

“The Purpose of Communion”

I John 1:5-10

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Communion Devotion

This Tuesday, you will want to wish your Jewish friends Happy New Year. Their New Year, Rosh Hashanah, begins on the first day of the seventh month on their calendar and this year that falls on October 4. Families will gather for two days in synagogues and homes to celebrate the gift of life, review their history, pray for Israel, confess their sins and eat traditional foods sweetened with honey.

Their New Year heralds the beginning of the ten day period known as the High Holy Days. These are days of reflection and penitence. It is a time for people to assess their lives, asking for God’s forgiveness for sins and help to make adjustments.

The High Holy Days conclude on the most sacred day on the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. This is a day of fasting and praying that gives believers one final chance to confess their sins before God’s Book of Life is closed.

Our season of Lent, the forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter is similar to the High Holy Days. Both encourage reflection and changes.

For Baptists, communion does this, too. This service is designed to give worshipers time to reflect, pray, confess sins and ask for God’s help to make needed changes.

In a world filled with people too busy, indifferent or even overconfident for self-reflection, communion provides a vital service. It invites participants to quit ignoring faults and confront weaknesses, to feel the hurt and pain unwise decisions inflict upon others and them, to see the folly of stumbling in darkness rather than walking in the light.

Beyond this, however, communion challenges us to abandon our defensive posturing and adopt an attitude of humility and penitence. It offers hope and healing for those willing to be honest and vulnerable, confessing their sins and asking for forgiveness.

The words John penned to the people he loved in Ephesus can guide our thoughts on this holy day. As we gather around this table, we would do well to heed the advice John gave his readers.

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives” I John 1:5-10.

What is the best deal you were ever offered? Did you take advantage of it or do you live with regret because you rejected it? Listen carefully to God’s offer this morning.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

How can we walk away from this gracious offer? God is willing to take away anything in our lives that is unhealthy, cleaning the wound it has caused so healing can occur. He is eager to take away guilt and shame, replacing them with dignity and pride. He is confident He can help us overcome destructive habits, replacing them with healthy ones. He is passionate about transforming lives with His amazing grace, so that broken relationships can be restored or new ones cultivated. And it all begins with our willingness to be honest and humble.

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” Everything in the Prodigal Son’s life changed for the better when he made that honest confession. He was reborn into the family that he rejected and abandoned. He was transformed into a productive citizen and family member. His dignity and pride were restored. Good came to him when bad was confronted and confessed.

I sense the same thing is happening with Ashley Smith, author of Unlikely Angel. You recall, she is the woman held hostage by gunman Bryan Nichols after the March 11 Fulton County Courthouse shootings. This book chronicles the events of that encounter and the dramatic changes she has made since then. She readily talks about the transformation that is occurring in her life because she has come to grips with some of her own demons, including drug addiction.

“I haven’t touched drugs since walking out of my apartment on March 12,” she said in an interview. She confessed that it has been hard to be honest and open about her life before March 11, but also liberating. “I remember what Jesus said,” she wrote, “The truth will set you free. That’s how I want to live my life. I want to be an honest person and experience the freedom that goes with it. Instead of running from God’s voice, I seek it and try to learn from His words. I put others before me now. It was just about me. Now it is about making a difference.”

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” This promise is for you and me, too, and this service is designed to help us claim it. Take advantage of God’s presence and His unchanging desire to forgive and transform you. Confess your sins and allow Him to take away anything in your life that is unhealthy, cleaning the wound it has caused so that healing can occur.