

I.N.I.

Maundy Thursday
March 29, 2018
I Corinthians 11:23-29

In Christ Jesus, who gives us His body and blood in this simple, yet also majestic meal of His Supper, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

For those of you who know me pretty well, you know that I forget things pretty easily. There are many areas where I get frustrated because of my bad memory, but one area applies to tonight's sermon---Remembering who gave gifts to me. I do treasure the gifts given to me or our family over the years, but I have a hard time remembering who they came from. I will look at pictures on our wall, nick-nacks in our house or my office and ties I wear and wonder where they came from. Ruth is always there to tell me "that came from so and so, don't you remember?" And then my memory is jogged and I remember the giver of the gifts.

We don't need gifts to remember loved ones in our past but it is good to be reminded of them when you look at gifts that have been given to you by them. The gifts they've given us help bring back memories of all that we knew and treasured about those people. We do need reminders.

So that we might always remember who Jesus is and what He has done for us, He gave us a great gift, something to remember Him by--the Lord's Supper. Tonight, we stand with Jesus in the upper room, and we hear Him tell us,

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

When someone close to us dies, we often receive possessions of theirs that we associate closely with him or her. Jesus did the same. He was about to sacrifice Himself for His disciples and all people and He left them and us with this great gift. Jesus said, "**DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.**" What is the "this"? It's the eating bread and drinking wine. Jesus wasn't reminding His disciples of the good times they had together, He was pointing ahead to what He would do for them. Jesus called the bread His body and the wine His blood. How would bread and wine symbolize Jesus' body and blood?

They wouldn't. If Jesus were looking for a symbol for His body and blood, He could've chosen something more obvious, like a lamb. But Jesus chose bread and wine. Why? They were on the table in front of Him because He and the disciples were celebrating the Passover. Two elements of that meal were unleavened bread and wine. However, the heart of the Passover was the lamb. At the first Passover, the blood of a lamb painted on the doorframe saved the lives of God's people. And the Passover meal commemorated that deliverance for the next 1,500 years until Jesus, the Lamb of God, gave His own life and by His blood delivered the entire world from sin and death. So the sacrificed lamb would've made a great symbol for the body of Jesus, but that's not what He chose for Holy Communion. He chose the unleavened bread and the wine.

Again why? In the case of the bread it might be because in the Bible yeast often represents sin. Jesus came here as a man without sin, represented by bread without yeast. The wine perhaps recalls the spilling of His blood, because drops of wine are spilled at various points in the celebration of the Passover. God doesn't tell us why He chose bread and wine, but He does tell us what they really are.

Jesus said, **"TAKE, EAT; THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU; DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."** And, **"THIS CUP IS THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD. THIS DO, AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."** Jesus put his real body and blood into Holy Communion. Now that doesn't mean the bread and wine are gone. They're present too. But Jesus' body and blood make this the perfect gift. And it's ours when we "do this." In other words, the body and blood of Jesus are not present on the altar right now, but when we come forward and receive the Sacrament, we receive the real body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the real bread and wine. When we're done, all that will be left on the altar is bread and wine, but we will have received the gift Jesus gave us.

Jesus gave this gift to us. St. Paul says, **FOR I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD THAT WHICH I ALSO DELIVERED TO YOU.** When did Paul receive Holy Communion from the Lord? Not on Maundy Thursday. Paul was not yet a disciple then. If he was thinking about Jesus at all back then, he no doubt was hoping the authorities would do something to stop Him. Yet Jesus personally passed this on to him. When? You remember the story! Paul was traveling to Damascus to arrest Jewish Christians. Suddenly, Jesus appeared to him, and the Holy Spirit converted him. After that, the Holy Spirit led Paul into the wilderness and for three years Jesus instructed him there. No doubt Jesus told Paul what He had done in the upper room, and He commanded Paul to pass this gift on to every church he founded. Jesus gave this gift to all Christians everywhere.

In our celebration tonight, we will proclaim the Lord's death. We will proclaim that God became man. God the Son took on a human body and soul through a miraculous conception so that He could live, die and rise again. We will proclaim that after living a life of perfect service to God, Jesus died to pay for all our sins and weaknesses. Three days later, He rose to give us eternal life. That life and death and life again are what Jesus gives us in this gift of Communion.

