

FROM CRUSADERS TO COMPANIONS:
EUCCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY AND THE *MISSIO DEI* IN ACTS 27–28
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Introduction

Although the names represent local American sports teams, many people around the world have heard of the Chicago Bulls or the Dallas Cowboys. Fewer people have heard about the Nazarene Crusaders. The Crusader was the official mascot of three of our Nazarene schools in the United States at the turn of the century. The Crusader figure used to make sense to us as a Nazarene mascot because the Scripture says we are “more-than-conquerors” (Rom 8:37 NIV) through Christ and a Christian faith that had “overcome the world” (1 John 5:4 NIV). The imagery also worked especially well in a late twentieth-century North American context, when Billy Graham’s peaceful, evangelistic “Crusades” were well attended in sports arenas and on television sets across the country. By the turn of the twenty-first century, however, the image of the Crusader more obviously represented something different: unjustifiable acts of unprovoked aggression, colonization, and oppression—all of which seemed to speak against our Wesleyan-holiness theology of love. Therefore, I was part of a first class of graduates at a Nazarene university who were *not* called Crusaders.

This local history speaks to a larger shift in the history, identity, and mission of those of us who call ourselves “Nazarene”—or, more properly, members of the global Church of *the* Nazarene. In some ways, the global Church continues to operate out of what I will call a *crusader mindset*: a biblical, theological, and missiological framework overdetermined by a conceptual metaphor of war and conquest evident in some of the language and constructs we use. Conceptual metaphors like MISSION IS WARFARE, EVANGELISM IS CONQUEST, or CONVERSION IS VICTORY can be supported by biblical proof-texts (e.g., Matt 16:18; Rom 8:37; 2 Cor 10:3–5; Eph 6:10–17; Rev 2:7, 11, 17),¹ but a larger scope of attention to the broader biblical narrative—or, as a Wesleyan might insist, “the whole tenor of Scripture”—suggests our missiology might be better informed by a wider variety of conceptual frames or metaphors. In this paper, I focus on the book of Acts as a biblical text of special importance for Nazarene theology and identity and call for a theological and ecclesial moment of repentance (*metanoia*) around the ways we think and talk about participating in God’s mission. I argue that the closing chapters of the narrative of Acts recommend a eucharistic conceptual framework of *companionship* rather than *conquest*, imagining the mission of God in moments of hospitality to strangers rather than territorial expansion, and through the vulnerability of evangelical witness rather than the winning of arguments in the marketplace of ideas.

¹ In a few instances in this paper, I make use of a convention in modern cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory, explained by Dancygier and Sweetser: “To distinguish them from cited examples, [conceptual or metaphorical] mappings are typically represented by analysts using the sequence TARGET IS SOURCE written in small caps”; Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser, *Figurative Language*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14.

Reading Scripture with a Crusader Mindset

The glasses I wear every day influence the way I see the world around me. They are made to remedy a defect in my natural vision and would not be as useful to anyone else. They are not that useful for seeing things that are very close or at very great distances. They are perfect for reading a book. Without them, the world looks quite different to me, and reading is difficult. Figuratively speaking, all interpreters of the Bible read with glasses like I do—though not all read with the physical kind of glasses I wear. The figurative kind of “glasses” to which I am referring are interpretive strategies, conceptual frameworks, and theological assumptions we apply to the biblical texts in the act of reading them. Some are more fitting for the purpose than others. Some are inherited from culture or tradition. Others are acquired by frequent reading. All of them influence what readers can “see” in the biblical texts. They prompt, limit, or, in some cases, determine what seems to jump off the page to the reader. When one reads a complex narrative like Acts with a set of interpretive glasses or a conceptual framework like what I call the *crusader mindset*, one can easily begin to ignore or exaggerate the importance of certain details that are (or are not) there in the text.

