

The Lord's Supper

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1 Corinthians chapter 11. I want to talk a little bit this morning about the Lord's Supper, which we did the Lord's table here today, and look at some things that the apostle Paul gives us here in this passage about the Lord's Supper. The kind of things to be mindful of.

You might be thinking, well, why didn't you tell us this before we did the Lord's Supper? But you can use it for next time. Just take down some notes and we will have some things we'll put on the screen here too. But we're going to look at 1 Corinthians 11, beginning in verse 17.

1 Corinthians 11:17. Paul says, *"But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not."*

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—³⁴ if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.” (ESV) Pray with me.

Father God, open our hearts. We need to hear Your voice in Jesus name, amen.

It's pretty obvious, isn't it, that this is a corrective part of the letter of 1 Corinthians. It's never fun to be corrected. It's not even all that fun to read corrective letters necessarily because they're essentially explaining how we're messing up, the things that we're doing wrong.

These comments obviously center around the Lord's Supper, the Lord's table, Communion. If you have a Catholic background, you probably called it, the Eucharist, which just means, the time of thanksgiving.

But the early church did the Lord's supper differently than way do we do? They didn't just do like we just did. They would get together and have a love feast. They called it an Agape Feast, obviously for the Greek word for love.

And they would just eat together, having a common meal. It would take a long time, maybe even the day. And at the end of that, they would remember with the elements of the bread and the cup, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. But it was all to them, it was all one thing. It was just the love feast slash the Lord's Supper. That's what it all was.

And obviously, we read from this passage that there were abuses related to this. And Paul felt the need to write to them telling them that their love feasts were something he couldn't commend them for. In fact, he said, you're actually doing more harm than you are good. Can you imagine coming together as a church and doing more harm than good? That's not a good thing to hear someone say.

The bottom line is that the people in Corinth were getting sloppy about what the communion elements and the love feast were all about, and what were they all about; celebrating what Christ did on the cross. But what they were doing was the opposite in the way they were observing it. In other words, they were violating the very essence of what it was they were celebrating.

Let me put that in terms that we might understand from today's celebrations. Can you imagine us celebrating Independence Day by locking people up and taking away their freedoms? It's a ridiculous idea. It's the opposite of what we're celebrating.

Can you imagine us celebrating Martin Luther King Day by sending hate mail to people of different cultural backgrounds? No, I can't either, because that violates the very essence of what we are celebrating. Can you imagine celebrating Veterans Day by expressing disgust to all those who have ever served in the armed forces? Obviously not. That'd be ridiculous. That's the opposite of what Veterans Day is intended for.

So what the Corinthian church was doing was expressing in the way they acted toward one another, the opposite of what it meant because it was all about selfless sacrificial kindness to one another.

And they weren't being selfless. They weren't being sacrificial. They were being idiots and they were being unloving and uncaring about the way they were expressing their relationships one to another in the body of Christ. And Paul called them on it and said, what are you doing? This is ridiculous. The way you're doing this.

So he began to speak to them about things they needed to be mindful of. We'll run through these quickly, but I'll put them on the screen for those of you taking notes. Things that we need to be mindful of. The first thing that, that we'll put on our list is:

1. We should be mindful of the past

We need to be mindful of the past. Look with me again at the beginning of verse 23 in your Bible that we were reading. Paul says, "*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, (and then he began to explain) that... on the night... (Jesus was) betrayed (He) took (those communion elements, or what we know today as the communion elements, the) bread,*" and the cup.

And two times, end of verse 24, end of verse 25, He said, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" Or do this in memorial, or a memoriam of Me, literally. He says, do this remembering Me. And that's something that we have to do, or be mindful of, is the past. And what happened in the past, and that is that Jesus died for us on the cross.

It's a little strange to remember someone's death. Usually, we like to remember someone's life. And when we know that someone's dying, some people will even say, well, I don't really want to see them in this condition. I want to remember them when they were full of life, and full of health, and vitality. I don't want the last thing I remember to be them on their deathbed, taking their

last gasps of air before they pass away. I just don't want to do that. It's strange to remember somebody's death.

I have to be completely honest with you. When I drive by roadside memorials, I am flabbergasted that someone would put one up. And I'm not criticizing it. If that's what—I just can't imagine marking the place where my loved one breathed their last. I just can't do that. To me, I want to remember their life, not their death.

But I understand that what Jesus is doing here is He's basically saying, remember my death and not just that I died, but how I died, and why I died. That's what He's saying. When we are remembering the death of the Lord, we're remembering why He gave His life.

