

Inside Out

Compassion Culture

November 16-17

Communion Reflection

One of the most exciting things you can hear on Thanksgiving is, '*Everybody, come to the table!*' It's the moment when family and friends gather to share in a feast, celebrate blessings, and express gratitude.

Today, we hear a similar invitation—not from a host at a Thanksgiving meal, but from Jesus Himself. He has set the table for us. While this meal may seem meager compared to what many of us ate this past week, its spiritual significance is infinitely greater.

In fact, the word *Eucharist*—a term often used for communion—comes from the Greek word *eucharisteo*, meaning *to give thanks*. When we come to this table, we participate in a Thanksgiving feast, not for the food on our plates, but for the gift of Jesus' body and blood, broken and poured out for us.

At Thanksgiving, we sit at tables overflowing with abundance. We give thanks for physical provision—food, family, and the blessings of life. But here, at the communion table, we give thanks for spiritual provision: the sacrifice of Jesus that offers us forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life.

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and what did He do? *He gave thanks* (Luke 22:19). Think about that—Jesus expressed gratitude even as He faced suffering and death. He knew what lay ahead, yet He gave thanks, modeling for us how to trust God's greater plan and give thanks in all circumstances.

As we approach this table, let's remember: no gift we've ever received compares to this one. Eternal life through Jesus is the greatest gift of all, and our proper response is a heart overflowing with gratitude. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:15, '*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*'

So, today, let's pause. Let's give thanks—not just for the blessings we've enjoyed this week, but for the greatest blessing of all: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Let's pray:

Lord, as we take this bread and this cup, we remember Your body broken and Your blood poured out for us. We thank You for this table, where we find forgiveness, redemption, and hope. Fill our hearts with gratitude, and help us live lives that reflect Your grace. Amen.

Introduction

Hey everyone, I hope you all had a blessed Thanksgiving! We had an amazing Give Thanks outreach with over 700 meals distributed into the community as well as blessing bags. Thank you to everyone who donated so generously of your time, treasure, and talents. Last Thursday the Youth assembled the blessing bags and the very next morning we were able to bless the woman sleeping on our driveway with one. This past Thursday my daughter's hula halau danced at a Thanksgiving outreach and the woman was there in good spirits so we were able to bless her again. This has been a wonderful season and one of the greatest blessings has been seeing our children find joy in blessing others.

The Model of Jesus

Through this series we've been looking to the example of Jesus for how to live a life that impacts the world around us. We've examined the kind of compassion Jesus modeled, we've studied His rhythm of rest and solitude, and we saw how Jesus took every opportunity to share the greatest gift of all, the gospel message, with those He was ministering to. As we conclude our series we're going to see how Jesus' life of compassion didn't end with His time here on earth but got passed on to His closest followers.

Compassion in the Church

⁴² "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved," (Acts 2:42-47 NIV).

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways do you see Christ's model for compassion (as discussed in this series) embodied by the Acts Church?
2. In what ways do you see this same model for compassion embodied in the Church today?
3. In what ways do you see a difference or disparity in the way this compassion is embodied today (both in the Church and in yourself).