



HEART OF
DISCERNMENT

The Priesthood of ALL Believers



AN UNOFFICIAL
COMMUNION SERVICE

Introduction

This service was conducted on January 15th, 2023. Those in this service are unordained in the hierarchical priesthood, but felt a call from God to eat the Lord's Supper with each other.

This service was recorded and uploaded to YouTube [here](#), however this transcript has been developed to make the meeting accessible for those who are hard-of-hearing.

Greetings

Evan Sharley: Hello and welcome to the first Heart of Discernment communion service.

We are gathered here today to join together as family and friends in Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Communion is typically understood as a symbolic meals which reminds us of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It serves as a renewal of our baptismal commitment as we ponder our past, present, and future, and determine if there are aspects in our life that are in need of reconciliation and redemption. It is with this that we recommit to promote communities of generosity, justice, and peace.

How this ritual is performed varies widely, and as a result there are many questions about who we should accept it from. I sought guidance from the scriptures, and I found it in the form of Mark 9: 38-41, which says:

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out devils in your name. We told him to stop because they were not a part of our group." Jesus responded by saying "Do not stop them. No one who does something like this in my name will suddenly turn against me. Those who are not against us are for us. I speak from my heart, anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you are Christians will never lose the honor that has been gained."

Communion is one thing that unites us all as Christians, and it is an honor to share in this meal with you tonight.

To begin our service, I will turn the time over to Ariel Gonzales for our opening prayer.

Opening Prayer

Ariel Gonzales:

Jesus, Jesus
The radiance of God's glory
The representation of God's being,
You sustain all things by the word of your power.
After you provided purification for sins, you took your throne at the right hand of heaven's
majesty, positioned above all angels
as the true child of the true parent.
Your throne will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You love righteousness
And you have been vindicated by the anointing of the oil of joy.

Lord, we are prone to wander.
Our hearts are always going astray,
and we have not known your ways
We have turned away from you
And in our deceit
we have become hardened.
Our unbelief has left us
outside of your rest.

Yet you have had good news proclaimed to us.
You have given us,
in yourself,
a great high priest who is able to empathize with human weakness.
You tore the temple veil
for us.

Thank you, God, for inviting us to step through that veil.
Thank you, God, for breaking the hierarchical system restricting access to your holiness.
Thank you, God, for gifting us the privilege of approaching the throne of grace
Ourselves
Not in fear of wrath
But with confidence.

God, we want to receive your mercy.
Please deal gently with our ignorance and our straying.
Be our source of eternal salvation.
Let us move beyond the elementary teachings
And be taken forward to maturity.
Enlighten our understanding.
Let us share in the Holy Spirit.

We want to taste the goodness of your word.

We want to taste the goodness of your kingdom's power.

Give us the faith and the patience to inherit what has been promised.

In your holy name we pray.

Amen.

Sermon Introduction

Evan Sharley: Thank you Ariel.

Tonight our sermon will be given by a dear friend of mine. I met her last year at the Sunstone Symposium where we talked about theology the whole weekend. Since she has a master's degree in theology, her thoughts were well researched and well articulated. Since that time her and I have become friends, and she has become someone I consider a spiritual mentor of mine. I am very happy that we get to hear her preach to us tonight, as undoubtedly the Spirit will be with her.

With that, I'd like to turn the time over to Elle Mills-Warner.

Sermon

Elle Mills-Warner: My siblings, we gather in the name of Jesus. For he has said that where two or three are gathered in his name there he shall be. We are gathered tonight in the spirit of reverence.

Though I have heard things that are being said about this service, things about us; I have heard from others that we are mocking the holy, that we are being disrespectful, that we are taking something that we haven't earned, that we are doing this to be subversive, for attention seeking, that all of this is a production - a show. That, my siblings in Christ, could not be further from the truth.

I cannot speak for everyone here but I will speak for myself. It is my sincere and deeply held belief that the priesthood is a universal institution, and that this is an old and a new revelation.

