

As you remain standing, I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

You can follow along in your own copy of God's Word, 958 in the Pew Bible or on your iPad or phone.

I want to let you know that today is a little bit different because as elders we have wanted to make sure that our focus on our Lord's Supper celebration Sundays is that the table is the focus, that everything that we do moves towards our communing with our God.

And as such, we have switched it around a little bit.

There's going to be some explanation.

We're still working on how we distribute the elements and why we have you come forward and now why we'll have you keep your elements and go back to your seats so that we can partake together.

But today we're going to actually look at the table.

We're going to look at 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

If we want to know anything about God or what duty He requires of us, there is just one place in the universe where you can go to find absolute truth.

And that is the Bible, which is the very Word of God.

Every single word of it is breathed out by Him.

It is inerrant, which means it has no errors.

So what God says is true is true.

It's infallible.

That it will never fail.

It will never contain error.

It will never be proven wrong.

So it can be and is our only rule for faith in life.

We can trust it.

And this morning, I invite you to trust God's Word from 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Hear now the word of the Lord.

For I received from the Lord, but I also delivered to you.

But 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.

And 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.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

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.

So let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."

That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

But if we judge ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray.

Father, we do give You thanks for Your Word as our only rule for faith and life, as the clear guide on how we are to enjoy You and glorify You.

And today as we come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we pray, Father, that today it would be a renewal.

It would be a reminder of what You have done for us, how You have demonstrated Your love to us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ our Savior died for us.

And so, Father, help us to look.

Help us to look at Your Word.

Help us to look at ourselves.

Help us to look to Jesus.

Help us to look around to one another, and ultimately encourage us in hope to look ahead.

We pray this all in Jesus' name.

Amen.

You may be seated.

Of course, I have children, those of you who have children, and those of you who were kids at one point, you remember the first time you were going to cross the road by yourself, your parents were adamant that you didn't just look once, but rather you would look to the left, and then you would look to the right, and then you wouldn't stop there, you would look again to the left.

The idea is that it takes more than one look to do something like crossing the street safely.

It's better to look multiple times and looking in different directions so that you have a fuller view of what your surroundings are so that you might cross that street safely.

Well, today in our passage, Paul is speaking to the Christians in Corinth, and he's saying, you guys are not looking enough.

In fact, you're only looking one way, and by doing so, you're missing out on

on the real meaning of what the Lord's Supper truly is.

In fact, you're so distracted about your place, how quickly you're served, how much food you get, that you're missing the entire point of this supper.

Now, one of the reasons why we want to make our second Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper a focus on the table so that we don't fall into that where it just is a tag-on at the end.

That it's something we do, or something because, well, maybe I preached a little bit too long, that we're doing and our service is getting later, you're worried about the roast in the oven, and you're distracted from it, and we're not, therefore, looking.

So today I want to share with you how Paul says to the Corinthians how we as believers are called to look.

So let's walk through each look.

I'm going to show you what the text says, and I'm going to give you just one concrete action that you can be thinking about as you come forward to receive the elements, and then as we partake together as a church body and as the family of God.

The first look is to look within.

In fact, we encourage this and have encouraged this every time we come to the table.

There's this idea that you are to examine yourself.

Now, in the Greek, dokizomazo is the word, and it really means the idea of, well, you know, don't do this, but maybe you are married and maybe your husband, when he asked you to marry him, gave you a ring.

Now, I hope what you didn't do is pull out the jeweler's magnifying glass and examine it.

Maybe you did later when he wasn't looking.

I don't know.

That's between you.

But Pastor Dan is here to help with that counseling.

But the idea isn't looking for fault, but looking for the quality.

When Paul invites us to examine ourselves, this is not for some sort of morbid self-loathing.

We all know that we're sinners.

We all know that we're worse than we think we are.

We all know that we're just beggars showing other beggars where to find bread.

And so sometimes when we come to the table, we really are just piling on ourselves about how terrible we really are.

And we are terrible.

not when it comes to our society.

We see there are far more terrible people out there that do heinous things.

Now, the problem with that is that we think because we don't do those types of things that we are fine, that we are acceptable, that we are somehow right before God on our own efforts.

Now, I know many of you have served in the military that are here, in the Navy, maybe in aviation, maybe in the Air Force.

You pilots, you know that squawk list.

You're not going there to kind of condemn the issues as you're going through your pre-flight checklist.

You're going through to make sure everything is in order so that you can arrive safely.

That's what Paul is saying.

It's just not a beat yourself up, you're terrible.

This is a reminder that Christ has died for you, and we look to see, well, how am I doing in this area?

And when we find inconsistencies, we put that on that checklist that we would say, Lord, help me in this area.