By crusader mindset, I mean to identify a biblical, theological, and missiological conceptual framework that has worked for us like a set of interpretive glasses through which we have viewed our world and mission work. In some cases, Nazarenes’ use of this metaphorical framework has been self-aware and intentional. For example, a fairly recent article on “Being the Church” in *Holiness Today* celebrates that “we believe in a church that, like its Lord, uses the weapons of faith, peace, truth, justice and the proclamation of the message of hope to destroy the power of evil (Eph 6:14–17).”² The irony of our Lord using faith, peace, truth, and justice as “weapons” seems intentional; hopefully, that irony is not lost on readers. In other cases, the influence of a crusader mindset on our language and practice might be more profoundly subconscious. Phrases like “winning souls” or “gaining members” depend upon conceptual metaphors like MISSION IS WARFARE, EVANGELISM IS CONQUEST, or CONVERSION IS VICTORY to whatever extent the metaphor is intended to be developed by users.³ Users of these phrases likely do not mean to insist that people “won” to the Lord or “converted” to Christianity should be fully conceived as conquered enemy soldiers. Moreover, the fact that new mission-oriented works are organized into regional territories or “fields” suggests a metaphor building on strategic military deployment. Missionaries are sent into new fields of spiritual, ideological, cultural, or religious confrontation, which might naturally be conceived, metaphorically, as acts of territorial dispute or expansion “for advancing the kingdom of God.”⁴ But, of course, we do not send missionaries into mission fields to acquire land or captives or to take possessions from anybody.

² Mónica Mastronardi de Fernández, “Being the Church: An Extreme Experience,” *Holiness Today*, April 2016, <https://www.holinesstoday.org/imported-news/being-church-extreme-experience> (accessed October 19, 2025).

³ A conversation between district superintendents in Mozambique recorded in *Holiness Today*, for example, demonstrates the prevalence of the language of “winning souls” and “gaining members” in widespread mission-oriented and ecclesial practice; interpreted by Obadias Muhandzule, “Growing Churches in Mozambique,” *Holiness Today*, March 2010, <https://holinesstoday.org/imported-news/growing-churches-mozambique> (accessed October 19, 2025).

⁴ From the “Foreword” of the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, 2023–2027, page 5.

The problem, in my view, is *not* that we have inherited such biblical metaphors or a conceptual framework like the crusader mindset, but that this conceptual framework might exercise *too much* influence on our interpretation of Scripture—to the point that it threatens to distort our reading of Scripture and our perception of the mission of God, causing us to overlook alternative biblical images and narratives that might also need to inform our faith and practice. This crusader mindset might cause us, for example, to focus on the Church’s or the Kingdom’s apparent territorial expansion “to the ends of the earth” in our interpretations of Acts (1:8), overlooking the ongoing and central significance of Jerusalem to the narrator’s purposes (e.g., Acts 2:5; 15:13–21; 21:17–26; 28:17–31). Such a mindset might also cause disciplined interpreters to hallucinate patterns of “conversion” or religious experience and impose them on the interpretation of the texts.⁵ Looking closely at Paul’s own missionary practice of “breaking bread” with his shipmates (27:33–38) and reception of the “hospitality” (*philanthropia*) offered by “barbarians” (*barbaroi*) on the island of Malta (28:1–10), I will show how the narrative of Acts overturns expectations for “winning souls,” “gaining converts,” or “advancing the Kingdom” that might come naturally to anyone reading the text from the perspective of a crusader mindset, recommending a reconceptualization of the *missio Dei* in terms of companionship rather than conquest, and in terms of witness to Jesus rather than the winning of converts through argument or force.

Eucharistic Hospitality in Paul’s Last Missionary Journey (Acts 27:33–38; 28:1–10)

The conceptual and missiological shift from *conquest* to *companionship*, I am suggesting in this paper, is not ultimately a matter of updating language or concepts to keep up with modern usage; it is a matter of paying closer attention to Luke’s own storytelling in the book of Acts.⁶ The author does not conclude the narrative with glorious images of victory or expansion, but with images of shipwreck (27:39–44), shared bread (27:33–38), and an apostle’s dependence on the kindness of strangers (28:1–10). In the book’s closing scenes, Paul’s embodied witness among Romans, prisoners, and “barbarians” (*barbaroi*) becomes a lived parable of the *missio*

⁵ Though Méndez-Moratalla and Talbert have argued for a consistent paradigm of conversion or religious experience in Luke-Acts, Gaventa and Green have more persuasively demonstrated that the Lukan narrator is not constrained by an imagination of a singular “technique or pattern of conversion”; Joel B. Green, *Conversion in Luke-Acts: Divine Action, Human Cognition, and the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 21–22; Fernando Méndez-Moratalla, *The Paradigm of Conversion in Luke*, JSNTSup 252 (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Charles H. Talbert, “Conversion in the Acts of the Apostles: Ancient Auditors’ Perceptions,” in *Reading Luke-Acts in Its Mediterranean Milieu*, NovTSup 107 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 135–48; Beverly R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, OBT 20 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