Jesus was not born into priesthood. At his at the time of his life "priesthood" was something inherited; passed from father to son, and only passed through the tribe of Levi. Nobody in Jesus's immediate line was a priesthood holder, and yet this man living in the back woods of the Holy Land - a place that wouldn't even appear on the map for another 200 years it was so small - this man was the one that God chose to be the Messiah. This man ministered in God's name casting out demons, healing the sick, forgiving sins wherever he went, and he did all of this without ever holding the "priesthood".

Jesus's Ministry did not begin with ordination or someone passing an office to him. His ministry began at his baptism with the spirit descending upon him, and so does our priesthood begin in the waters of baptism and with the spirit coming upon us.

Jesus is not only **not** a priest, he casts priestly people often in negativity. When he interacts with the priestly he usually has words of admonishment. Even his one of his most famous parables, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, casts a priest and a Levite, two of the great religious leaders of the time, as the ones who look at the men with indifference and carry on their daily activity. It is a Samaritan - someone who is outside of Jesus's culture, Jesus's religious tradition, someone who the Jews would have seen as arch-heretics, people who were not even supposed to be communicated with by the Jews - Jesus casts this person, this outcast, as the hero of the story.

But it is not just Jesus. The Restorationist tradition has the priesthood being given by God to a boy, a young boy, also in the backwoods. Another boy begins the priesthood tradition that we have come to see in our tradition. The priesthood starts simply and becomes ever more complex during that time, culminating in its current form in Nauvoo. And yet even after that, the priesthood is ever changing.

The priesthood has never been static; the priesthood has never been one thing, but what it seems to have become is an institution a hierarchy. Even the word "hierarchy" means "ruled by priests". When we see hierarchies form they often become static, seeking to preserve themselves and the status quo at all costs. If we see anything from the messages of Christ, it is

that he was never one to side with institutional powers. Indeed his ministry was always to the outcast, always to the poor, always to the laity.

In one of the most sacred acts Jesus ever did, the night before he died he gave his disciples a holy sacrament. Jesus knowing what was to come knew that he was not going to be in the presence of his followers much longer, and so symbolically gave them his flesh and blood. As long as they had bread and wine, they would have him. Everyone had access to these things. It was something everyone needed. Nowhere does Jesus talk about anyone being set aside for this task; all participated. At the Last Supper even Judas, the one Jesus knew was going to betray him, sat at the table and participated. Jesus did not put stipulations on this sacrament or give it over to "priesthood authority". He gave it to his disciples to be a sacrament that they did everywhere and every day without condition. Indeed he says "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup do it in memory of me."

Yet, as a layperson I am not "allowed" to say the words of communion. I am not "allowed" to approach this holy sacrament that Jesus gave freely to his disciples. I do not see this as inspired counsel. I do not see a hierarchical priesthood as being compatible with the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Instead what I see the priesthood as at this point is an administrative system. An administrative system from an older system when we still believed in "One True Church."

Yet I firmly believe in the priesthood. I believe that we all participate in the priesthood. I believe God calls us all in different ways. Just as Jesus's Ministry began in the waters of baptism and the revelation of Spirit, so our ministry begins in the waters of baptism and the continued guidance of the Spirit; guiding us to where our ministry should be. Be that ministering to children, ministering to congregants, ministering in the form of cleaning windows, ministering in the form of spreading the gospel ministering, and visiting the sick ministering in every way possible. Endless priesthood offices based on our gifts, and not on titles that bear little to no relevance in our modern Church. The priesthood is alive, [and] the priesthood will continue to change just as it changed in Joseph's day. The priesthood is what we all are.

I can think of nothing more sacred than the priesthood. I do not mock the priesthood. I believe that we all participate in this holy institution of God. It is not passed by someone laying their hands upon you; it is passed by the Spirit of God breathing life into you, breathing revelation and breathing Their Holy Light. God will call who God will call, and let no institution bar a person from God's call. For God called the lowliest person out of Nazareth and took him and made him the Messiah. I urge all of us to be seeking that same Spirit in that same counsel.

