

Remember!

1 Corinthians 11:23-28 (Maundy Thursday - April 9, 2020)

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the meal, he also took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the Lord's body and blood. Instead, let a person examine himself and after doing so, let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

There is a certain benefit in making a new recipe. You really have to look at the recipe to make sure you have everything you need, the right amounts of those ingredients, and that you are following the instructions. If you don't do that then it won't turn out to be the dish that the recipe creator intended. Then after preparing the dish, there is a certain joy to experiencing its never before tasted flavors and textures. You enjoyed it. So you want to eat it again and again and again.

But over time when you do something so often like making a particular dish, you can begin to go through the motions of preparing it. You know the recipe so well that you just start putting things in without thinking too much about it. Then when you eat it. It may taste good, but it may not have the same enjoyment as it did when it was first tasted. Or maybe the opposite happens if you don't make that recipe very often. Because of the time between you forget what went into the meal and you forget just how good it tasted.

Perhaps something similar was happening to the congregation in Corinth when it came to the sacrament of Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper. When we examine the context of 1 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul speaks about various abuses and divisions among the congregation especially in regard to the Lord's Supper. Listen to what Paul said in the verses 17-22. **"Now in giving you this next command, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For in the first place, I hear that when you come together in an assembly, there are divisions among you. And to some extent I believe it, for there also have to be factions among you so that those who are approved may become evident among you. So when you come together in the same place, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. For when you eat, each one goes ahead and takes his own supper, and so one person goes hungry while another is drunk. What, don't you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise God's church and humiliate those who have nothing? What am I to say to you? Shall I praise you? In this matter I do not praise you!"**

People within this congregation seemed to have lost touch with the meaning of the supper itself. So Paul, who was not in the upper room, repeats to them what he had received from the Lord Jesus about this precious meal reminding them of what the Lord's Supper is and why they celebrate it. He wants them to remember what he had passed on to them. After all, what was happening among them was not the Lord's Supper as Jesus had given it.

Even though we aren't here together this evening receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion, let's take this opportunity as we gather in the upper room with Jesus on the night he was betrayed into the hands of sinners to remember. We remember what Jesus is giving us in his holy supper. We remember the reality of enjoying it as Christians for whom he prepares it. After all, it is a meal prepared out of love for his own.

The disciple and apostle John who was there in the upper room with Jesus tells us in sort of a preface to Jesus' passion account. He begins in the upper describing the depths of that love. He writes, **"Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved those who were his own in the world, he loved them to the end."** (13:1) Then Jesus got up and took upon himself the role of a servant washing the disciples' feet. He spoke of the reality that if he didn't wash them, they would not be clean. Peter thought he was talking about a physical washing, but Jesus was talking about a washing of sin. His love for them was on display all the way to the end from the upper room, to the trials, to Calvary, to death on a cross all to wash them clean. That's what he was going to do. That's exactly what he did. Yet in that upper room as he celebrated the Passover with his disciples Jesus took common elements which were used in that meal. He gave them new meaning in himself and the death he was about to die. Paul recounts **(read vs. 23-25)**

Jesus doesn't say to us that the bread and wine represent or are symbolic of his body and blood where his body and blood are not really present. He doesn't say that the bread and wine become his body and blood leaving it no longer bread and wine. Jesus simply says, "This is my body...this cup is the new testament in my blood." He declares both bread and wine to be his body and blood. I'm sure the disciples in the upper room had some puzzled looks on their faces as they ate and drank. He was present there in the room. They could see him and touch him and talk to him. So how could he say that the bread was his body and the wine was his blood? Jesus isn't visibly present among us right now, and yet he says that he is present in his Holy Supper. The bread and wine are also his body and blood. I can't explain how that is possible. Yet it is his powerful Word that makes this true.

The lamb which was slaughtered for the Passover meal and whose blood was painted on the doorposts of the homes pointed ahead to Jesus. That was the old covenant. In the new covenant, the new testament, Jesus is our great Passover Lamb who gives himself. He gives his body and his blood in and with the bread and the wine. He gives us his body, the same body that was given into death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. He gives us his holy blood that was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. What he gives to them and to us is the result of his love for his own, for you and I. As we take and eat, we are doing that in remembrance of Jesus.

