

“Do this”
Luke 22:14-20

War, swine flu, economy. All this bad news cascades upon us, 24 hours a day. It's easy to forget Jesus. His grace, his love, his promises, never make the front pages.

And if you're a baseball fan like me, this last week has been especially grim. Manny Ramirez, star of the Dodgers, has been suspended for fifty games for what amounts to steroid use. (By the way, if Manny Ramirez should find himself to “be in the family way,” then his suspension should be lifted!) Alex Rodriguez, Yankee star, has just come back from surgery and he's announced he used to use steroids. And a book has just come out detailing star pitcher Roger Clemens' use of steroids. A charge he denies, but we shall see.

So, what's a Christian to do? We remind ourselves, and witness to the world, that in the words of a hymn, that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet. We stand firm to witness that there is truth and power that do not make the headlines; and the truth is this: God's power, mediated to the world in the grace of Jesus Christ, stands strong.

Communion is one way of remembering the truth and the power of Jesus Christ.

“Do this in remembrance of me.” When we receive communion, we remember, we remember that we belong to Jesus. Receiving Communion is not just an act of remembering what Jesus did once long ago in a far away town, but it is an act of re-presenting Jesus: in Communion we know again that Jesus Christ is with us in Spirit.

If we were to read the Scripture in its original Greek, we would find that when Jesus says he eagerly, eagerly, desires to share this Passover meal (itself a ritual that re-presents God's mighty acts of deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt), when Jesus says he wants to share this meal before he suffers, he uses a word for suffering, pascho, which is nearly identical to the word for Passover, pascha.

The implication is: Jesus is our Passover, our Passover lamb, if you will, who brings us deliverance from slavery to sin and death and despair. Jesus is eager to share himself with us; he is willing to sacrifice himself for us.

This is the truth in which we live. At Communion, we get reconnected to that power. His body broken... for us... his blood shed. . . For us..

Do this in remembrance of me. That we remember, not just Jesus' long-ago supper, but Jesus' presence with us on our journey today.

Do this in remembrance of me. If our worship reminds you that Jesus is present on your journey, then this has been time well-spent.

But now let me ask another question. What if "do this" does not just refer to eating bread? What if "Do this" might also be an invitation to live the kind of life Jesus lived? He tells us to divide his cup among ourselves. Cup is a symbol for our God-given calling to fulfill. Jesus gives to each of us a portion of his calling to live a life of helping, of mercy, of kindness.

And "This is my body, broken for you." What if "Do this" refers not just to the bread, but also to taking into

ourselves a portion of Jesus' sacrificial life? Jesus dies for us; does "do this" perhaps invite us to live for the sake of others? To sacrifice that others might know of Jesus' love?

Such a sacrifice can involve the giving of our time, our financial gifts, the giving of our love and energy to others. And when we "Do this" Jesus is then represented again to the world which so desperately awaits good news. We can be that good news.

Let me close with another baseball story. It involves Aaron Harang, pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds. He is overlooked by many. One year he led the league in strikeouts and wins, and became the first pitcher ever to do that and not receive even a single vote for the Cy Young Award, given to the best pitcher.

Look at him, and he's not impressive. Not handsome. And if he ever took steroids, he should get a refund, because his body is simply not athletic.

But last Saturday here's how he spent his 31'st birthday. He got up early. And with his wife and two kids, went to the dedication of Miracle Field, a baseball field designed so that kids in wheelchairs can play baseball. Why was he there? Because he contributed tens of thousands of dollars to its construction and spent hours making the field a reality.

Then, later that day, he pitched against the Cardinals. And won, even got a hit, another sort of miracle, for he's a lousy hitter.

Well, his victory got covered in the sports pages, but the opening of Miracle Field? Hardly any coverage at all.

It's not news that make headlines. But Aaron Harang, baseball player, husband, father, Christian, did this, yes for the sake of the kids, but also in remembrance of Jesus Christ, though he might not put it this way.

Jesus is real to Aaron Harang. And the "Do this" command that he heard, led him to Miracle Field.

Today we receive Communion. Today we acknowledge that Jesus is real and present. We eat bread and we drink wine to remember he is with us, among us, within us. And in the remembering we again hope.

And maybe we find the courage and the inspiration, to listen for what "do this" might lead us to do in response to Jesus, who died that we might live.

No, what we do won't make the headlines. But we believe the story of humanity is written not in headlines, but in human hearts, listening when Jesus tells us, "do this" in his name, in his power.

Amen.