May 2, 2010 Mark 16:14, 15 Communion

RESURRECTION NEWS

HARSH WORDS

This morning we celebrate Communion once again. Or as one person said the other day, breakfast, which I thought, hey not bad, Communion is having breakfast with Jesus. Communion is a remembrance of God's Grace, His mercy, His forgiveness and His presence with us to make a new life out of the old. To assist us in our daily living…to know that whatever we face we aren't alone. This past week I joined with other retired and serving pastors to hear our Bishop. We worshiped and followed by celebrating the breaking of bread. As we went through the ritual I thought we need to be reminded from time to time what this first Sunday means to us as Christians so turn in the hymnal to page 12 as we prepare our hearts for feasting around the banquet table with our Risen Lord. **Use page 12, 13, 14**

From those pages I bring you these words. First Communion means **confession and pardon.** In John's letter he tells us, "If we confess our sins God is faithful and will forgive us." There is that big word again, 'if.' You see, we have a hard time saying we have done stuff wrong. We think because things are acceptable these days, they are okay to do, that they aren't sin. We talked about

that in Sunday School last week. Hardly anyone wants to admit they have sinned. No one likes to admit they are wrong.

We all remember "Happy Days" with the Fonz. He could never say he was sorry, that wasn't cool for such a guy like he. He could never admit he was w-r-o-n-g! Those words did not roll off his tongue to easily. There are many today who have that same problem. We want to blame society, our heritage, our upbringing and all that. We just fail to admit we did it...that we made the conscious choice to keep that anger tucked way back there…or we store some other 'sin' in our sin closet hoping no one will find out and once in awhile we pull it out…or we make that choice that we know is wrong and can lead to bigger hurts and maybe even broken relationships. Hate to let you in on a big secret. You can't hide things from God. In fact he knows what you are going to say before you even say it. He knows your thoughts way before you think them. Remarkable.

But there is Good News. This is what Communion is about. God invites to his table of Grace those who humbly (submissively), repent (turn from that bad stuff), admit those mistakes, admit you have sinned and receive His forgiveness. And the best part….because sin breaks our relationship with God….when we seek forgiveness that relationship is restored and our joy returns and so does peace.

There is more. We hear the **Great Thanksgiving.** We affirm, give thanks and praise our God for loving us so much that he gave us his son that he died for

your sins and mine so that we would not have to bear them, nor be in bondage to them.

My friends, that's what it means to come to this altar on the first Sunday of every month. We may not say those words each time, but we are reminded what the bread and wine symbolize for us. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the Savior who died on the cruel cross of Calvary to purchase us from the grips of Satan. So the bread is 'the body of Christ given for you...the wine is the blood of Christ given for you.

We could stop right now and sing "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wrench like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see" and the morning would be off to a great start. Yes, we could end right now and sing about the amazing Grace of God. But that isn't the whole message this morning. Let's see that story in action found in Mark's Gospel.

According to Mark sometime after Easter morning, *"... Jesus showed himself to the eleven apostles while they were eating, and <u>he criticized</u> them because <u>they had no faith</u>. They <u>were stubborn and refused to believe</u> those who had seen him after he had risen from the dead."* The Message translation says, "*(Jesus) took them to task most severely for their stubborn unbelief, refusing to believe those who had seen him raised up."*

Can you believe that? He criticized them ‘most severely’. Why? Because they had no faith. They were stubborn and refused to believe.

Folks that has gone on in history. Just imagine what kind of world we would have if all believed the resurrection story. Imagine the love each would have. Just think what transformed lives could do. There would be so much of God’s love to go around there would be less time to hate. Isn’t that what heaven is going to be like? All love no hatred.

Read about the early church and that first Pentecost and you see hearts transforming as people repented, turned to God, asked what they needed to do to be saved, began to sit with the disciples to learn what Jesus had been teaching and the first mega church began when over 3,000 people gave their lives to Christ. And that was not the end. For God added daily to their number, those who turned from their sin to time of repentance. And the church grew and people sold stuff and helped each other out. It was the first food pantry and bread line. But sometime later the critics and disbelievers came and threw monkey wrench into Paul’s ministry. But Paul never gave up.

I want to remind you that those harsh words weren’t said to sinners around a banquet table, or some lepers looking for a healing. Those words weren’t meant for the religious leaders who persecuted and tortured him or who rejected him. These weren’t words said to those who followed from afar. NO! Think about

this…THESE HARSH WORDS WERE SAID TO THE REMAINING DISCIPLES. He criticized them for their lack of faith and for not believing the story of his resurrection.

My friends, those harsh words are scary words. If Christ was physically present today in this church would he look out over this congregation criticizing some of us for our lack of faith…for our stubbornness to believe, to trust? Do we have a hard time believing walking with Christ makes us different? Do people refer to some as 'hypocrites' because out of your mouth comes words of love and grace, but your actions speak volumes in the other direction? Do we have trouble getting off the throne of our lives and letting the Holy Spirit reign? Do we make excuses for our actions? Do we fail to examine our lives and allow God to search our hearts and minds to let us know what is standing in the way of having a personal relationship with God? In Psalm 51 David says, "*I know about my wrongs and I can't forget my sin. You are the only one I have sinned against….Create in me a pure heart, God, and make my spirit right again."*

Are you ready to say 'yes' to Jesus as he invites you to his table for a complete makeover? Never mind changing the outside, you need to be changed from the inside. That's the ultimate makeover. Never mind covering it up with stuff. That would be like taking a rundown house sprucing it up for people to see from the outside but they don't see the damage in the inside. What you need is a

real spiritual demolition where the Holy Spirit razes your old life in order to build a new one in Christ.

Hear now the words of hope, those Good News words. Words that give us hope. You see, even though he criticizes his disciples, he also commissions them and sends them forth to tell their story, his story, how they failed, yet they were forgiven…how God forgave them and gave them a new chance...how they were lost, but now are found…how they were blind but now they see. The Gospel message is life transforming.

I love to tell the story because it did so much for me that story of salvation for everyone to hear.' And here is the story….Jesus lives!

This morning God invites you to have breakfast with Him and His Son around the table of Grace.