

## **How Not To Ruin A Good Meal - Kareem Smith (September 3, 2023)**

Yes, I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my lips And on my lips On my tongue in my mouth.

I give him all the praise. How many are you happy to be in the house of the Lord today? Has the Lord not been good to you this morning? How many of you are thankful to the Lord this morning that you have your sins forgiven, your slate washed clean eternity ahead we are together a united body and Jesus Christ.

So many reasons this morning to be glad. Hey, man, you can go ahead and be seated. God bless you. My name is Pastor Kareem Smith and I'm privileged to serve over the forever young senior adult ministry here at Grace Church. And it is an honor to be in the house of the Lord to share with you the Word of God.

Earlier, I made a deal with the first congregation, and I let them know right ahead. There's some bad news. And the bad news is that I have 3500 words to share with you all this morning. The good news is I may have you out here in 35 minutes if I get an amen or two in the midst of this message.

Well, before we begin, I do want to honor a family. Here this morning is David and Gillian Schaefer, along with Stephen here. Are you here in the house today? If you are here, stand up. Let us know that you're here. Are they not here? The Schaefer family Not here. Well, the Schaefer family are actually on their way to bungalow.

Oh, there is you late, brother. I'm supposed to be praying for you. Where are you at, man? But no, this is a great family. They're all headed to Bungalow, Bungalow Hospital, which is a CMA hospital in West Africa, in particular the Gabon nation of West Africa. And they're actually undergoing some turmoil right now in that country. But this family is headed there September the 15th, where they're going to go and serve in a hospital together as ministering service of Jesus Christ.

And so let's give them a hand of praise for what they're doing and sacrifice in themselves to go overseas. Amen. So now, as I alluded to earlier, I have very few minutes left to share with you. I got a very important message to share with you from first Corinthians Chapter 11. And so before we begin, how about we just go ahead and pray?

Father, thank you so much for the privilege and the honor that exists that is mine to preach and declare the truth of your word. Father. I pray that you would lift me up during this sermon. Give me the strength that I need to communicate clearly what is in your word, so that the church may be united even more strongly.

Lord, at the end of this day and be stronger, more passionate worshipers of Jesus Christ. As a result, we do give you the praise for everything that will be said and done in this church today, and it's in Jesus name that I pray. Amen To those of you tuning

in live, those at Homestead Falls and those at the Lorraine Correctional Institution, I want to thank you for joining in today's service.

God bless you. And may you be richly satisfied in the Lord from today's message. Now we're going to do something a little bit different this morning. Is that all right? Now, hold on now. Don't you all know I like feedback right now. We going to do something a little bit different this morning. Is that all right? All right.

So what I want to do is that's going to be the words on the screen. And I want you all to follow along. We're going to do a responsive reading of today's opening text. We used to do that back in the day. If you Baptist, y'all know what I'm talking about. And so the words we're going to start off in verse 23, I believe it is, and first Corinthians chapter 11, and I'll read verse 23 and 24, you guys read verse 25 and then together we come and we conclude with verse 26, is that all right?

All right, All right. So we're going to begin with verse 23. The Bible says, For our receive from the Lord what I also passed on to you, the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took the 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 this house, in this environment.

That's good and all together. Verse 26 For whoever eat this bread and drink this cup. You proclaim the Lord's Death until he comes. May the Lord add a blessing to the reading, the hearing and the doing of His word. So this morning I want to talk to you from the subject How not to ruin a good meal. Oh, this How not to ruin a good meal today?

In a word, devotion. Dated June 1992, it recounts the meeting of the American Psychological Association, where Jack Lipton, a psychologist at Union College in our Scott Billion, a graduate student at Columbia University. Together, they presented their findings on how various sections of a major symphony orchestra all perceived one another as they led in the orchestra. The percussionists were viewed as insensitive and unintelligent and hard of hearing string players seen as arrogant, stuffy and unathletic.

And they all chose loud to describe the brass players. While the woodwind players were held in high esteem as they were described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistic. Interesting findings, to say the least. But with such widely divergent personalities and perceptions, one might ask how an orchestra like this could ever come together and make beautiful and harmonious music.

One might ask, How could they ever come together and make wonderful and joyful sounds? And the answer is quite simple, and that is that regardless of how this orchestra and the musicians felt towards one another and regardless of how they viewed each other, they all subordinated their feelings and biases to the leadership

of the conductor. You see, under the guidance of the conductor together, this orchestra could play beautiful and harmonious music.

Under the guidance of the conductor, they exchanged their discord for harmony and a sense of oneness. Well, I think it's safe to say, ladies and gentlemen, that the God you and I serve is a stickler for oneness and unity. Just look at the creation around us. The entire universe sings a harmonious melody in tune within the Godhead trinity.

We understand that God eternally exists with three eternal persons. All three persons, our God. Yet you are in our mystified by the fact that God is one. That a simple glance through the New Testament, and you see this theme of oneness and unity strung throughout the entire New Testament. Jesus and His high priestly prayer prays that the believers in Jesus Christ might be one, He says in verse 21 of Chapter 17 of John, He says this.

He says that all of them may be one in his prayer. He says that all of them we may be one father, just as you are in me, I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me. Make no mistake about it. In Jesus's prayer, he prays something powerful.

