

The Cruciformed Community

The Community of Christ's followers have always regarded certain rituals as important. These are called sacraments or ordinances.

These rituals are meant to do more than help us remember Jesus. They were meant to help us participate in the life of Jesus- specifically the crucifixion and resurrection.

These ordinances are not simply meant to inform us about the life of Jesus. They were meant to transform us. They are meant to help us conform to the life of Jesus. And they were meant to form us into a community shaped by the Cross and Resurrection.

Note: We are meant to be a Cruciformed Community= Community formed by the Cross.

We celebrate 2 sacraments/ordinances: Baptism and Communion

1. **BAPTISM:** The word is a transliteration from the Greek word, *Baptizo*= to immerse.

Why Baptism?

- Baptism is the visible representation of our participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - He died with us so we could die to sin and self.
 - His burial was my burial. The old me is dead.
 - His resurrection is my resurrection. I am no longer who I was even if I act like it on days.

Romans 6:1–4 - *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."*

- Baptism creates a new identity- individually and collectively.
 - Baptism identifies the individual with the physical body of Christ by placing us "in Him."
 - Baptism places us in the corporate Body of Christ and changes the way we identify others.

I Corinthians 12:12-13 - *"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."*

Galatians 3:27-28 - *"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Note: Baptism does not change our identifiers: But now, in Christ, our identifiers are not our identity. We belong to Jesus. We belong to each other as members of the Body of Christ. And in that Body, everybody is a somebody.

- While baptism is non-salvific it appears that baptism in the New Testament was also not-optional.
 - It was not meant to save us. It was meant to shape us.
 - It was meant to help conform us into the image of Christ by reminding us that we are those who find our identity in Him and have died to the old way of life through the cross.
 - Jesus did not just die for me. I also died with Him.
 - And it placed me in the Body of Christ shaped by the cross.

Baptism is the visible declaration that we can say with Paul, **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me". (Galatians 2:20)**

And those who have been crucified with Christ are marked by Cruciformed lives.
A Cruciformed community chooses the way of the Cross which is the way of laying down our lives in love.

2. COMMUNION/THE LORDS' SUPPER/THE EUCHARIST: The early church viewed this ordinance as a way to live in cruciformed/ cross formed community.

- It was not a 15 minute ritual. It was a meal. And meals in the 1st century were not chiefly about the food. They were social gatherings that defined insiders and outsiders.
 - In Jewish culture they defined who was "in" or "out" of favor with God.
 - Jews not only didn't eat unclean food like pigs.
 - Righteous Jews didn't eat with unclean people that they treated like pigs.
 - In the Roman culture meals were not about sustenance but status.
 - Who you ate with, where you sat, and what you were served communicated your social status and rank.

Communion was the declaration that we recognize one another as those who have equal worth and value. We recognize Jesus has invited us all to His table.

I Corinthians 11:20-22 - *"Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you*

Paul's concern is that the church is reproducing the social hierarchy of Corinth at the Lord's Table.

- **Communion was a family meal.**
 - And we don't get to choose our family in God's family. God has chosen them.
 - And when we "choose" to dignify them as brothers and sisters
 - It is supposed to be hard. It is meant to be the way of the cross.
 - It is meant to shape us so we become the cruciformed community.

Note: The Jewish world said:

"You eat with people you deem clean enough"

The gospel declares:

"Jesus has made us all clean"

The Roman world said:

"Meals are a show of your status. You get an invite if you measure up"

But **Jesus declares:**

"At this table you are all elevated because you have a special invite from the King."

And the world around us today would tell us:

"Your identifiers are your identity and determine your value in this world.

But we as the cruciformed community declare to the world:

"We are the Family of God, the Body of Christ, the Ekklesia who is establishing the Kingdom of God by living out the way of the King. The way of Jesus, The King of Kings.

And Paul reminds us that the way of the King Jesus was the way of the cross in Philippians 2:6-8.

"(Jesus) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

And Paul would write in verse 5 that we are to live the way of the cross.

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

The mindset that is set out on living the crucified life as individuals in cruciformed community.

Baptism reminds us of our new identity- we died and rose with Christ.

The Table reminds us we belong to a new community- the one Body of Christ we share in the Bread makes us one Body.

Both of those point us to the cross where we learn what a body shaped by Christ looks like.

It doesn't look like a hierarchy of important people and unimportant people.

It doesn't look like the strong consuming the weak.

It doesn't look like people protecting their status.

It looks like Jesus.