Do you remember that wonderful passage from Isaiah? Let me put it up there. Isaiah chapter 53:

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

That's why he died. And Peter said something similar when he wrote, in his first epistle:

1 Peter 2:24 (ESV)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds (those marks of His crucifixion on the cross) *you have been* (delivered, you've been) *healed.* (you've been restored, you've been redeemed.) That's what Peter is saying in that passage.

So when we remember His death, we're remember, remembering why He died, what was the benefit of His death. And we have to do that by looking back. It's a remembering sort of a thing, but it's not just remembering a date in history.

It's not a memorial like, something like, well, I don't know. I've been to Washington D.C. a couple of times, walked through the Lincoln Memorial. It's a very awesome sort of a deal, and I have a deep appreciation for the life of Abraham Lincoln. I really do. Incredible man, but it's very cold and stone like, and you can't talk to him.

It's an event in history that we greatly and deeply appreciate. When I say an event, I'm talking about the life of Abraham Lincoln and all that he did for our country. But it is a rather impersonal element when you go in and you see that there's this statue in the midst of this memorial. And you can't talk to Abraham Lincoln, and relate to him, or anything like that. It's a memorial that is in the past.

Not so with the way we remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. We have this wonderful blessing of being able to have an ever present relationship with a living person who is alive today. And wants to talk with you and have you get to know Him in personal, intimate fellowship. That's quite different than just remembering some historical event or something of the past. It's a very personal sort of a thing.

The second thing that Paul tells us to be mindful of in Communion is to be mindful of what is to come.

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So we think of what is in the past, which is the death of Jesus. And then what is to come? Look at verse 26: *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until (when? Until) he comes."*

It's an ongoing thing that we look to the future, *"...until he comes."* The Communion elements are something that we maintain as a remembrance, as a memorial; *"until he comes."* And that is still yet in the future.

I'm very pleased that the church has been doing this for 2,000 years. I'm very pleased. At least we can say this is one area where we've been obedient to the Lord. We continue to do this. And what we do, he says, is we *"proclaim the Lord's death."*

We're proclaiming that He died for us and He is the only way that we can be saved. It's a proclamation that looks toward the future. That this One who died

for us is going to return, is coming for his church, is coming to judge the world. And we're telling the world, you can be, you can have the judgment issue taken care of for you.

He's coming to judge the world. You don't want to be in that judgment, but the offer is available to you to allow your sins to be judged in what He did on the cross, and then they're wiped out. Then you don't have to worry about any judgment to come. It's a wonderful deal. You haven't taken advantage of it. I strongly encourage it. It's the best deal you've had, best offer.

But this is looking toward the future. You remember what Jesus said? It's recorded in John 14, He said to His disciples:

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

...(He) *said to* (His disciples)..., "*I am the way*, (He didn't say, I am a way, He said *I am the way*, He said, I am) ... *truth*, (not a truth. I am *the truth*) and (I am) *the life*. (not a life, not a way to have life. I am *the life*. And then if you didn't understand that and the significance of that, He repeated it in another way) *No one comes to the Father except through me.*" And that is what we proclaim, looking ahead to His second coming.

Third:

1. We should be mindful of the past
2. We should be mindful of what is to come
3. We should be mindful of our own hearts

We should be mindful of our own hearts. Look at verse 27 in your Bible, the text we're looking at here today. "*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.*"

Now it's important to understand Jesus did not, or excuse me, Paul is not saying here that you must be worthy to take Communion. He's saying you want to take it in a worthy manner. People say to me all the time that, they'll come up to me and say, pastor Paul, I'm just, I just feel horrible. I feel like I'm not worthy. And I always say to them, you're absolutely right. You are not worthy and you never will be.

Paul isn't telling you to be worthy. You're never going to be worthy of God's love, so don't try. But he told you and I to take the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. And what that means is, by examining our hearts.

That's what he says in verse 28, look there again, "*Let a person examine himself...*" And what that means is be honest. Be honest with yourself. Is there something in your life? You ought to do this before you take communion every time.

You ought to come to the Lord and just pray, Lord, is there anything going on in my heart? And, if you're playing games with God, well, that's a time to come clean. If you've got something against somebody in the body of Christ, it's time to lay it before the Lord. Father God, I've had these feelings toward this person that aren't good. I confess them to you. They're sin.

