

## COMMUNION HOMILY: ABIDING IN CHRIST

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One of Jesus' discourses on that last night before His betrayal, trial, and crucifixion is that recorded by John in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of his gospel. This passage is Jesus' discourse on abiding in Him in which He likens Himself to a vine and His followers as the branches. The 7<sup>th</sup> verse of this passage sets forth the following promise:

John 15:7: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

At a number of points previous to this the disciples had asked Jesus to explain His meaning, but here they did not. I can imagine that their spirits were crying out, "Jesus, what do you mean? How do we abide in You?"

It turns out that Jesus had provided at least a partial answer in His discourse on the Bread of Life in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's gospel, where we find the following statement:

John 6:56-57: <sup>56</sup> "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me."

And so one of the ways we abide in Christ is to participate in this holy ritual meal that is set before us this morning. While we would not go so far as to assert that this grape juice is actually transmuted into the blood of Christ, and this bread is actually transmuted into the flesh of Christ, we do embrace the teaching that Jesus is *actually present* in this ritual meal in a special way.

This bread is a physical symbol of Jesus's body. Our partaking of it is an act of faith by which we declare that we are partaking spiritually of the resurrection life of Jesus. And this cup is a physical symbol of Jesus's shed blood. Our partaking of it is an act of faith by which we declare that the blood of Christ has cleansed our soul of all sin, making us righteous before God the Father.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, where Paul discourses on the proper celebration of Communion, he commands us in the 28<sup>th</sup> verse to examine ourselves lest we partake of the bread and cup in an unworthy manner. Therefore, let us take a moment to make sure that our hearts are right before God.