Maybe this past week you were very angry.

Maybe this past week you were tempted in a very powerful way.

Maybe this week you failed.

in living as a follower of Christ.

But the reality is that we are examining ourselves to be reminded of what Christ has done for us.

And we confess the fact that we need Jesus.

Paul says, look within.

It's kind of like when a doctor gives you medical tests to take before the exam.

He's not doing that to shame you that you eat too much or you don't exercise enough.

but rather they are doing a diagnosis through that testing, through that exam, so that when you come, they can bring healing.

So when we look, it's not, let me just see how terrible of a person I am.

It's a reminder of who Christ is and what He has done.

And for us to be examining ourselves and recognizing that we are called by grace to pursue a life that reflects and conforms to

Jesus.

Do we do that perfectly?

No.

The good news is Jesus has done that perfectly for us.

But for you and I, it's an opportunity to examine the quality.

Lord, am I living fully for You?

Am I disgruntled or am I upset?

Do I have an issue with a brother or sister in Christ?

Do I need to have reconciliation occur?

Have I loved my wife as Christ loves the church?

Have I respected my husband and sought to encourage him as he leads our household?

Have I loved my neighbor?

And even worse, more difficult, have we loved those who hate us?

You see, tolerance is not a Christian virtue.

Love is.

And that's what we're called to do in our lives.

And so we examine ourselves.

We look within.

So before you come to the table or after if you're up front, you're coming first because we're going to have a time of that silent preparation, examination, name just one specific sin that you were struggling with this week and confess that and ask that Jesus, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, would indeed give you victory over that.

Name that sin to God.

Is there a person you have wronged?

Make every effort, make a plan for reconciliation.

How will I be at peace with this individual?

If there's anyone even in this room, I would encourage you at some point to reconcile before coming to the table.

So, if the Spirit convicts you that you haven't been a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is God's kindness.

not punishment.

His discipline is kindness.

We are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

Discipline is that gift.

Examination is that reminder that we can always come to Jesus and that we are always in need of Him.

And that's why the second look is to look to Christ.

We're always in need of Him.

The two most important words in this whole passage is, "'For you.'"

Those are the two most important words.

What Jesus has done, why Jesus came, why He died, why His body was broken, why His blood was shed is for you.

So this is a gift far better than any birthday present, far better than any Christmas gift.

This is for you.

You individuals who failed miserably this week, you individuals who are inconsistent in what you profess with your mouth but what you do in action, those of us who fall into disappointment or anger or frustration, those of us that are trusting in our own efforts or inabilities and not in God.

This is for you.

This is for us.

This is for us to come and be reminded that all that is necessary has been taken care of.

So if you had a great week this week, it's not like you come bringing your successes and your trophies.

Look, Lord, look what I did.

And if you failed miserably, you don't come embarrassed saying, I messed up, I have nothing to give.

We look to Christ, who is all-sufficient, whose merit is

whose work, whose person fully satisfies the commandments of God and on the cross pays the penalty for our inability, our unwillingness, even our outright rebellion.

as we have disobeyed that law.

Look to Christ.

When you come, you're reminded that whether you were successful this week or a failure this week, Christ is perfect, and this is for you, to remind you that He will never leave you nor forsake you, that He will never, there's nothing you can do today that's gonna cause Him to love you more than He loves you right now, and there's nothing you can do today to cause Him to love you any less than He loves you.

This is for you.

He's always perfect.

You take Christ with faith, and He gives what He promises.

His body for your guilt, His blood for your shame, His covenant for your instability, we'll call it, and His yes for your bunch of maybes and sometimes outright no's.

This is

for you, a reminder of who Christ is.

Now, in 2019, Alistair Begg brought familiarity and popularity to an old evangelical saying.

And basically, at the 2019 National Preaching Conference, he talked about the man on the middle cross, and he said, when it comes to the gospel, when you stand before God... In fact, he was speaking of the diagnostic questions that are in the ministry Evangelism Explosion, which is a ministry started by D. James Kennedy, a PCA pastor in Fort Lauderdale.

And the two diagnostic questions were, hey, if you were to die tonight, do you know for certain you would go to heaven?

And the second one is, so say you were to die tonight, and you were standing before God, and you say, why should I let you into my heaven?

What would you say?

Alistair Begg said, if you begin any statement with because I, you're missing the gospel.

Oh, I went to church, or I prayed a prayer, or I gave tithes and offerings, or I served in the children's ministry.

I served in nursery.

And by the way, if it was about works, those of you who are serving or willing to serve in a children's ministry, if it was works, you'd go to heaven directly.

That doesn't work, but we do need people to continue to help us raise and instruct and care for our covenant children while they are here.

