

The Love Feast

The Blessing of Food and Community



Love Feast facts

- A communal meal shared among Christians
- In the early Church, communion was part of the love feast but during the 1 century the early Church separated the two
- Today, Love feast is a worship service and is separate from Communion (in most traditions that observe this ancient practice)
- AME, AMEZ, CME, UME, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Brethren, Adventist, Eastern Orthodox, and many others practice the Love (agape feast)
- The purpose is to strengthen one another, work out differences and find common ground in love

Early mentions of Love-Feast

- 12 He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Luke 14:12–14.
- ¹² These are blemishes^[c] on your **love-feasts**, while they feast with you without fear, feeding themselves.^[d] (Jude, 12)

Unworthy eating and drinking – “a Supper”

17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

²⁰ When you come together, it is **not really to eat the Lord's supper**. ²¹ For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with **your own supper**, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²² What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

Eating and drinking – “The Lord’s Supper”

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for^[g] you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Paul gets angry

- 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink[h] without discerning the body,[i] eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.[j] 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined[k] so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
- 33 So then, my brothers and sisters,[l] when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

What was the real problem with the Corinthian Church?

- The Corinthians celebrated a perverted Supper, (Not the Lord's Supper) an Agape Meal
 - Collins, Raymond F. *First Corinthians*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007, 81.
- They celebrated a supper (agape), then the Lord's Supper but the agape meal prior to the Lord's supper was unjust socially.

What was the real problem with the Corinthian Church?

At an evening hour . . . people come together in an appropriate room. . . . The members of the community who are better off financially, whose time is more at their own disposal, arrive earlier. They bring provisions with them which are supposed to suffice for all, but they begin to eat and drink for themselves, and soon are in a jolly mood. Slaves and wage laborers are not allowed to leave earlier from the household of their master or from their workplace. When they come somewhat later, they find only bits and pieces left of the full meal, to which they have nothing to contribute from their own means. At the end of the meal is the double sacramental action over bread and wine. The more highly placed **Corinthians** try to placate their own conscience and others with the argument that no one is excluded from receiving the sacrament, which is ultimately all that matters.³

From this perspective, Paul's reproach would be as follows: Some are taking part — to the point of drunkenness — in a full meal in which hunger plays a defining role. They should be so good as to hold this meal at home, prior to engaging in religious communion with those who are poor.

How should we prepare for Communion with the agape meal?

- Acts 2:42-47: 42 And they were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. 43 And fear was coming upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were coming through the apostles. 44 And all who had faith were together and having all things in common, 45 and were selling their possessions and the belongings and were distributing these to all as any were having need; 46 and daily, attending together the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were receiving their food with glad and grateful hearts, 47 praising God and having gratitude towards the entire people. And the Lord added to those who were being saved daily.

How should we prepare for Communion with the agape meal?

- 4 activities are associated with the meal
- Teaching of the apostles
- The fellowship
- The breaking of the bread
- The prayers

How should we prepare for Communion with the agape meal?

- A commitment to apostolic teaching
- A commitment to fellowship - Koinonia (Fellowship) is often used in the context of marriage.
- Shared activity
- Shared possessions

- This specific form of fellowship signaled friendship and intimacy breaking the pattern of only eating with your "socio-economic" class.

How should we prepare for Communion with the agape meal?

- “The wording of verse 24 merits careful attention. A literal translation reads: “But all who have faith were together and had all [things] fellowshiped.” The first use of “all” (pantes) in this verse refers back to “all (pasē) soul” in 2:43. The “all” who have experienced God’s power through the apostles’ signs and wonders are further described as “those who have faith” (presumably) in the gospel taught by the apostles. All these gospel-believers were together (or in a single place)...

How should we prepare for Communion with the agape meal?

- 17 and had “all” (hapanta) in “common” (koina) or—to be consistent with the translation “fellowship” (koinōnia) in 2:42—“all” had “all fellowshiped.” This is Luke’s way of expressing that all had adopted an attitude of mutuality, sharing their individual material possessions with one another as fellow members of the household of faith.¹⁸ Such pooling of possessions was not imposed on them by the apostles but was a voluntary response born out of a sense of spiritual unity and mutual care.” (PAUL S. JEON, Collectivism and/or Christianity)

How should we prepare for Communion with the agape meal?

- You are entering God's kingdom. When you are entering his kingdom you must acquire a different mindset and habits. "New Table Manners"
- The Feast of the Kingdom was not just announced but practiced.
- Jesus didn't just go around talking about eating and drinking; he went around eating and drinking.
- The Kingdom was not just coming, but we bring the Kingdom in.
- We are participating in the future and present Kingdom.

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- 6 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”
- 3 Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” 5 Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” Luke 6:1-5

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- ³⁶ When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.
- ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- ⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” Luke 7:36-39, 44-47

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. Luke 14:
- ⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- ¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- ¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” Luke 14:15
- How shall we eat the feast in the kingdom?
- Shall we have carnal mindsets?
- Shall we eat with a crooked eye?
- Shall we eat with words under our breath?

How Jesus shared a “love-feast” with others

- What we do at the table manifests the kind of people we are, or at least, aspire to be.
- At this table we show that we are committed and joyful people celebrating God's gift's toward us in fellowship.
- Life in the kingdom demands we adopt a new set of table manners as citizens of the City of God.