⁶ In this paper, I follow the ancient traditional but also modern scholarly convention of treating “Luke” as the implied author of both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Though I am aware of recent arguments against the assumption of Lukan authorship of Acts, I agree with Michael Bird that “despite warranting a frequent mention in the footnotes of scholarly monographs, [these arguments] have not convinced the majority of Lukan scholars and have not overturned the consensus” of Lukan authorship or the narrative unity of Luke-Acts; Michael Bird, “The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion,” in *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and C. Kavin Rowe (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 10; Joel B. Green, “Luke-Acts, or Luke and Acts? A Reaffirmation of Narrative Unity,” in *Luke as Narrative Theologian: Texts and Topics*, WUNT 446 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 3–23.

Dei as eucharistic hospitality. The same narrative that might be read as the gospel's triumphant march to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) can also be read as the Spirit's descent into patterns of mutual hospitality embodied in the witness of a shared social life together (see Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37). To see how Luke reimagines mission beyond the crusader frame of winning converts, capturing territory, or advancing the Kingdom, we turn to the sea voyage and shipwreck narratives of Acts 27–28, where companionship (e.g., the breaking of bread) rather than conquest serves as the central symbol or metaphor that structures apostolic witness.

Breaking Bread with Sailors (Acts 27:33–38)

Interpreters have long noticed the remarkable eucharistic Lukan phrasing in Acts 27:33–38.⁷ As dawn breaks after two weeks of storms at sea and struggling, Paul urges the ship's passengers to share a meal in the following way: "Having *taken* bread, he *gave thanks* to God before them all, and after *breaking* it, *began to eat*." The sequence, "taken" (*lambano*), "gave thanks" (*eucharisto*), "broke" (*klaō*), and "began to eat" (*erxato esthiein*) unmistakably recalls the four-fold pattern of the Lord's supper presented in Luke 22:19, which is likely also implied in summary references to "breaking bread" throughout the book of Acts (cf. 2:42; 20:7). Yet the context could hardly be further removed from a Christian worship gathering. Paul is a chained prisoner on a Roman vessel surrounded by soldiers, sailors, and prisoners.⁸ Nothing is said about the Lord's supper, baptism, sacraments, wine, a new covenant, remembrance, or the risen Lord. The purpose of the bread breaking is also stated explicitly: "This [meal] is for your salvation" (*soteria*, 27:34), which, in context, apparently means the partakers' survival.⁹ Therefore, many commentators understandably caution against identifying this act as a formal instance of the Lord's supper or Eucharist.¹⁰ The absence of ecclesial markers, the particular mix of participants, and phrases like "satisfied their hunger" (27:38) that underscore the meal's physical intentions all weigh against treating it as a sacramental administration of the Lord's Supper. Luke's vocabulary for "taking bread" and "blessing" it or "giving thanks" can also describe any ordinary Jewish meal blessed with gratitude to God (cf. Luke 9:16; 24:30; 1 Sam 9:13 LXX). Nothing requires the conclusion that Paul formally celebrated the Lord's supper or offered the sacrament to unbaptized or unbelieving persons in the boat.

⁷ For a now classic treatment of this subject, see Philippe H. Menoud, "Les Actes des Apôtres et l'Eucharistie," *RHPR* 33 (1953) 21–36.

⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson's commentary suggests that, in the context of ancient Greek comparative literature, sailors were culturally associated with "untrustworthiness" or "incompetence in a crisis" rather than heroism or virtue; Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina 5 (Collegeville, MA: Liturgical Press, 2006), 555; cf. Plutarch, *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* 18; Aelius Aristides, *Sacred Tales* 2:12, 65–67; Achilles Tatius, *Clitophon and Leucippe* 33; Petronius, *Satyricon* 102.

⁹ Joseph Fitzmyer no doubt correctly notes that "Luke uses *soteria* (lit. 'salvation') [here] in a secular sense, 'survival,' since the food will contribute to their physical well-being"; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB 31 (New Haven: Doubleday, 1998), 788. Nevertheless, the use of soteriological language in the passages serves the further underscore the eucharistic resonance of the event, in my view, that might easily be lost in translation.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 788; Johnson, *Acts*, 556.; C. K. Barrett, *Acts II* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1998), 1225–26.