When we receive the Lord's body and blood we are not just remembering Jesus' words, but also his great acts of love he has done for us to save you and I. Each time we come together and approach his table, we are remembering what has gone into that meal prepared for us by Christ himself. We are remembering by receiving the blessings we have through what he has given us in himself. Yet while we remember we are also proclaiming. **(read vs. 26)**

Each time we come together in worship and receive this wondrous sacrament, we are proclaiming what the Lord Jesus has done to save sinners, to save you and I from our own sins. His death is preached until he returns and we visibly see his presence again. The Lord's Supper is a wondrous meal of his body and blood he invites us to eat and to drink together, but it is a meal for us to prepare ourselves to receive.

When you are invited to a special event, perhaps a wedding, you prepare by dressing for the occasion. If the bride and groom want it to be a more formal wedding, they might want everyone in formal dresses and suits. It would be improper and disrespectful if you showed up in jeans, t-shirts, even polo shirts. You wouldn't be properly prepared as you ignored the wishes of the hosts.

The Lord Jesus is the one who prepares this special meal for us. He is the one who invites us to approach his table. As the host who gives his own body and blood to us in the bread and wine for the

forgiveness of sins, he wants us to be properly prepared. It seems in the Corinthians congregation's lack of remembering and abuse of the sacrament, many were unprepared and received in an unworthy way. So the Apostle Paul as he helps the Corinthian believers to remember what he passed on to them from the Lord Jesus himself, he speaks about proper preparation and the results of being unprepared. **(read vs. 27-28)**

Paul's words serve as a warning and an encouragement for us. Being unprepared, eating and drinking in an unworthy manner, brings spiritual harm instead of the good blessings that Jesus intends for us to receive. When we approach his table, we are truly unworthy of receiving anything from him. Yet he gives himself to us by his grace, his undeserved love, in such a miraculous and profound way. However it is lack of preparation which causes us to receive it in that unworthy way. Instead of forgiveness, we sin against Christ himself. So how does our Lord Jesus want us to be dressed for his Holy Supper? No, I'm not talking about what clothing to wear, but what clothes your heart. We clothe ourselves with personal examination.

That word "examine" means to test yourself. Take a hard personal evaluation of yourself. Look at your actions and whether you recognize the truth of this meal the Lord Jesus invites us to receive. Examine yourself with these thoughts in mind. "Am I a sinner? Have I broken God's commandments? Am I truly sorry for my sins? Do I recognize how harmful they are to me and how much they separate me from my God. Do I want to amend my sinful life? Do I have a desire to turn from my sinful ways toward living a life that is pleasing to God? Do I recognize that in this sacrament to which the Lord Jesus invites me, I am receiving the body and blood of Jesus himself in the bread and wine? Do I trust that in this holy supper prepared for me that my sins are forgiven?" Having examined ourselves, as we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, we receive the wondrous blessings of his love Jesus gives to us in his body and blood given and shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

Tonight on this Maundy Thursday, as we gathered in the upper room with Jesus and his disciples, we remember not just what he was about to do because of such great love for you, for me, for the world through his suffering and death. We also remember his holy supper which he instituted on that night he was betrayed into the hands of sinful men. We always have a need to remember because our own willful neglect leads us to forget what this precious meal is and the valuable blessing Jesus gives to us through it. We remember so we aren't simply going through the motions and forgetting to reflect on what it is Jesus has prepared for us in this meal with its promised blessings for you.

We remember tonight so when we are able to receive it again here in worship together, we might "take and eat" and "take and drink" prepared with repentant hearts recognizing our need for this sacrament yet also with joyful hearts knowing what Jesus gives us in himself. May this blessing be true for us that after receiving the Lord's Supper: May the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus strengthen and keep you in the true faith until life everlasting. Depart in peace. Your sins are forgiven. Amen.