I close out with the words from 1st Peter, chapter 2 (4-10):

"As you come to him a, living stone, rejected by men in the sight of God, chosen and precious, you yourselves are like living stones being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

'Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame'

So the honor is for you to believe, but for those who do not believe,

'That stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone'

and

'A stone of stumbling, a rock of offense'

They stumbled because they disobey the word as they were destined to, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people built for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

All of this I proclaim in the holy name of my savior Jesus Christ, amen.

Call for Communion

Evan Sharley: Thank you, Elle!

We now transition into the portion of our service for communion.

If you are joining us live and have the emblems prepared in your location, we invite you to kneel as you are able to and partake of the Lord's Supper with us. However, if you are watching this service recorded, we ask that you wait to participate until you can be with us live.

Jaime.

Communion

Jaime Harker: Eternal God, we ask you in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who receive it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of your Son, and witness to you, O God, that they are willing to take upon them the name of your Son, and always remember him, and keep the commandments which he has given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

Joanna Smith: Eternal God, we ask you in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who receive it, that they may drink in remembrance of the blood of your Son which was shed for them, that they may witness to you, O God, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

Closing Thoughts

Evan Sharley: In John chapter 6 verses 25-32, Jesus was asked by a group of people what God wants them to do, and Jesus simply replied to trust Him. The people wanted something more grandiose and elaborate, like what their ancestors experienced when Moses was alive. Jesus told them that it wasn't Moses or the laws that Moses gave which is the "bread of life", but instead it is God that is the bread of life.

Tonight, we hope that the communion that we partook of reminds you of the TRUE bread of life.

With that, I will turn the time back over to Ariel Gonzales for our closing prayer.

Closing Prayer

Ariel Gonzales:

God, there is no one greater than you.
Your purpose is unchanging.
King of Shalom,
You stand without father or mother, without a pedigree.
Without beginning of days or end of years.
You will never retire from your priesthood office.
We stand in contemplation of your vastness.
You, our promise-keeper,
You, the ever-living,
your ordination came not through tradition or regulation, but from your indestructible immortality.
For it is declared,
You are a priest forever.
Adonai has vowed,
You are a priest forever.
Because you live forever,
 Your office never ends
Your intercession for God's people never ends.
You are holy, holy, holy.

We confess that we cannot intercede for the people
Without our own sins getting in the way.
Day after day we deal with the consequences of our actions,
and it impairs our ministry
Among these tabernacles of clay.
We have not been faithful.
And our repentance is perpetually short-lived.

Yet you respond to our limited and temporary efforts at repentance
with perfect and eternal reconciliation.
You entered the holiest place for us,
through the mystery of your own death.
Thank you for bringing us ritual purity that goes much deeper than any system of tradition we
could have executed.
Thank you for entering the holiest place to plead for us.
Thank you for an intercessory priesthood sacrament that is not temporary and always needing
to be renewed, but instead interceding once and for all.
Thank you for setting all of God's people apart... as holy.
Thank you for giving all of God's people confidence to enter the Most Holy Place,
the place of the highest priesthood office,
by your blood,
By a new and living way opened for us through the curtain of your body.

And since we have a Great High Priest over the house of God,
let us draw near to you with a sincere heart
and with the full assurance that faith brings,
having our hearts cleansed from guilty conscience.
Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for you, who promised, are faithful.
Let us consider how we may spur one another on
toward love
and good deeds,
not giving up meeting together,
but encouraging one another.
Give us confidence in what we hope for. And assurance about what we do not see.
Give us the faith of Noah,
who spoke truth to power
and became an heir of righteousness.
Give us the faith of Abraham, who, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his
inheritance,
obeyed and went,
even though he did not know where he was going.
Give us the faith of Sarah, who trusted you to keep your promises.
Give us the faith of Jochebed,
who was not afraid of the king.
Give us the faith of Joshua,
doing victory marches on the wrong side of a border wall.
Most of all, give us the faith of the sex worker Rahab,
who welcomed the forerunners of the coming kingdom.
Equip us with everything good
for doing your will,
For yours is the glory
for ever and ever.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.