Nevertheless, the deliberate echo of eucharistic language has seemed too strong to many readers to be merely accidental.¹¹ At least part of the intended audience of Acts was likely already familiar with some form of eucharistic practice.¹² By framing the meal in the language of “salvation” (*soteria*) and the fourfold cadence of the Lord’s Supper from Luke 22:19, the implied author invites the audience to blend the two conceptually and imagine Jesus’s presence in a common meal shared among Roman sailors, soldiers, and prisoners at sea. As in the Emmaus narrative (Luke 24:30-35), divine grace is recognized in the breaking of bread among wayfarers. Paul’s meal is thus best understood not as the Eucharist but a eucharistic moment—a narrative sign of God’s providence that remembers or even anticipates the sacramental reality without specifically performing it.

This reading accords with the author’s broader theological strategy. Throughout Luke and Acts, table fellowship has been the author’s way of revealing the inclusive and transformative character of God’s kingdom. Jesus has eaten with tax collectors and sinners (Luke 5:29-32; 7:36-50); the Emmaus travelers have recognized him especially “in the breaking of bread” (24:35); the earliest believers have devoted themselves to “the apostles’ teaching and the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42). In Acts 27, that pattern reappears in an unexpected venue: the narrative setting of a Roman ship in storms at sea in what must have felt to some readers like the “ends of the earth” introduced at the beginning of the narrative (cf. 1:8). The blessing and distribution of bread among prisoners and pagans dramatizes the implied author’s suggestion that some sort of *prevenient* grace here precedes their baptism or conversion. Salvation comes first in the form of companionship with an apostle of Jesus Christ. God’s mission reaches the “ends of the earth,” not only or even especially through his persuasive preaching, but through surprising forms of apostolic hospitality.

This narrative need not be interpreted as erasing sacramental boundaries. In 1 Corinthians 10–11, Paul’s instructions about the Lord’s Supper appear to presuppose that its participants already belong to the baptized community (cf. 1 Cor 1:13–17; 12:13), and he explicitly requires moral discernment of the social body of Christ at the Lord’s table (11:27–29); more specifically, he warns that those who “eat and drink” without “discerning the body” risk bringing judgment upon themselves (11:29). Nothing in Acts 27 must be read as contradicting Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians. The meal at sea does not set a new liturgical precedent but is presented as a parable of the activity of Christ and the Spirit in history. The same God who sustains believers in the Eucharist sustains the world; the same gestures that, within the Church, signify participation in Christ’s body here signify the triune God’s generosity toward all creatures. Luke thus preserves the theological grammar of the Eucharist—thanksgiving, breaking, sharing, life-giving

¹¹ Fitzmyer insists “the phraseology has a eucharistic ring to it,” and Johnson observes further that “the sequence is sufficiently allusive to point the reader back to earlier passages where the Eucharistic gestures seem deliberately to be invoked (see Luke 6:4; 9:16; 22:19; 24:30)” and that “the addition of ‘having given also to us’ in the Western Text makes the allusion even stronger”; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 788; Johnson, *Acts*, 556. For a more comprehensive treatment of this eucharistic motif in the book of Acts, see Menoud, “Les Actes des Apôtres.”

¹² On the centrality of the practice of the Lord’s Supper (or Eucharist) in early Christian devotion, see Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 128–33; Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 73–114.

communion—while introducing its significance into the wider theater of providential and/or prevenient grace.

Sharing Hospitality with Strangers (Acts 28:1–10)

Having survived the shipwreck, Paul and his companions encounter the island’s “barbarians” (*barbaroi*)—outsiders by Roman and Jewish standards—who nevertheless show “unusual kindness” (*philanthropia*, 28:2). The leading man on the island, identified as *Poplios* (28:7), receives them and provides “hospitality” (*xenia*, 28:7); Paul reciprocates the act of kindness with a display of spiritual or apostolic hospitality, healing Poplios’s father and many others (cf. 3:1–7). Luke’s narrative development of terms like *barbaroi* and *philoxenia* in this passage overturns certain ancient stereotypes of foreigners as enemies or inferiors.¹³ No one is converted, baptized, or instructed in the Christian faith, as we might expect to see happen in one of Paul’s so-called missionary journeys; instead, hospitality is exchanged in mutual benefaction. Furthermore, the missionary is a grateful guest before he becomes a benefactor. Here, again, the narrative presents a paradigm of communion or companionship that comes before conversion, fellowship that is possible without explicit faith profession. The dynamic mirrors the pattern of Paul’s meal at sea (27:33–38), presenting the *missio Dei* as mediated through acts of shared humanity rather than through crossing a spiritual or sacramental boundary.

