

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:23-27

➤ Read Text

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. ²⁷Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 1 Cor. 11:23-27

Prayer

➤ Introduction

Illus: A little girl asked her mother, "Mommy, why do you cut the ends off the meat before you cook it?" The girl's mother told her that she thought it added to the flavor by allowing the meat to better absorb the spices, but perhaps she should ask her grandmother since she always did it that way. So the little girl found her grandmother and asked, "Grandma, why do you and Mommy always cut the ends of the meat off before you cook it?" Her grandmother thought a moment and answered, "I think it allows the meat to stay tender because it soaks up the juices better, but why don't you ask your Nana? After all, I learned from her and she always did it that way." The little girl climbed up in her great-grandmother's lap and asked, "Nana, why do you cut the ends off the meat before you cook it?" Her Nana answered, "I had to; my cooking pot wasn't big enough."

There are a lot of things in life that we do and seldom stop to question the real reason behind them. The same can be said for the church. Perhaps the most used explanation for the reason things are done a certain way in churches is the proverbial, "we've always done it that way." I must compliment Barnwell Baptist Church because I rarely hear that explanation. Our congregation is very open to change and willing to move forward with ideas that are for the furthering of the Kingdom of God.

➤ What's the Lord's Supper really about

Today we will be observing the Lord's Supper. I would like for us to take a few moments and look at the real meaning of this age old practice of most Christian denominations.

The practice of the Lord's Supper is based on the acts of Christ as recorded in Mark 14:22-24, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:18 and John 6. Perhaps it is the extensive and consistent attention given in all four gospels that adds to the importance of the event and practice. Today we are looking at Paul's more explanatory version as found in his first letter to the Corinthians.

The concept of the Lord's Supper was first introduced by our Lord at His final meal before His arrest and crucifixion. Christ was in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration meal in which the Israelites commemorated their deliverance from Egypt many centuries before. The meal included many things but always included unleavened bread and red wine. The wine was actually 2 parts water and 1 part wine. The elements of the meal were not original elements from the exodus generation but were simply symbolic. They were encouraged to exercise faith and identify with the exodus generation whom God had delivered and been so faithful to in the past.

Christ took the opportunity to introduce a new memorial in view of a greater deliverance about to be accomplished. This new covenant would provide deliverance to all men and women who would receive this great gift from God. Our Lord himself handed us the "worship procedure" if you will, for remembering the great sacrifice of His body and blood for the sins of mankind.

But today, thousands of years later we still practice what we call the Lord's Supper. Why? What meaning and what purpose does it accomplish in our modern worship experience? I believe this question can best be answered by reflecting on the three different terms that refer to this practice.

1. Giving Thanks - Eucharist

The term Eucharist comes from the Greek word "eucharisteo" which means to "give thanks."

There are several very strong statements surrounding the instructions of the Lord's Supper. Our Lord had a way of taking simple things and using them to convey powerful spiritual messages. We might call them 'object lessons' in our day but somehow that description falls well short of His technique. He did exactly this with the bread and wine. He presented them in such a way that they were His body and His blood being given for you and I. Wow, such simple objects to represent the suffering of the Son of God. Such basic elements representing the one who was with God before the world began.

The bread and wine are more than just an object lesson. The bread and wine represent the body of Christ which is the essence of God's grace. It is the thrust of His love and our existence as Christians. For without the body and blood of the Son of God, there would be no salvation. None at all!

In Matthew, He says, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins." Someone once said; "the true test of a sinner is one who thinks he is not a sinner." When we receive the gift of His new covenant, we realize just how great the forgiveness is. We must surely give thanks.

Giving thanks to God for all things is at the very foundation of worship. How can we even begin to worship without first giving thanks for what He has done for us?

Illus: I am reminded of a true story. During the war in Vietnam, a young West Point graduate was sent over to lead a group of new recruits into battle. He did his job well, trying his best to keep his group from ambush and death. But one night when they had been under attack, he was unable to get one of his men to safety.

The soldier left behind had been severely wounded. From the trenches, the young lieutenant and his men could hear their fellow soldier in his pain. Eventually, the young lieutenant crawled out of hiding toward the dying man. He got him to safety but was killed before he could reach safety himself.

After the rescued man returned to the States, the lieutenant's parents heard he was in their vicinity. Wanting to know this young man whose life was spared at such a great cost to them, they invited him to dinner. When the honored guest arrived, he was obviously drunk. He was rowdy and obnoxious. He told off-color jokes and showed no gratitude for the sacrifice of the man who died to save him. The grieving parents did their best to make the man's visit worthwhile, but their efforts went unrewarded.

When their guest finally left, as the dad closed the door behind him, the mother collapsed in tears and cried, "To think that our precious son had to die for somebody like that."

Christ died for you and me. May we always have hearts full of gratitude for God's gift of grace.

2. Becoming One - Communion

In His prayer in the Garden, Christ himself prayed for unity among believers. He prayed that we would be one with Him and the Father and that we might be one with one another.

Over and over we are told in the scriptures to love one another. At communion there is no room for hard feelings toward others. At communion, there is no separation or hierarchy. We are all one in Christ. Communion is not the exclusive property of any Christian denomination. When we partake of communion, we are reminded of our obligation to keep the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3).

Illus: There is an old story about the Duke of Wellington who remained to take communion at his parish church. A very poor old man went up to the opposite aisle, reaching the Communion table and knelt down close to the side of the Duke. Immediately, tension and commotion interrupted the silence in the church. Someone came and touched the poor man on the shoulder, and whispered to him to move farther away, or to rise and wait until the Duke had received the bread and the wine.

But, the eagle eye and quick ear of the great commander caught the meaning of that touch and whisper. He clasped the old man's hand and held him to prevent his rising; and in a reverential but distinct undertone, the Duke said, "Do not move; we are equal at this table."

Communion is a place where we re-unite and build-up our love and unity.

3. Following His Command - The Lord's Supper

In this case Christ uses the objects of the bread and wine to convey a powerful concept just as He did many other times in His teaching. However, here He takes it a step further and says, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Christ tells us to make this a practice and to do it in His remembrance.

Our Lord knows that we need to be reminded of this and so He commands us to partake of His Supper, the Lord's Supper.

It is not our place to question His command. It is our place to be obedient. Every good parent knows there are times when our children question our instructions without realizing their importance.

We must be sincere, pure of heart and obedient.

Conclusion

Join with me as we express our thanks, join together in unity and do as we are commanded. Let us partake of His body and blood in spirit and truly worship. Listen with your spirit and may God's Holy Spirit speak to you.

Invitation

Look with me again at verse 27:

²⁷Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord

If God is speaking to you today, do not be guilty of the body and blood. Be a partaker and respond to His calling. This is your invitation to respond to what He is leading you to do.