

The Green Hill Presbyterian Church
Sunday, June 7, 2026 – Table Copy

SILENT PREPARATION: Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. – Psalm 100:1-2

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today, we are departing – from the Revised Common Lectionary –
to observe a celebration on the calendar of the wider Church.
June 4th – on that calendar – was Corpus Christi,
a celebration of the meaning of the “Body of Christ.”
Our Scripture readings – today –
will focus on the extraordinary importance of the gift of the Body of Christ
for us.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (*Unison*)

God Most High, it is hard to hear you calling us, for there are many competing voices vying for our attention. It may be difficult to believe your promises because we have been misled by so many empty commitments. We are hesitant to hope for healing and fulfillment amid the living death so many experience in our times. Yet, as we gather here to touch the Unseen Presence, we are moved to rejoice. We stand in awe before you, eager to live by faith, anticipating your mercy, giving thanks for your Word. Amen.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Great God of all nations, by whose word the heavens were made,
and under whose dominion the cosmos continues to expand:
Stretch our thinking in this time of encounter with your Word;
refresh us as your rain waters refresh the earth;
and restore our strength –
that we might live faithfully, according to your promises.
And, let your grace be made known through our witness;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord;
in whose name we pray. Amen.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING Deuteronomy 8:2-3

*The Book of Deuteronomy consists of Moses' final charges
to the Children of Israel. Our reading comes from Chapter 8....*

Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you –
these forty years in the wilderness – in order to humble you,
testing you to know what was in your heart,
whether or not you would keep his commandments.

He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna –
with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted –
in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING John 6:48-58

*Our second reading comes from John's Gospel;
as Chapter 6 began, Jesus fed the five thousand –
and – as a result – the crowds are eagerly trying to follow him.
Today's Lectionary Bible Study covers all three of Jesus' bread-related
discourses; two of which precede – and set the stage for – our reading.
Jesus is speaking....*

I am the bread of life.

Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

This is the bread that comes down from heaven,
so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever;
and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying,
'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

So Jesus said to them,

'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life,
and I will raise them up on the last day;

for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me,
and I in them.

Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father,
so whoever eats me will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven,
not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died.

But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.'

SERMON

“Contemplating Corpus Christi”

A pastor once visited an elderly woman who was nearing the end of her life.
She told him that – when the time came –
she wanted to be buried with a fork in her hand.

The pastor was puzzled. “Why a fork?”

She smiled.

“Because – at every church supper I ever attended –
when the plates were cleared,
someone would say, ‘Keep your fork.’”

That meant something better was coming.

Dessert was on the way.

So, when people see me holding a fork, I want them to know that –
for a Christian – the best is yet to come.”

That may be one of the finest summaries of the Christian faith.

We live in a world where people are hungry for many things.

Some hunger for security.
Some for love.
Some for meaning.

Some for the quiet assurance that their lives matter –
and that death will not have the final word.

And, many of us know what it is to feel that something is missing –
even when life appears full on the surface.

We may have the house, the family, the career, and the routines –
that give shape to our days.

Yet, there are moments when an emptiness makes itself known.

It may come late at night.

It may come in the stillness after a loss.

It may even come when we realize --
that what we once thought would satisfy us has not quite done the job.

The Good News is that the Bible takes that hunger seriously.

In our first reading -- from Deuteronomy --
Moses reminds the people that --
during their forty years in the wilderness --
God fed them with manna,
"to show you that not by bread alone does one live,
but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord"

The lesson was not that bread is unimportant.

It was that -- even a full stomach --
does not answer the deepest needs of the human heart.

There is an old story about a man who ate lunch every day --
at the same restaurant.

One afternoon, he complained to the waiter --
that he had been given only one piece of bread with his meal.

The waiter apologized and returned with several more slices.

The next day, the man said there still was not enough bread.

The restaurant brought him a basket -- overflowing with rolls.

The following day, the manager decided he had had enough.

He arranged for the kitchen to bake an enormous loaf --
four feet long, and two feet wide.

And – with considerable ceremony –
he – and the waiter – carried it to the customer’s table,
and set it down in front of him.

The man stared at the colossal loaf – frowned – and said,
“So, we’re back to one piece, again.”

We laugh, because we might recognize something of ourselves in that story.

There is a part of us – as human beings – that is never quite satisfied.

We tell ourselves that – if we had a little more money,
a little more recognition,
a little more certainty about the future –
we would finally feel at peace.

Yet – once we have what we thought we wanted – the appetite remains.

St. Augustine understood this – almost 1600 years before the modern age.

He observed that: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”
That is, in God.

In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus speaks directly to that restlessness:

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven,” He says.

“Whoever eats this bread will live forever;
and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (v. 51).

Those words were difficult to hear then, and they remain mysterious now.

Indeed, the people listening to Jesus were scandalized.

Some turned away.

They had come looking for a teacher – perhaps even a miracle worker.