Neither Paul’s eucharistic meal on the ship nor the surprising mutuality of the hospitality between Paul and the *barbaroi* on Malta need to be interpreted as authorizing indiscriminate sacramental practices. These narratives do, however, problematize any missiological or conceptual framework that automatically treats “others” as enemies, as undeserving of hospitality, or treats conversion as a prerequisite for any participation in grace. God’s hospitality, in these narratives, precedes human responsibility or ecclesial authority. The meal at sea and the hospitality at Malta depict the *missio Dei* as a movement that reaches outsiders through acts of thanksgiving and companionship long before they speak the language of faith. If the crusader metaphor prompts us to imagine mission or evangelism as conquest, Acts 27–28 prompts the reader to imagine it as table fellowship and hospitality beyond the Church’s boundaries—as breaking bread with Roman sailors and trusting that God’s providence is already at work among strangers.

Toward a Companionship Mindset through Eucharistic Hospitality

Two of the closing moments in the narrative of the book of Acts, Paul’s breaking bread with Roman shipmates (27:33–38) and his exchanging hospitality with “barbarians” at Malta (28:1–10), invite a reconceptualization of evangelism and the *missio Dei* for the global Church of

¹³ For an extended treatment of the implied author’s characterization of the “barbarians” (*barbaroi*) in this Malta episode with respect to common conceptions and characterizations of *barbaroi* in the ancient Greco-Roman literature of the period, see Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1–10*, NovTSup 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 39–43. Jipp observes both that “the term ‘barbarian’ is most frequently used to characterize the ‘other,’ the non-Greek, in stereotypically negative terms,” it is also possible that the implied author is “drawing upon a cultural script of friendly, hospitable barbarians” (p. 44); cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 563; Dio Chrysostom, *Oration 7:5*; Xenophon, *The Ephesians*, 2, 2, 4; Petronius, *Satyricon* 114; Lucian of Samosata, *True Story* 1:28–39.

the Nazarene in the twenty-first century. They demonstrate that the mission of God may not only be imagined as a campaign to win converts, advance the Kingdom, or extend ecclesial borders; it can also be imagined as an anticipatory participation in the eucharistic hospitality of Christ that even now sustains the world. These narratives teach us to imagine evangelism in practices of sharing life, bread, and blessing with those whom we have not yet known but God has loved. Conversion, in this paradigm, is for all parties involved—including the missionaries—a mutual turning toward God and toward love for one another in the presence of God. The Church’s task is to discern and join this movement of the Spirit wherever it appears, to receive strangers as friends, and to offer friendship, too, as sacramental.

The closing chapters of the book of Acts present the *missio Dei* not as a matter of conquest but of communion. This is more than narrative closure; for us, it offers a summons to eucharistic revival and reform. The narrative invites the Church to reimagine its tables, altars, and mission fields as shaped alike by *receiving, giving thanks, breaking bread, and sharing* in cooperation with Christ and the Spirit. This teaches us to imagine the Eucharist as not merely an inward sacramental or liturgical celebration for the Church but also as a pattern of an outward facing life and witness in the world. Paul’s final missionary journey, marked by shipwreck and hospitality, ends not in triumphal expansion to the “ends of the earth” but in a quiet household in Rome where he welcomes all who come to him and proclaims the kingdom “with all boldness (*parresia*) and without hindrance” (28:31).¹⁴ The last words in Acts, placing Paul in a precarious position on house arrest in Rome, do not sound a note of victory over the Romans but of the relative vulnerability of witness and of welcome. This literary choice is deeply theological: the *missio Dei* does not culminate in domination but in sharing life together—in the Spirit of Christ inhabiting households, meals, friendships, and moments of mutual care.

