

Sermon for October 4 and 5, World Communion Sunday

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Video from Lutheran Disaster Response shown first. Web link is <http://bit.ly/1CoHq6R>

“This will pass very soon and we will begin to celebrate again, the goodness of our God.” Words from the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, my husband Jensen Seyenkulo.

Today is World Communion Sunday—and we gather today, having heard the words and the songs and seen the faces of other Christians who are also gathering. As we think on that and on the reality that faces my other home, the country of Liberia; my other church, the Lutheran Church in Liberia; my other people, the people of Liberia as we remember- hear words from the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the book of Luke:

<sup>19</sup> And Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you

We gather together today, we come together to worship and to gather around the table, to share in communion, in, as Jesus said, in remembrance of Jesus, son of God, our Lord and savior. We gather for some ordinary wine and some ordinary bread---made from ordinary things and we gather extraordinarily together, sharing in the bread and the wine, the body and blood of Jesus.

We gather today at First Lutheran, many of us with people whom we know well, people with whom we have a connection, a shared location, a somewhat shared culture, some shared life experiences. We know what it is to be Minnesotans (I was the first one of my Facebook friends this week to post that I saw snowflakes, this past Friday!) that’s being Minnesotan, isn’t it? We gather with people we have something in common with---and in a meaningful way, we come together to eat and to drink,---in remembrance of Jesus--- and then to go out to live as Christians in the world, in this shared culture, in this shared location. We even gather with those people we know so well and don’t like too much. Here in Minnesota, on the Iron Range any years ago during the labor strikes, I was moved to see, every Sunday, management people from the mines and Iron workers who were on strike, kneel side by side for communion; people who were on different sides in life but side by side in faith.

It’s an amazing thing: Jesus, that first time, gathered with Jewish friends. All right, they were more than friends: they were after all the original apostles! But they gathered and then they went out and spread the word, “Do this.....” “Do this in remembrance of me.....” And here’s the thing: the message did not just stay with them and people like them. Today we would say it went viral, but at any rate, the message spread and today, on this day, we, along with Christians from all over the world, including the Lutheran Church in Liberia, and including those Christians in West Africa who have ebola; including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and including people who are daily experiencing war conditions; including people from many different countries and all walks of life. Today we like them, we with them, share the bread and the wine, the body and blood of Jesus, together. We do it, as it says in 1 Thessalonians, “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” people from all over the world, from different cultures, places and life experiences; people different from us. We even gather with people with whom we disagree.

So today, we gather----and as we gather here, I ask that you hold in your minds and in your hearts, that you remember as you come forward that as we gather "in remembrance of Jesus----we gather also with people from all over the world, and I ask you today in particular to hold the people of West Africa who gather in the midst of a disease that is killing too many. It is World Communion Sunday. As we gather, let us hear the words of a Table blessing written by Jan Richardson just for this kind of day:

### Table Blessing

To your table you bid us come  
You have set the places  
You have poured the wine  
And there is always room you say for one more.  
And so we come  
From the streets  
And from the alleys we come  
From the deserts and from the hills we come  
From the ravages of poverty and from the palaces of privilege we come  
Running  
Limping  
Carried,  
We come  
We are bloodied with our wars  
We are wearied with our wounds  
We carry our dead within us  
And we reckon with their ghosts  
We hold the seeds of healing  
We dream of a new creation  
We know the things that make for peace and struggle to give them wings.  
And yet, to your table  
We come  
Hungering for your bread, we come  
Thirsting for your wine, we come  
Singing your song in every language, in every tongue, in conflict and communion, in discord and in desire, we come.  
O God of wisdom we come.