But if you start with anything, that is because I, you're missing the gospel.

He says the real response is because He, Jesus,

died upon the cross for my sins, because He lived a perfectly righteous life before the Father, because He imputed that righteousness by His grace to me, because He paid in full the penalty for my sins.

The man on the middle cross, of course, he goes into the story of the thieves on the cross.

You know, at the beginning, they're both mocking Jesus, but then there's a change in one of them.

He finally recognizes that this one in the middle cross is actually who he says he is, the very Son of God.

And Jesus says to him,

When he asks to be remembered, today you'll be with me in paradise.

And Alistair Begg goes on and says, I don't get it.

I'm going to go find that guy when I'm in heaven.

And I'm going to ask him, hey, how'd that work out for you?

How'd this work as if he came and there's some angel that's asking him, hey, why are you here?

And the idea is that if the angel says, well, what are you doing here?

He says, I'm here.

He says, well, were you baptized?

No.

Do you understand the doctrine of justification?



No.

How about the doctrine of the atonement?

Never heard of it.

You know?

Did you go to Bible study?

Did you go to church?

Did you serve in nursery?

No.

Why are you here?

Because the man on the middle cross said I could come.

Yeah.

Amen.

Because He.

Look to Christ.

This is for you.

This is for me.

This is a reminder even though I fail miserably and fall short of His glory.

This is for me, a reminder that He died for me.

He saved me.

So, before you come, say this by faith, Jesus, Your body and blood are for me.

I receive what You give.

I am not here to prove anything.

I'm here to receive everything.

The third look is to look around.

Whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Now, this does refer to the elements.

What we're doing isn't just some sort of memorial.

It's not like we're having birthday cake and celebrating someone's birthday.

It's not like we're reminding, oh yeah, Jesus died on the cross.

We need to remember that.

We do need to remember that.

But there's something more that is happening here.

It's a mystery.

It's the spiritual presence of Christ.

We know what happens physically.

You're going to come forward.

You're going to grab each element.

You're going to make your way back to your seat.

And then together, we're going to eat the bread.

We're going to drink of the cup.

And our bodies are going to do physically what our bodies do, and that is digest it and pull from it any nutrients that you can find out of it.

That's what happens physically.

But here's the mystery.

What Paul is saying when we are doing that

Physically, there is a spiritual reality where our soul, our faith is being nourished by the blood and body of Christ.

And it sustains our faith and our spirit just like physical food sustains our physical bodies.

This is spiritual food that we're eating.

And it's for us.

And it's to remind us what Christ has done.

That's part of it.

But the other part that Paul is addressing is look around.

Look around.

Go ahead.

These are individuals who have made a profession of faith in Christ.

These are individuals who you might not be physically related to, yet the bond of relationship is stronger and greater than any physical human bond because of the bond that we have in Christ.

We are each members of one body.

And Paul talks about how as a body are you kind of doing your own thing?

Why are you over here and not together with your brothers and sisters?

Or why are you withholding help from them?

Maybe it's because you don't think they deserve it, or boy, they made some mistakes, or I wouldn't do it that way.

In fact, one of the reasons why we've come back together for a combined service is that we want to be one body.

Now granted, as you can tell, at some point we're going to need two services, but right now we're at the place where we want to be reminded that we are one.

And what Paul is saying is you need to remember that.

Those of you who are feeling like you can't eat with those who are of a socioeconomic different level than you are, that was what was happening.

There was favoritism, different things happening that way.

People just being selfish.

They weren't waiting for others to come knowing that there were others who needed to partake as well.

They were just gobbling it all up.

What Paul is saying through the Holy Spirit is that we're in this together.

that it's a family table.

And I don't know, if you ever were getting close to Thanksgiving, you're going to have a big family possibly coming on over, and you know what that's like.

Some are real loud, some you can't hear, some eat way too much, others won't eat enough.

No one helps clean up the dishes.

Serious stuff.

But it's one family.

Now, one of the reasons why we've changed and have people coming forward is because our Presbyterian forebearers used to all come forward and sit at what was known as long tables.

They would come in groups and sit down, and they would basically partake and eat together because they wanted it to be a level of intentionality that you're coming, and you're coming together.

This is a meal that we share together, not just a plate that's passed.

And so, we're going to invite you to come and receive and pick up the elements.

And then, as one big family, we'll partake of all of those.

So, it's bringing into our practice some historical aspects of Presbyterianism in the long tables.

They always came forward, and they ate together.

So, that's what we're doing.

We're

I don't think that we have division here at Pinewood.

I know there are churches that are struggling with that.

We do see that there is great division in our nation.

And it kind of reminded me of the movie Remember the Titans or Coach Boone.