For a tradition like ours that has sometimes imagined evangelism through crusading metaphors of conquest, Luke’s ending offers an essential correction and calls us to participate in a wider theological and ecclesial change of mind and heart (*metanoia*). This is not to deny that there is a time and place for those biblical metaphors suggesting spiritual battle (Eph 6:10–17), advancing the Kingdom (Matt 11:12; Luke 16:16), or victory in Jesus (1 Cor 15:54–57; 1 John 5:4–5).¹⁵ Rather, what I have meant to show is that such conceptual metaphors are not the only framework the Church is given to understand God’s mission. As we have seen, a crusader mindset is, at best, peripheral to the missiological imagination of Acts, where the Church’s

¹⁴ In light of the case this paper has been making so far against automatically conceiving of preaching the gospel as ideological conquest, assuming something like the common conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, we will do well to observe that, in the New Testament, the Greek word *parresia*, here translated “boldness,” often refers to the relative “candor,” “frankness,” or “perspicuity” of the *content* of someone’s speech rather than to their level of confidence, passion, or style in delivering it; see Mark 8:32; John 7:26; 11:14; 16:25, 29; 18:20; Acts 2:29; BDAG s.v. “παρρησία.”

¹⁵ Even so, such metaphors are rarely, if ever, developed in the New Testament without some degree of irony or reversal. For example, Paul’s “armor of God” (Eph 6:10–17) frames spiritual battle almost entirely in defensive or steadfastness terms rather than conquest, and the only “weapon” is the Word. The so-called “violent” advance of the Kingdom (Matt 11:12; Luke 16:16) is famously difficult and is best read as an ironic commentary on the mismatch between human expectations of forceful messianism and Jesus’s own nonviolent mission. Likewise, the New Testament’s victory language (1 Cor 15:54–57; 1 John 5:4–5) consistently overturns normal associations of triumph by rooting triumph in Christ’s death and resurrection—victory through apparent defeat.

mission is not to subdue the world but to share in God’s hospitality expressed in all creation. The shape of that mission is not only evangelical but profoundly eucharistic: thanksgiving amid peril, shared bread with strangers, faithful witness in weakness. The shipwrecked apostle who breaks bread with sailors and receives kindness from “barbarians” embodies a missiology of companionship rather than conquest. The grace that saves Paul and his shipmates is the same grace by which the triune God continues to make strangers and even enemies into friends.

Such a vision resonates with John Wesley’s theology of prevenient grace as well as his sacramental practice of eucharistic revival and reform. Wesley was as sure that God’s mercy goes before us, awakening faith and love where we least expect it, as he was convinced that the Lord’s Supper should be a practice of “constant communion,” the ordinary “means of grace” by which believers are continually renewed in love and sent into the world with the “hope of glory.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, the Eucharist and a missiology of prevenient grace have not always been held together closely in later Wesleyan language or practice. The Scriptures help us to imagine that the Spirit who hovered over the waters in creation and descended on Jesus’s disciples at Pentecost continues to sanctify those who receive Christ in faith, moving over the chaos of our own age, gathering scattered peoples into community, often even before they know the name of Christ. The Church participates in that movement not by winning arguments or asserting dominance but by practicing gratitude and inviting hospitality: recognizing in every act of human kindness a trace of divine love and offering in return the bread and blessing of Christ’s body broken for the redemption and sanctification of the world.

To heed the Bible’s invitation to imagine ourselves as *companions* rather than *crusaders* is not to abandon the evangelistic fervor of our forebears but to rediscover its eucharistic core. At the end of Acts, the gospel is not advanced by strength of argument or numbers but by the vulnerability of shared table fellowship, where strangers find themselves addressed by supernatural grace. In the same way, the *missio Dei* drives the Church to the ends of the earth—but as guests, not conquerors; as witnesses, not warriors; as companions with strangers in the great work of bearing witness to the love of God. And every time we break the bread of thanksgiving, we remember what kind of mission we are called to embody: a mission supremely embodied in the faithfulness of Jesus, in whom we have not only “more-than-conquered” (*hypernikao*, Rom 8:37) but in whom we are also more than *just* conquerors in this world.

¹⁶ See John Wesley, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” Sermon 101; “The Means of Grace,” Sermon 12; and “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” Sermon 43, in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint of 1872 ed.), accessed via Wesley Center Online, <https://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-works-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/>. On the centrality of the Eucharist and a eucharistic conceptual framework for mission suggested by the Wesley brothers’ own spirituality and practice of ministry, see also Lorna L. N. Khoo, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality: Its Nature, Source, and Future* (Singapore: ATF Press, 2005).

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