And I know God that You forgive me, but I'm just going to come clean with this stuff because I don't want to take communion withholding these sorts of things or cherishing sin in my heart. Why? Because good grief communion is a celebration of what He did to eliminate your sin. And if you're cherishing sin in your heart, or you're playing games, or you're ignoring your sin, you're basically trampling on the very reason that He came and what He came to do for us. So we're told to examine ourselves. Examine our hearts.

Sometimes this is a slippery slope because we're pretty easy on ourselves, usually. We're hard on other people. We're easy on ourselves when it comes to sin. We like to excuse ourselves or justify ourselves. I'm justified in feeling, like you're a jerk because you really are. And you did that to me. There! So you see? Or whatever the case might be.

I had a couple come into my office a number of years ago and they were looking for marriage counseling. And they were, there's only one problem. They weren't married. They were living together and they wanted marriage counseling.

So before we started, I wanted to see if they were playing games with God, or if they were willing to recognize what was going on in their lives. And I said, well, before we get started, is there anything in your life that you feel like maybe is out of order, as it relates to God's Word? Anything that you feel like maybe God's been convicting you of, or anything like that? They looked at each other no, no, no, we're good. I was disappointed, because then I had to come back and say, well, there's a little problem.

First of all you're coming to me for marriage counseling cause I'm sure you want the blessing of the Lord on your life, but you've stolen the ability for God to bless you because you're walking in disobedience to His Word. Cohabitation outside of marriage is a sin. It's not the unforgivable sin, but it's wrong. We shouldn't do it. And as a believer, you absolutely shouldn't do it.

But the point is, as a believer, you're expected to know what the Bible has to say about those things. And when we come into the communion place, we ought to be willing to examine our hearts and to be honest and say, you know what? This is wrong. This is wrong and I shouldn't be doing this.

Father, I confess this to You. This is wrong. This is a sin. I shouldn't do this. I'm sorry. I repent, and I ask You to forgive me. And I ask you to give me the strength to have victory over this area of sin in my life. Do you know what happens when you do that? You are now able to take communion in a worthy manner, because you've examined your heart.

But remember, like I said, sometimes we don't examine our hearts very thoroughly, and sometimes we need the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts for us. Remember what Paul said about, examining his heart? Let me put this one. It's a little bit earlier in 1 Corinthians. He says:

1 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)

For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

Let me paraphrase that for you. I'm not really aware of any area of my life where I'm walking in sin, but you know what? That doesn't mean I'm innocent. Just because I acquit myself doesn't mean I'm fully acquitted because you see, sometimes I'm just not playing with a full deck as it relates to my own sin, and understanding what I've really done that's wrong. And I need the Lord to reveal to me those areas of my heart that are out of order.

That's why David prayed that most amazing prayer: Lord search me and know me, and see if there's any wicked way in me. And then lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24) That's the most beautiful prayer I think because it's a prayer of such honesty and such openness, that it says essentially to the Lord, I look into my heart, I don't see anything wrong, but you know what? I need Your search light to really do the job. I need You through the search light

of your holiness to investigate my heart, to examine my heart. Is there something here that is not right? Just tell me God and I'll get it right. I'm going to...

And what I mean by getting it right. It doesn't mean pull myself up by the bootstraps. And I'm going to make this thing right. What it means about getting it right. It means bring it to the cross. Do you understand? That's why God reveals sin in your life. Do you understand that it's not so that you'll pick yourself up and say, all right, I'm going to do better next time. He's not looking for that out of you because frankly, He's not terribly impressed with your and my ability to do that.

What He's looking out of you and I, when He reveals sin in our lives is an attitude that is willing to bring that sin to Him and say, Father, forgive me. I lay this at Your feet. I know that this is why Jesus came to die for me on the cross, and I offer this up to You.

You've made me aware, You've convicted me of jealousy, or anger, or bitterness, or this sin or that sin or whatever, and I bring it to You. I lay it at Your feet and I say, Jesus, I need Your help. I need Your strength. I need Your power to walk in victory.

That's what He wants out of you and I. He's not looking for you to just buck up, and be better. You can't and neither can I. We can't be better! I'm sorry! In and of ourselves we just don't have the goods to be better. Only through the power of the Spirit can we walk in holiness. Only through His Spirit. He knows that. The sooner we know it, the better.

Stop making promises to God. God, I promise I'll never do that again. Man, I stopped doing that a long time ago. Because I realized how much of a failure I am every time I've made promises to God. I just can't do it. Neither can you. We need His strength. We need His power. But that's why He's convicting you and I of sin. So that we'll bring it to Him. Father forgive me.

