You will see.

Am I passionate? [The congregation says, "Yes!" without hesitation]. Thank you, thank you. Yes, I am passionate. I'm so glad you already notice it.

How about God? Is God picky? What is God picky about?

Is God passionate? Where do you find God's passion?

I would like to share God's pickiness and passion for this God's Table.

2. My Limitations for this sermon

I am going to explain the understanding of the United Methodist Church in regard to God's Table, at which Open Communion is practiced. Open Communion means that ALL are welcome to God's Table. Before we jump into this, I need to share my limitations in regard to this sermon topic.

First of all, my experience, knowledge, and understanding of other denominations' tables is very limited. Every denomination has its own understanding about Holy Communion. I respect all of these understandings. There is no right or wrong understanding. Every Holy Communion has its own special meaning, even though its focus is different. For example, I have been to one Russian Orthodox church. I cannot join in communion, because their communion is only for church members. It is called closed communion. The priest feeds the church members from the babies to the seniors with one spoon. I am not sure how you feel about using only one spoon. To me, it is a very powerful image about the family of faith: those who eat literally together.

Second, my love for the United Methodist way can be a limitation. That's because love is blind. I fell in love with the United Methodist Church, and I decided to become a member in 2012. Open Communion is one of the reasons why I decided to be a member. I try to be fair about other denominations' understandings about

communion. But it might be impossible to hide my love for the United Methodist Church.

3. Diverse Practice of Holy Communion

How many different Holy Communion have you experienced? Can you tell the differences?

There are many different kinds of bread in communion. Some churches use wine, real wine, instead of grape juice. Some churches use one cup, while some churches use many small cups.

Who can join in communion? Some churches do not allow children to join in.

Some churches require baptism to join in communion. Some churches do not allow other church members to join in.

The way of giving and receiving is diverse as well. The presiding pastor can give the bread and wine. Participants themselves can take the bread and wine.

Participants can stand or kneel.

4. Open Communion : All are Welcome

How about the United Methodist Church? In our understanding, the following is what God is not picky about: any kind of bread is okay; either wine or juice is okay; one cup or many small cups are okay; any way to serve is fine.

But God is very picky about making the guest list. God breaks the usual limitations of the guest list. Young or old are welcome; baptized or unbaptized are welcome; members or non-members are welcome. No one and nothing can block us from God's Table. God's grace to you is what is most important. God invites all all the time. This table is not mine, not ours, but God's Table. God is the host. In today's scripture, the resurrected Jesus hosted the table, took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the two disciples, even though they did not recognize Jesus. God is so passionate that our knowledge and our feeling cannot stop God's love for us. The picky and passionate God is calling us to God's Table. We are already, still, and forever God's children. Come to the table and Eat! All are welcome!

Closing Prayer

Let us pray! Oh, Gracious God, thank you for your pickiness about guests. You choose all of us as your guests. Thank you for your passion! Your passion reaches out to all of us! Thank you so much for God's table and your invitation! In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!