Christians will eat the bread and drink the cup and proclaim Jesus' death until He comes. We will proclaim the forgiveness of sins and life in God's name because when we eat and drink, we share the very body Jesus offered on the cross and the very blood that He shed. These past two months Jonathan has learned that we call this teaching **REAL PRESENCE**. Jesus' body and blood are really present here in Communion. For 43 years I have not been able to explain that, but I and you believe that, and I teach that because Jesus tells us this is true. And He tells us to treasure this gift until He returns. Jesus said,

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

I: COMMUNION IS A REAL PRESENCE REMEMBRANCE.

But the Lord's Supper is more than just something by which to remember Jesus. It's the visible preaching of the Gospel. It's the real body and blood of Christ given to us every time we partake here.

What if someone abused that? The congregation in Corinth had been abusing the Lord's Supper. Some of the members were even getting drunk before they celebrated it in their Agape meals. The poor were also being mistreated. So Paul wrote, **THEREFORE WHOEVER EATS THIS BREAD OR DRINKS THIS CUP OF THE LORD IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER WILL BE GUILTY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD.** Do those words send a shiver up your spine?

What does Paul mean by "unworthy"? Sin makes us unworthy—but Jesus has washed all our sins away. That's what the cross was all about. So now only one thing makes us unworthy---unbelief. And only one thing makes us worthy---faith in Jesus. If we trust in Jesus and in the promises He gives to us in His Supper, we are worthy, that is prepared. If we don't trust in Jesus, we are unworthy, that is not prepared.

That means an unbeliever can't be a worthy communicant. He doesn't trust in Jesus to make him perfect in God's sight. In the same way, a Christian who is not repentant is unworthy. If you're guilty of committing sins and you refuse to confess your guilt or repent of your sin, you are unworthy. That's why the drunkenness and the lovelessness of the Corinthian celebration were so wrong. There's one more way to be unworthy. St. Paul says, **FOR HE WHO EATS AND DRINKS IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER EATS AND DRINKS JUDGMENT TO HIMSELF, NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY.** If you do not recognize the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine—if you don't believe in the real presence—you do not receive the blessing God put into this sacrament.

Jesus is present in this sacrament whether we believe it or not. We receive Jesus' body and blood when we eat and drink whether we repent of our sins or not. If you receive the sacrament without faith or without repentance, the Bible teaches that you receive judgment instead of forgiveness, death instead of life. That's not only true with the Lord's Supper. It's true anytime forgiveness is proclaimed through Jesus to someone who doesn't recognize his sin. For that reason, it's a very dangerous thing to come to the Lord's Supper unprepared.

That's one reason why we practice close Communion. We only admit those who can examine themselves. Paul says, **BUT LET A MAN EXAMINE HIMSELF, AND SO LET HIM EAT OF THE BREAD AND DRINK OF THE CUP.** Again these past two months Jonathan has learned there are at least 4 important questions to ask ourselves: Am I a sinner? Am I sorry for my sins? Do I believe that Jesus paid for my sins on the cross and rose again to forgive me? Do I believe that His body and His blood are together with the bread and wine to give that forgiveness to me personally? If you answer, "Yes" to all 4, then you are worthy, that is well prepared.

Jesus gave us Holy Communion to comfort us and to put down the accusations Satan and a guilty conscience throw at us.

That's what it means to do this in remembrance of Him. It means remembering that we are forgiven for all our sins. It means hearing Jesus speak to us individually, **"This is My body FOR YOU...This is the new covenant in My blood FOR YOU."**

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

II: COMMUNION IS A GOSPEL REMEMBRANCE.

Jesus put His body and His blood into the bread and wine. No one could have ever guessed that He would do that, but He did. It would be sad if we didn't come regularly and consistently to receive that blessing. It would be sad if we ever forgot what Jesus said and did or failed to trust in His promise and so rob ourselves of this blessing. This is a treasure and gift from Jesus.

It's not like the gifts and treasures of this life that you sometimes forget who gave them to you or even forget where you put them. That cannot happen with the Lord's Supper, because the power is in God's Word, not emotion or nostalgia, or faulty memories. The power is the shed body and blood of Christ given by Jesus' word to take our sins away. That gives us peace, no matter how unfaithful we may have been in the past. Do this in remembrance of Jesus.

Amen.