Instead, they were confronted with a claim – a claim so astonishing
that it left them shaking their heads.

But, Jesus was not offering a slogan – or a self-help strategy.

He was offering Himself.

He was saying, in effect:

If you want life — real life, enduring life, eternal life —
you will find it – only – in Me.

And, that is still the Christian claim.

The fact is that we too often look elsewhere – for what only God can provide.

Some seek fulfillment in wealth –
only to discover that money can buy comfort – but not peace.

Others pursue status and recognition –
hoping that applause will quiet the ache within.

Still others search for satisfaction in possessions, experiences,
or endless distraction.

None of these things is evil.

But none can bear the weight of our deepest needs.

Bread is one of the most basic foods.

It is humble, and ordinary.

Yet – throughout Scripture –

bread becomes a sign of God's faithful care:

 manna in the wilderness,

 the loaves multiplied beside the sea,

 the bread broken at Emmaus,

 and – finally – the bread of the Eucharist.

God meets us in something simple enough to hold in our hands.

During the celebration of the Eucharist, we hear St. Paul ask, (1 Cor. 10:16)
“The cup of blessing that we bless,
is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?”

“The bread that we break,
is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

Here, participation is the key word.

When we come to the Table, we do not merely remember Jesus –
as one might remember a beloved figure from history.

Rather, we are drawn into communion with Him. His life becomes our life.

And – because there is one bread –
Paul says, “we who are many are one body” (1 Cor. 10:17)

The Eucharist binds us – not only to Christ – but to one another.

That is to say – at *the* Table – the distinctions that matter so much –
in ordinary life – begin to fade.

Rich and poor. Young and old. Confident and uncertain.
Successful and struggling.

We come with different stories – but with the same hunger.

And Christ wants to feed us all.

This Holy Feast reminds us that Christianity is not – merely –
a set of ideas or moral principles.

Rather, it is life shared with the living Christ.

It is – as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians –
“Christ *in* you, the hope of glory!”

1:27

After her husband died unexpectedly,
the young widow said – to her pastor,
“I have a choice to make.
I can either stay bitter – or I can get better.”

That was a hard-won insight.

The fact is that life – can often – wound us.

There is no avoiding it.

We suffer losses – losses that we did not choose.

We carry grief – that no one else fully sees.

And – sometimes – we may feel as if we are trying to live on what is left...
after life has taken such a large bite out of us.

To be sure, the Eucharist does not erase those wounds.

But it assures us that we – most certainly – do not face them alone.

In the Eucharist, Christ gives us Himself:
His strength, His presence, His life.
He feeds us with a love stronger than death.

The phrase – “eternal life” – can sound abstract,
as though Jesus was speaking about something that begins...
only after death.

But – in John’s Gospel – eternal life starts now.

And – later in the same Gospel –
Jesus defines eternal life with remarkable simplicity:

17:3

“This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”

Eternal life – then – is not merely endless existence.

It is a relationship. It is sharing – even now – in the life of God.

To receive Christ – in faith –
is to begin living a life that death cannot destroy.

Furthermore, the Eucharist is both nourishment for this life,
and a foretaste of the abundant life to come.

Every time we come to the Lord’s Table, heaven touches earth.

We are given a glimpse of the great banquet – promised by God –
where every tear will be wiped away,
and where nothing good will ever be lost again.

That is why Christians can face the future – with confidence:
not because life is easy,
or because we have all the answers –
but because Christ is present –
both with us, and in us.

He is present in the bread and wine.

He is present in His Church.

He is present in the lives of those who trust Him.

And He will be present at the hour of our death.

So – perhaps – that elderly woman had it exactly right.

When she asked to be buried – with a fork in her hand –
she was bearing witness to a truth at the very center of our faith:

In Christ, there is more – always more – to come:
more grace than our failures....
more mercy than our sins....
more love than our losses....
and more life – than even death itself – can extinguish.

Friends, today *the* Table is spread before us.

The bread is broken.

The cup is poured.

Christ – the living bread, from heaven –
offers Himself for the life of the world.

So, come hungry.

Come with your questions.

Come with your gratitude.

Come and be fed.

And, keep your fork.

The best is – most certainly – yet to come!

Thanks be to God for the Bread of Life!

Amen.

*** AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*Unison*)**

Pastor

From the Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934)

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way and with the same seriousness is he also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures.

The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as the Lord in Word and Sacrament through the Holy Spirit. As the church of pardoned sinners, it has to testify in the midst of a sinful world, with its faith as with its obedience, with its message as with its order, that it is solely his property, and that it lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and from his direction in the expectation of his appearance. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

When Jesus blessed the bread – and the cup –
and gave them to his disciples –
he said, “Do this in remembrance of me...”

Even so – as we go forth from his Table –
may both our words – and our deeds – be in remembrance of Jesus.

Let us receive the Lord's benediction....

