

Sermon Title: **All Are Welcome to God's Table**

Bible: 1 John 4:7-16

Where & When: World Communion and Homecoming Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on October 6th, 2019

Audience: about 33 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you come to us, because you love us. You gave yourself. You became a human like us. You live in us. Your love is great! We want to live with you. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Welch's Grape Juice

In the Gospel of John, the first miracle of Jesus was turning water into wine at the marriage at Cana. And Jesus drank wine and ate food. But why do we drink grape juice instead of wine during Holy Communion? There is Methodist history behind this. In the 1800's, there was a Temperance Movement, which stressed avoiding all alcohol, even wine for Communion. At that time, there was no refrigeration so it was very difficult to use grape juice, because grape juice naturally ferments into wine at room temperature.

So, some churches even used water instead of wine, because of Jesus' miracle at the wedding in Cana.

(Slide of Welch's Bottle & Grape Juice) There was one Methodist dentist, Thomas B. Welch, who was a communion steward at Vineland Methodist Episcopal Church. He wanted a

non-alcohol substitute for the wine at Communion. In 1869, unfermented grape juice was born out of his passion to serve alcohol-free Communion. Now, using grape juice is a common practice for Communion in Methodist churches.

2. Open Communion & God's Table

(Slide of Communion) The Methodists still use grape juice for Holy Communion. To me, it makes sense, because Methodists practice open communion. Open communion means that all are welcome at the table. If you are struggling with alcoholism, you are welcome at this table! Babies and children are welcome! Methodists, Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Swedenborgians, any denominations, and non-denominations are welcome! We do not ask your denomination. We even do not ask if you are baptized or not. What is important is that God loves you and me. That's because this table is not mine, not ours, but God's table. God is love, and God loves you and me, already, still, and forever. You are the loved ones by God. Nothing can separate us from God's love.

3. World Communion Sunday & God's Love

(Slide of World Communion Sunday) Today, the first Sunday of October, is World Communion Sunday. World Communion Sunday was started in 1933 by a Presbyterian church. There are a lot of denominations and traditions. But can we celebrate our unity in Jesus Christ? Aren't we one body in Christ? These questions make us celebrate World Communion Sunday. We are all different. We are coming from different cultures and traditions. We speak in different

languages. Our hair, eyes, and skin have different colors. Our parents and grandparents lived in different locations. Our faith journeys are unique and special.

Nevertheless, we love one another. We worship together. We listen to each other. We pray for each other. We eat together. When one rejoices, we celebrate together. When one is suffering, our hearts are broken. Your story is mine, and my story is yours. This is who we are. As God is love, we love each other. Fortunately or unfortunately, I do not physically see God. But in this church and at this God's table, I taste the love of God. Today, again and gain, I will come to God's table. Let us come to God's table, and taste God's love together!!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you sent us your son, Jesus Christ. Jesus loves us and gives us His body. As you love us, we want to love one another. We bow down in front of your unfailing love. Please pour out your love and grace upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Possible Qs.

1. What are your blessings from your culture and tradition?
2. What does Holy Communion mean to you?