

He Has Not Abandoned Us

Today many in this assembly will soon gather together for a meal. This is appropriate. As a fellowship that is concerned to live in keeping with the faith and practice of the ancient church we are aware that much of the communal life of the earliest Christians centered around tables. On the Lord's Day Christians would gather together for a meal. At this meal, perhaps at the beginning and at the end, words invoking the presence of Jesus and thanks for the benefits of his death, burial and resurrection would be said. So we have good precedent.

Most of the time, as believers today, you participate in this meal in a quiet and sedate setting. Our goal is to leave here renewed and ready to face the challenges of the week. But in an assembly of this size we know that some are troubled – about their faith, or family, vocation or future welfare. It is helpful to know that the Bible tells us of times when ancient believers assembled for a meal and faith was strengthened under stress.

On the night Jesus founded this meal-we call the Lord's Supper - he was within hours of facing his own death. Luke highlights this time in his Gospel account. But in his companion account of the early days of the Church, toward the end of his second volume in Acts, Luke tells us of another meal.

In Acts 27:34-36 Paul, aboard ship on his way to trial in Rome, is caught in a terrible storm. His party was 14 days without food. Notably, during the storm Paul takes bread, gives thanks, breaks the bread, and begins to eat. Soon the pagans, scared and apprehensive, follow.

I am not saying that meal was the Lord's Supper. The language, however, is imitative of the many times Jesus would eat with a wide range of people in his ministry. But there is a word here for us. Gathering together in Jesus' name we

invoke the power of his presence at the meal. Troubled and concerned though we may be, if we but pause and claim his presence, we know it will be well.

After the meal, when it was daylight, Paul and the others had to abandon ship. In a rough surf the ship broke up. Some had to grab planks or other pieces of the boat to get to the shore. But note how the account ends in Acts 27:44. “And so it was that all escaped to land.”

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Communion Meditation: Brentwood Oaks Church of Christ

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