And we, people say to me all the time. But I just feel like such a hypocrite because I keep coming back. Oh no, no, no. That's not hypocrisy. You misunderstand the definition of hypocrisy. It's not hypocrisy to keep coming back. That's honesty. I don't care how many times a day you have to come before the Father and say, it's me again, your child. Yeah.

The mess up and I need Your forgiveness. It doesn't matter. He wants you to come in honesty, confessing your sin. Laying it at the foot of the cross and

especially when we're participating in the Lord's Supper. We must come before Him with an open, honest heart that allows us to participate in Communion in a worthy manner.

Lastly:

1. We should be mindful of the past
2. We should be mindful of what is to come
3. We should be mindful of our own hearts
4. We should be mindful of others

We should be mindful of others. Look again with me at verse 33 in the text that we're looking at here, 1 Corinthians 11:33. *“So then, my brothers, (Paul writes) when you come together to eat, wait for one another—”*

What's Paul saying in these verses? He says you should, when you come together, look around. Think about the needs of others. Again, he was applying this to their love feasts. What was going on is that, as we read, people who had a lot were bringing food to these love feasts and they were sitting there and eating. And they had this abundance but there was somebody over on the other side of the room who didn't have any money at all, and they didn't have any food to bring, and they weren't sharing with those people.

And those people over there who had nothing were being made to sit and watch while people who had a lot were sitting there just enjoying themselves and eating and so forth. And even in the taking of wine, which was a common beverage back in those days.

Paul says, I've heard that some of you guys are actually even getting inebriated at the love feasts. He said, that is unconscionable. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? That you would come out and do such a horrific thing in public while other people are sitting around and they have nothing. You're not even caring about the people who are there.

And sometimes we do the same. We just don't think about the people who are around us. And we don't think about what's important to them or what's needful to them or how they might feel about a situation. Sometimes it catches us even by surprise.

There's a well-known Bible teacher who tells a story about an incident that occurred back when he was a teenager many years ago. And he was at a church

picnic. And he writes that the person in charge of the games set up a relay that involved various people throwing eggs to each other. And then backing up and becoming far more distant and so forth. And he said, of course, the farther the teams went from each other, the harder they had to throw the eggs. And the results were pretty funny.

However, he said, during this game, some of us noticed that there were two kids who were watching the eggs with great fascination. They came from a very poor family and the little girl went to the lady who was leading the games. And she said, if there are any eggs left over, can my brother and I take them home? And wisely the lady stopped the game before it was really over, awarded the prizes, and promptly gave all of the eggs to the two kids.

She knew that it was wrong for some to have a good time without caring about the feelings of others. And that's a great story because it illustrates how easy it is for us to become very thoughtless related to other people. And the things that they need and the concerns that they have and so forth.

When we come together as a body, when we come together as the fellowship of Jesus, I cannot just do what I want without considering you and vice versa. We have to care about each other. There's no getting out of it. You are my brothers and sisters. I am your brother. We have to deal with issues. We have to learn to minister to one another, and we have to be tenderhearted. Why? Because when we come together to do the Lord's Supper, it's all about thinking about other people. It's all about selfless attitudes. That's what the celebration is all about.

How can we come and celebrate something by doing the opposite? You see. Again, that is what Paul is confronting the church in Corinth about. It's the confrontation that we are receiving in the Word, and it is the responsibility of us as believers to take this Word and say, how might I be acting thoughtless toward my brothers and sisters in Christ? How might I be doing that?

I think there's a lot of ways if we really think about it long enough, but the bottom line is we have to care. We just plain have to care. We are called to care and we absolutely must. So four things, four things to keep in mind throughout the course of this. Can we put the four things back up on the screen and we'll just take a look at those last four? The things that we're to be mindful of.

1. We should be mindful of the past
2. We should be mindful of what is to come
3. We should be mindful of our own hearts
4. We should be mindful of others

We need to be mindful of the past, remembering what Jesus did for us on the cross. And remembering that work that He has accomplished and why. We need to be mindful of what is to come, which is the return of our Lord. And how we are to proclaim that death until He comes.

We are to be mindful of our own hearts, ready and willing to examine them at any time because we're coming together to celebrate forgiveness. How can we hold unforgiveness towards someone else or hold an area of sin in our lives and not confess it?

And then lastly, we need to be mindful of others. Thinking and caring about how they feel what's going on in their lives. Because remember, we are celebrating a selfless act, the most selfless act in all of human history. And we cannot celebrate it by being selfish. And so we look to others as well.