

## **“Taste and See that the Lord is Good”**

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is full of interesting and fascinating stories. These aren't just stories of interest or information, though. They're stories of faith. They teach us about God and about our relationship with God.

Since these stories are so important to us, it's interesting to try to step inside those stories, to wonder what it might have been like. What was it like for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? What would it have been like on Noah's ark or in Jonah's big fish? How would you have felt if you saw David slay Goliath or Elijah defeat the prophets of Baal? What was it like on a boat with Paul? Or sitting in prison with him?

These stories of faith are an important link to following Christ. Therefore, there is a certain group in the Bible we already connect with: Jesus' disciples. What an incredible experience they must have had – to be with Jesus and hear him preach and teach, to see him perform miracles, to watch him take on the religious leaders.

What do you think that was like? How did they feel? What did they learn? We can only imagine what it might have been like to be Peter or Thomas or James. Yet there is one way that we can definitely connect with those first disciples, and that is thru the Love Feast service.

When we sit at the Love Feast table, we take the place of a disciple. As we re-enact that Passover celebration we call the Last Supper, we begin to get a sense of what it was like on that holy night.

We also know, though, that those disciples in that upper room were far from fully understanding what was truly happening during that simple service. When Jesus washed their feet, they were confused. When he talked about betrayal and denial, they were insulted. When he likened the bread and wine at the table to his body and blood, they surely wondered what they were eating and whether they should continue eating it.

We have the fortune of 2000 years of thought on the subject. We know the lessons well. They are the lessons we hear about in the Love Feast service. Feetwashing teaches us about humility, cleansing, forgiveness, and service. The agape meal reminds us of the importance of community and love. Communion presents the big lessons, as Jesus shares how his body will be broken and his blood spilled, a sacrifice, God's ultimate love.

These are but a few of the lessons that can be mined from this simple, yet profound, service. This is part of the reason the Love Feast has become so important to and defining of the Brethren. It continues to speak to us deeply who have participated in Love Feast for years. We don't celebrate it often, making it even more special.

This also makes it more important for us to participate. For these lessons are the culmination of our faith. But it's not just lessons heard. It's experienced. You can smell it and taste it in the food and the cup of juice. You hear it in the fellowship, in the splashing of water. You feel it, in having your feet washed, in embracing your brother or sister in Christ. We are disciples of Christ, the body of Christ, around those tables. Christ is in our midst in a most special way.

Here we begin to understand better what Jesus was talking about when he shared the two greatest commandments, to love God with your whole being and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Love Feast focuses us on God's great, wondrous, life-giving love for us and how we must respond with our whole bodies, our whole beings, in acts of love to God and one another.

For as we experience the Love Feast and live out that story of Jesus with the disciples, we realize that the lessons of this service are to be experienced and lived out in our daily lives, in our everyday faith. These are symbols to be experienced. And shared.

Washing one another's feet in a church fellowship hall or eating a simple meal with fellow churchgoers or breaking bread with a fellow believer must inspire us -- to wash each other's feet the rest of the year thru acts of service and sacrifice, to build community and unity and love within the church, to seek and experience and share God's forgiveness and mercy.

We wash one another's feet because Jesus said, "You also ought to wash one another's feet." Because Jesus said, "Come, follow me" and "Go and do likewise." We have always believed strongly in imitating Christ, in doing what he did and what he has commanded us to do.

And this takes us to the beginning, the beginning of the Love Feast service, which is a time of examination. Actually, the whole service is a time of examination. As we hear, sing, taste, see, and touch these great lessons of Love Feast, those vital scriptural commands, we evaluate our own relationship with God, with the world, and with one another. We see where we stand in living out these lessons. We realize our shortcomings and need for forgiveness. We see the great need for washing one another's feet in the world around us. We see where we stand as a community, how healthy the body of Christ is. As we eat that small piece of bread and drink that tiny cup of grape juice, we are reminded that it's all about a loving, wonderful Savior, who gives his life for us.

As our world becomes more fractured, suffers more pain, and busies itself with the things of this world, it becomes even more important for us Brethren to put ourselves in the position of a disciple each and every day and to follow the call of Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

*Steve Spire, Interim Assoc. Pastor, Pleasant Valley Church*