

Week 4 – Confession & Communion

BIG IDEA: Jesus people take sin seriously because Jesus took it seriously. And Jesus people bear one another's burdens because Jesus bore ours on the cross. That is, through honest confession of our sin we enter into the deepest communion with God and one another.

Alternative turns of phrase:

- "Confession leads to communion."
- "No confession. No communion."
- "The opposite of confession is hiding."
- "It's okay to tell others you're not okay. That's not an end but a beginning."
- "Without confession we will always end in isolation."
- "God forgives but only with others are we healed."
- "Among the people of God is the only place in the world where sin is taken more seriously than anywhere else, and you are restored, not canceled."
- "We never come to the table alone. Communion is about a community. That is, a community that through confession has tasted God's mercy."

KEY SCRIPTURE:

Galatians 6:1-2

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

PASSAGE BREAKDOWN:

If anyone is caught in any transgression...

As long as we live this side of perfection even as followers of Jesus we can expect the presence of temptation. We should not be surprised about our own or others' fight with sin, even though the gospel has given us power over it. So, instead of pretending we're better than others, Paul prepares us for *when* we encounter sin in the Body.

...you who are spiritual...

That is, those who are fed and led by the Spirit. What Paul is about to say is not natural but supernatural and empowered by God as a way for his people to operate. We need the grace of God to do this well.

...should restore him in a spirit of gentleness...

The people of God are not to be judgmental but helpful. Everyone is in progress and needs the grace of God; both those correcting and the corrected are utterly dependent on the grace of God. Because, ultimately, salvation and sanctification is a restoration

back to the image of God, so we should “restore” others...and be gentle (meek = strength under control) just as God is with us.

Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

We cannot lead others if we are not being led; we cannot pretend we do not struggle with temptation if we are going to effectively help others in the fight (1 Timothy 4:16). This guards our humility, and we know that not only does pride come before the fall, but God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:1-5). Taking sin seriously and restoring one another is not about power dynamics but about humbly loving one another as we cry out for more of God’s grace - for ourselves and others.

Bear one another’s burdens...

Matthew 8:17 uses the same word for “bear” when the writer quotes Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and *bore* our diseases.” Jesus bore our burdens, and so he is able to empower his people to do the same for one another. Again, not pointing a finger and judging one another, but humbly serving one another in order that the burden be lighter, the struggle with sin a little less fierce, and the power of God made plain in his people.

...and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The law of Christ, based on the greatest commandment, is to love God with all of our being and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Jesus emphasizes that we cannot fulfill that in isolation. We need community and, since we are sinners, we need confession. In fact, confession leads to communion

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

1 John 1:9 - confess to God and be forgiven and changed.

James 5:16 - confess to one another and be *healed*.

Wedding Banquet - what keeps you from coming to the table?

KEY QUOTES FROM BONHOEFFER BOOK:

- “In confession there takes place a breakthrough to community, a breakthrough to the cross, a breakthrough to new life, and a breakthrough to assurance.”
- Christ became our brother in the flesh in order that we might believe in him. In Christ, the love of God came to the sinner. In the presence of Christ human beings were allowed to be sinners, and only in this way could they be helped. Every pretense came to an end in Christ’s presence. This was the truth of the gospel in Jesus Christ: the misery of the sinner and the mercy of God. The community of faith in Christ was to live in this truth. That is why Jesus gave his followers the authority to hear the confession of sin and to forgive sin in Christ’s name. “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:23).
- “The day of the Lord’s Supper is a joyous occasion for the Christian community. Reconciled in their hearts with God and one another, the community of faith receives the

gift of Jesus Christ's body and blood, therein receiving forgiveness, new life, and salvation. New community with God and one another is given to it. The community of the holy Lord's Supper is above all the fulfillment of Christian community. Just as the members of the community of faith are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord, so they will be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and Christ's community is complete. The life together of Christians under the Word has reached its fulfillment in the sacrament."