

I don't know about everybody else, but this week has been incredibly hard. It is one of those times when Thursday holidays are just the worst. They threw off your entire week, like my Monday and Tuesday meetings got shifted around, and then Thursday happened which was a fantastic thing. But then Friday I tried putting up my garbage because I was so thrown off on what day it was, and I know I'm not the only one that did that. But one of the good things that happened this week was on Friday I met with a couple, and they asked me to perform their wedding ceremony. It was a really great time. I don't really know the couple. I don't know the bride at all. I got to sit and listen about their faith journey. I got to listen to how they came together to be a couple, and it was fantastic. And through some very trying times, they came together and when they came together, they also found God. They started going to church together. They started believing everything they had done up to that point had led them to believe and question about God's love for them. And so it was fantastic, and it was very appropriate because they came from two different backgrounds. They came from two different heritages, they came from two different cultures. But they still had this common thread with God's love and their love making it even stronger. And we talked a little bit about the Fourth of July. We talked about how religious freedom is so important to them. That's why they came to me. They didn't go to their regular minister. They wanted somebody that shared the same views that they did, and their minister doesn't necessarily see things the way they do. And that leads to so many questions, doesn't it? But that is for a different time.

The Fourth of July was so fantastic this year. It was the first year we got to take Wednesday to the fireworks with her tubes put in, so she could actually hear them. She could hear the music playing, and she could do all of those things.

I was on Facebook, and I'm looking and I'm hoping to see all of these comments celebrating the Fourth of July. Thanking the veterans for all that they've done for us, thanking everyone that we have the right and the privilege to express our religious freedom. That we don't have to do what anybody says. We don't have to do things a certain way. We get the right to choose, and instead I see everybody fighting.

It wasn't about celebrating the Fourth of July, it was about fighting arguing about the Supreme Court decision on the Connecticut case on whether or not religious freedom comes into vaccinations. It was about fighting over the 10 Commandments being in schools in Louisiana and which 10 Commandments do you use? Do you use the Jewish 10 Commandments? Do you use the Muslim 10 Commandments? Do you use the Catholic 10 Commandments? Do you use the protestant 10 Commandments? Because they're not the same, even though they all come from Exodus. They all come from the exact same chapter in the Bible. Each one of those are different, and so much more fighting. Everybody was arguing about something.

The only thing I saw anybody agree with out of all of my friends, and I have them both extremes. I have the far left liberals. I have the far right conservatives, and everyone of them said the same thing. Nobody cares what the president's handicap is. That's the only positive everybody had together. That led me into today's reading.

We spent a lot of time talking about Revelations over the last couple weeks in our Bible study group. We've talked a lot about sharing God's love. We talk a lot about differences and groups. Remember when we read Corinthians a few weeks ago. We talked about how Paul was talking then because there's a division within the church itself. There are all these people

fighting amongst themselves. There are people who believe that they are better because they were baptized by Paul. There are others who believe they were better because they were baptized by John. There are others because of Amos, and each one's a different group. And in today's reading, we're seeing that they're still maintaining that difference. They're all separated out; they're sharing based on where they were sharing based on who they were. The Jewish Christians are separating themselves from the gentile Christians. They're forgetting what it means to be a Christian, and they're doing it at the Lord's table. They're forgetting that we all have the same love from God, they're forgetting that we are all God's children.

Remember at this time, communion is different than how we share it. Obviously we have it here, and we do it on the first Sunday of the month. We all come forward, and we share that wonderful blessing, that sacrifice that Jesus gave for us. We share together.

During Paul's time and during 400 years the last supper was really a supper. It wasn't like this. Communion was held together and was celebrated more as a feast. And they still remain separated. The gentiles were told to sit in one area and share the food. The Jews were told to sit in another area and then and that's not even including breaking them all up by gender because women weren't allowed to eat with men sometimes. And at festivals like this, different cultures, different heritages were all forced to separate and remain different.

It doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't make sense that they did that because Jesus never told them to do that. Jesus didn't tell them to separate themselves based on who they were, where they came from, how much money they had, what they did. Jesus told them specifically that was for him to decide later when the day of judgment comes, he will separate us the sheep and goats. The people that are doing it because it's the right thing to do, and the people that are doing it because it looks good. We keep doing it to ourselves.

They kept doing it to themselves then. They kept saying I'm better than you because I believe this, so you have to do this. They weren't accepting God's love together.

When I was talking this week to different people, I realized I still do that too. I have an opportunity, and many people have heard my soapbox. Religion is about God's love, our faith is about God's love. We don't need to put 10 commandments in every classroom, if we just believe Jesus's two commandments, and it's a lot easier remembering two things than remembering which 10 depending which room you're in. We remember there is no other God than our God, and we treat people the way we want to be treated. If we treat people the way we want to be treated, then we don't have to worry about everything else because it will all fall in line. I say that here, but I still get angry because I'll go to other churches, and I will listen to their sermons. I'll listen to what they say, and I don't agree with it because they teach separation. They teach their faith is different than ours, but really it's all the same. We're all praying to the same God; we're all looking for his love. We're all looking to share and do the right thing. We all want to get to heaven; we all want to have eternal life. We all want to be happy, but we try very hard to make ourselves unhappy. When it would be so easy if we just treated everybody the way we want to be treated. it's a hard thing to do though.

It's a very hard thing to do, but it all starts right here. It all starts at the table. Jesus gave himself so that we can live. So that our sins will be forgiven; so that we can find God's grace and God's love. And we get to share this together. That is the most beautiful part about it. God knows that we make mistakes. God knows that we're going to continue to sin, but he still gives us a way to remember. Whether it's monthly, whether it's weekly, depending where you go, you

have that little piece that reminds you that we are all Christians: that we all believe the same thing, that we all know that Jesus died for us, and we get to share together. We get to remember not just Easter, but we get to remember that on that last day, Jesus took the bread, and he broke it. And he said to everyone, "Do this in remembrance of me." He didn't just pick certain people, he told everyone that was there. He shared it with Matthew and John, so they could share it with everybody else. He then took the last of the wine cup. He took the cup and he said, "This is my new covenant, when you drink this, think of me." Let us bless the bread that gives itself to us with its terrible weight and its infinite grace. Let us bless the cup that has been poured out for us with that drenches and it makes us new. Let us gather around these simply given and deeply blessed. This is for you, but it may change you for the one who is anxiously concerned about their own redemption and the one who knows Christ's body is the earth and all who walk upon it or one in him. Knowing that we are not redeemed by our being good but by our being connected, knowing that daring to eat at the table of Jesus Christ has unimaginable consequences. So come, come to be made whole and to participate in the work of making us one with him and each other