Sunday, June 29, 1975
WHAT CAN THIS MEAN? (Communion Sermon)
Luke 24:13-18,28-35

I. Many Protestants in our tradition are confused about the meaning of Holy Communion.

1. First of all note that eating, aside from being necessary, has always in history had its celebrative aspects.

a. special events like weddings, victory celebrations, birth, parties, banquets.

b. we honor someone by having them eat at our table and we are honored by someone's presence, or they honor us by inviting us.

2. But what about Holy Communion in this context? It has its roots in the Jewish tradition of celebrative religious meals. Mostly the Passover.

a. At the first last supper, Jesus and his disciples had gathered to celebrate the Passover.

b. Jesus turned the meal into something new by using the common elements of bread and wine. Body and blood.

c. Following the crucifixion and resurrection, we know the disciples gathered regularly for meals. It helped them recall Jesus and they always remembered the last supper.

d. Many or most of these communion services were informal, like the one described in our scripture lesson. Christians eating together and talking about Jesus.

3. The Early Church continued the practice of a common meal each Sunday, a weekly celebration of Easter and as part of this meal took bread and wine and recalled the last supper.

4. Later in Church History it became a much more elaborate ceremony and grew into the Roman Catholic Mass.

5. Along with this elaborateness came the belief in "transubstantiation."

This gave the priests a unique power available only to them. Christ sacrificed again.

The Reformation changed this. And we're back to the beginning.

II. What then does it mean for us today?

1. It recalls the history of Jesus Christ and our roots in the Jewish tradition.

2. We see ourselves as part of the historic church by re-enacting the ancient ceremony.

3. We see ourselves as part of humanity and related to each other.

4. God is the host and invites us to his table. Often in the N.T. the Kingdom of God is pictured as a banquet. We are honored to be invited.

5. Nothing magical or sensation. The Holy is often revealed in the Common.