



8-27-17 Sermon Discussion Guide “Sacramentology”



Context

Throughout this summer we are talking about words and ideas that we often hear in church but rarely define. This summer provides a chance to hit “pause” and reflect upon these ideas, their importance, and their impact upon life. This series began by asking the question, “What is theology?” Throughout this summer we’ve looked at who God is, who we are in relation to God, and how God saves us. After discussing our response to God’s faithfulness, we move into a discussion about the church – what it is, what it does, and how it works..

Checking In

Since the last time your group has met, how have each of you experienced God at work? What have you celebrated? What have you mourned?

Introduction

This week we discuss our belief about the sacraments. What is a sacrament? How many sacraments are there? What do sacraments do for us? What’s at stake if we don’t believe the right things about them? As we start this discussion, there are two major points to emphasize. 1. Sacraments are experiences that are meant to make God’s grace more real, more tangible to us. 2. Our beliefs and practices of the sacraments should bring us together, not separate us. So as we start our conversation, consider a worship experience where God felt real to you. Describe what made that experience meaningful or memorable.

Discussing the Text –1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Ephesians 4:1-6, and other texts to follow

1. The word for sacrament comes from the Greek word “mysterion,” also a root of the word “mystery.” What connections might you find between the words “mystery” and “sacrament?”
2. In Mark 1:9-11, Jesus is baptized before he begins his formal ministry. Why do you think Jesus would get baptized? Also, if this event takes place at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, what might that tell us about baptism and its role in the life of the Christian?
3. In Romans 6:34, Paul says that in baptism we die and are raised with Christ. What do you think he means by that phrase?
4. Acts 16:31-34 tells the story of a jailer who converts to Christianity and he and his whole family are baptized. What might this story tell us about who can be baptized and what the requirements for baptism are?
5. Ephesians 4:1-6 is a powerful passage about the unity we share as Christians. When Paul says there is “one baptism: in verse 5, what do you think he means?”
6. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 outlines some issues the Corinthian church was having with celebrating Communion. What does it mean to “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes?”
7. Why would Paul be so upset in 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 that the Corinthians weren’t waiting for one another to share communion? Do you think this issue is what made Paul say what he did in verses 27-31?

So what?

1. The theologian Augustine of Hippo says that sacraments are “visible signs of an invisible grace.” What do you think he means by that?
2. If the sacraments are more about what God has done on our behalf, what is our role in celebrating them?
3. Since Jesus tells us to make disciples and baptize them, and to remember Jesus in celebrating Communion, when and how often should we celebrate these sacraments? How do we know?
4. How can baptism and the Lord’s Supper help build bridges between people from different backgrounds? How can they empower you to live out your faith?

Prayer

Share something you for which you are thankful and/or something for which you need support. Have the group pray this week for unity in our country, especially as it relates to race and politics.