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Glen Ridge Congregational Church

***The Teachings of the Table***



*"Best Table"* by Jan Richardson

Sunday, October 4, 2026
1 Corinthians 10:16 - 17

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

In a little less than a month, it's Election Day. It's the day when hopefully all of us will go to the polls and choose our leaders.

Now, I'm not the kind of pastor who gets up and tells anyone who you should vote for. There are many pastors who will come into the pulpit and will tell you that you should be voting for this one. You should be voting for that one. You should be voting against this resolution.

I'm not that person. Because I believe voting is a moment of conscience in which each of us, according to our own understanding, and the climate of our hearts, chooses who we think will be the right leaders to lead our communities forward.

I may not be here to tell you who to vote for, but as your pastor, I am here to remind all of us of Christ's values, of the dream Christ has for us. And not just his followers, but also for the whole world.

And today, we have the great reminder of those values. Today we come to Christ's table. There is so much that is embedded within what seems to be a simple ritual: coming up, receiving bread, receiving juice, doing it not just as individuals but as members of a community.

So, the first value I think we experience by coming to Christ's table is that all are welcome. This is especially true on World Communion Sunday when, like I said, we join churches and followers of Jesus the world over to come together and participate in this sacrament. And think what an amazing thing that is, because for most of our Christian history, we have been at each other's throats, literally warring against each other.

With divisions so deep and so long, it seems like we could never overcome them. And yet on this day, we share together a meal, not at my table, not at GRCC's table, but we share a meal at the expression of Christ's table here in front of us.

We are all welcome because Christ is inviting us to build a community; a communion together. Christ is showing us that he values the bridging of difference by welcoming all of us, regardless of if we're older or younger, if we are LGBTQI or straight, whether we are male, female, somewhere in the middle, whether we are rich or poor, regardless of the color of our skin. And so we have to ask ourselves, are those who we will be voting for bringing people together? Or are they fragmenting us and dividing us?

When you come to this table, regardless of whether you are baptized, regardless of whether you have come here before, you are promised that you will be fed. That can be such a different message from the message that we hear in the wider world where only certain people get to be fed. Only certain people get to be fed regularly. Only certain people get to be fed with the highest quality foods. At Christ's table, we eat and we drink, no matter who we are, and we offer that bounty to all who ask.

There is a moment at the end of when we serve communion that I finally take communion. It's very intentional that that happens. And it happens according to Christ saying that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. In many churches, somebody like me is often considered to be special - to be the first; to have a special kind of role or position in the community. It is important to see that those who are called to serve in many moments, in special moments, in the most meaningful moments, put themselves last. That's why I take communion last. When we think about who is asking for our vote, have they shown us that they are willing to be put last? Or do they demand to always be first?

Again, when we step into that voting booth, it is a matter of conscience who we will choose to lead us, to lead our community, to lead our nation. But I ask you to remember in that moment what Christ is teaching us at this table.

In the platforms of the parties, in the candidates' political ideologies, in the way that those seeking office have told us how they will govern, are they telling us everyone is welcome? Not just from this nation, but from around the world. Are they telling us that they will build our communities up stronger? Or are they saying it is acceptable, needed, desired to break us apart and to divide us? Do they see that all of those they are called to serve will be treated with equality? Or are there special carve-outs? Do they believe that everyone deserves to eat? Or do they think that only certain people deserve to be fed? And again, do

they show us that they are comfortable being the last instead of always insisting on being the first?

There are other things going on as we approach this table and are fed. These are just a couple of thoughts that I wanted to share with you today. But as you come forward this morning, if you desire to take communion, think about the meaning of this act for you. Think about how you might meet Christ in the values that are implicitly present in this meal. Hear his voice through the actions of feeding and being fed. Hear what he is saying to you, today.

And vote according to what he shows you.

Amen.