There were two schools that were coming to merge together, particularly in the football team, and they were two schools of different ethnicities, different race.

And he told them there's going to be one.

He took them to Gettysburg, to the cemetery, and reminded them what division can do, that it can destroy lives.

But then he says, we're going to eat together.

We're going to sleep together.

We're going to practice together.

We're going to serve together.

We're going to work together so that we can accomplish our mission together.

Now, I'm not Coach Boone.

But I'm telling you, we're going to worship together, we're going to serve together, we're going to eat together, we're going to love together so that we can together accomplish the mission that God has called each of us to.

Now, if you didn't understand this idea of football illustration, there's a dwarf, there's an elf, a wizard, hobbits, and men, and they form a fellowship to accomplish the mission of getting the ring to Mordor, all right?

What's your concrete action?

Practice unity that costs you.

Maybe serve someone who you usually overlook.

Maybe write a note to someone you tend to avoid.

Maybe share a meal with a believer from a different age group or background.

And if there is division, start the hard work of peace.

And finally, we're called to look ahead.

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death.

until He comes."

So, what we know is that every month when we gather for this, it's two things.

It's a proclamation as well as a preview.

That's what we're doing.

It's a proclamation and a preview.

In fact, I've got a wedding coming up in November.

I've done a number already.

I enjoy the rehearsal dinner, you know.

It's great, and it's a time of celebration, and it's a lot of fun, and the family and the bridal party and groomsmen come together, and they enjoy a meal, but it's the preview.

The real thing is the wedding the next day.

That's the real feast.

That's the real celebration where they're united in marriage, and we celebrate at that reception.

So this is a kind of a preview of what is coming.

We are participating in something that Jesus Himself says, I'm not going to participate this until we're all together.

And oh, what a great day that would be.

And we proclaim, we do preach the cross.

We're reminded that it wasn't something that somehow we figured out or we earned, but rather our place before our heavenly Father is because Christ died in our place, that His body was broken for us, and that His life was lived for us.

So when we recognize that this that is for us, as we look within, examining what Christ has done in our lives, as we look to Jesus because He says we're supposed to be here, He says we can be here, He tells us to come, we look around and we recognize we're in this together.

None of us are alone.

And it's our desire that we will continue to grow in how we care for one another.

so that you know as you look around, these people have your back, and I know that you have mine.

And so, we come up to the table and we partake of it, not looking down in shame or at our feet, but rather looking ahead to the promise of what is awaiting each of us.

So, I know that some of you are facing a week that feels like it's going to be a long, long valley.

The table tells you the story's not over.

The cross has already set the ending, and Jesus will finish what He started.

So, you eat hope.

You drink hope.

We're proclaiming the truth that we believe.

Even though we haven't yet seen it, we believe.

that one day we will share this meal together.

Until He comes.

We do it until He comes.

And it's my prayer that there would be a church family worshipping at 198 Nightbox until He comes.

And we're proclaiming that Christ has died.

Christ has risen.

Christ will come again until He actually does.

So why not this week speak that good news?

Let them know that the preview is here every Sunday and that once a month the meal is served, that there is something greater and something bigger that's coming.

Share that news with someone else.

So here's your takeaway before we come to the table.

Grace received becomes grace given.

Now seventeen years ago I brought my family down from Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania has a lot of what is known as the Amish, the Pennsylvania Dutch.

But I remember back in 2006, back in an area called Nickel Mines, there was a shooter that went into a one-school Amish schoolhouse and committed mass murder.

And sadly, that's becoming more and more common in our society.

But back in 2006, it was shocking.

But what was even more shocking?

was later that day, many of the men from that community went to the shooter's widow because he ended up killing himself to share the gospel and to give words of comfort to the widow.

And not only that, but they ended up taking care of her because she lost everything because of her husband's sin and stupidity.

They set up a fund and they cared for her and for the kids.

Grace received becomes grace given.

Now, not much on social media.

I don't post a lot, but I've been reading through just kind of finding out what in the world is going on.

And there are a lot of individuals who are very, very angry and are out for blood.

I was talking to a friend of mine the other day, and he told me this.

If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same.

And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount.

But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High."

For He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful.

We don't need more laws.

We don't need more political action committees.

Our world needs the gospel.

It's the only hope.

It's the only solution.

And friends, we're of the only group that can proclaim that and share that.

And so let us be those who love.

Let us be those who recognize the grace that we have received and that we give grace to others.

Because we know that there by the grace of God,

That would be all of us.

It's only by what Christ has done.

So look within today.

Look to Jesus.

Look around and look ahead.

Realize you've received that grace so that you might give it to others, so that they might know and might believe and receive and rest in