What he prays, in essence, is that believers from every walk of life, that means believers from every tribe, every tongue, every culture and every race, believers from every sects and every nationality. In fact, divided people, groups from across this globe would somehow miraculously be transformed into a beautiful mosaic of oneness within the very union of Christ himself, within Jesus himself.

This is what He prays for, that you and I may find our oneness and unity in him. That's a powerful thing to pray. But I want you to know that Jesus doesn't just pray this prayer independent of his power to pull it off. Jesus. Some self provides the means to achieve this oneness by laying his life down as a sacrifice for sins so that by faith in his death and resurrection, you and I may be a new community called the Church.

And this is the message that he's called you and I, you and me, to proclaim to a lost and dying world. That message being that on that cross, Jesus's blood stained body was sacrificed in order to satisfy God's wrath while simultaneously solidifying you and me and to new community. What an awesome God we serve. What an awesome savior we have.

And this is a message that he taught us to preach and proclaim. But guess what? This message got lost in translation when it came to this Corinthian church. I'm here to tell you, because what we just read is a ceremonial reciting of Jesus's last words at the Last Supper. But don't get it twisted. And often we hear these words read at every communion service, or if you want to call it a Eucharist, it really doesn't matter.

Eucharist means Thanksgiving. Communion is all about communing with God and communing with one another. But don't get it twisted. We recite these words at every communion service, and if we're not careful, familiarity can breed contempt because you need to understand that these words that are often recited at a communion service are sandwiched between a severe rebuke on one hand and a stern warning to the Corinthian church on the other.

You see, by now you probably know we've been in the series now for a couple of months. The Corinthian church was a hot mess, and we all know they had some problems, didn't they? They had all kind of issues or issues. This church is established by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey, and he planted this church together with a couple of friends of his and together they go into this this region, which was a melting pot of cultural diversity.

I mean, the region where they planted this church was an affluent society. It was filled with progressive thinkers and vast polarization. Imagine planting a church smack dab in the middle of New York City. That would have been like where Corinth was planted. And Paul, he spends a whole year and a half planting this church, and then he leaves.

But after he leaves, soon after his departure, he gets word that there's trouble in paradise. Various factions had formed and disagreements amongst the body. There were petty rivalries and even popularity contests. So Paul addresses these concerns as a response to a letter he received from them, asking various questions about particular matters. Last week, Pastor Jonathan reminded us of the various warnings that sprinkled throughout the book of First Corinthians and in chapter one, three, four, he addressed those factions and divisions that seem to plague the Corinthian church, and they seem to rear their ugly head right here again in Chapter 11 divisions.

And what Paul takes issue with them over in Chapter 11 is more related to their corporate worship. In particular, he's making a case against their mannerisms at the Lord's table because it was these mannerisms that misrepresented the gospel. A little background I help us understand. It's already been mentioned, the context where this church was planted. Again, don't forget, the culture that existed around this church was fractured.

It was a fractured society, and it was divided along economic lines. They were divided along cultural lines. There were divided socially and political. I mean, there was all sorts of division. But that wasn't the main problem for the Corinthian church. The Corinthian church main problem had to do with how do you prevent the polarization outside from bleeding over into our worship That was the challenge for this church.

In other words, how do you prevent the culture wars going on around us from causing us to form tribes and causing us to form conflicts and causing us to form divisions, erecting walls of discord? How do we prevent that from happening in our

church? And unfortunately, the Corinthian church failed at this miserably. They couldn't understand how to keep this from happening.

They let their social norms of the day dictate their behavior and their love towards one another. And so it all came to a head in the worst possible place, that being at the table of the law. Irony here being that this very meal that was meant to be a display of unity and harmony and respect in the body of Christ instead became an opportunity for division and disrespect and all types of biases.

And so Paul, the Apostle Paul levels with this church and he says, you know what, you're being judged for that you can't do that. That's not the body of Christ. You're being judged for that. Now, it's at this point that I wish I could say that this is one of those rare sections in the Bible that ain't got nothing to do with us and ain't got nothing to do with you and me, the church.

But truth be told, this passage, ladies and gentlemen, it specifically relates to the American church. Because unless you've been hidden under a rock these last few years, you and I know that the Church of Christ has had a love affair with this world like never before. And we have been divided over many different things. And it's the usual suspects were divided over politics.

We're divided over race. The church is divided over identity politics. We're divided over denominational divides and divided over polity. And gender roles were divided over wokeness. The church in America is divided, and it almost seems as though the American church is in the midst of a holy war with itself. And so serious is this subject from the Apostle Paul that he has to level with them by saying that if you think you can come to the table of the Lord with that mess, then you got another thing coming.

He says, If you think you can come to the table of the Lord having Partizan division and you think you can come with sowing seeds of disrespect and discord within the body and this loveless, this loveless, and it's going, I know you've got another thing coming. Don't expect to come to the table and be blessed. Instead, expect to be judged.

That's pretty much Paul's thesis statement, not one we want to hear, but it nevertheless applies across the board. So the question could be raised for you and me. How do we as a church family partake of communion today in a way that avoids God's discipline? There's a lot you got to learn on this and we'll break it down for you.

But how do we partake together as one body in a way that honors the gospel? Well, if you follow me in the verse 17, Paul says, The first thing we need to know is that we need to, first of all, realize and recognize that there's a problem, he says in verse 17 in the following directives I have no praise for you for your meetings.

Do more harm than good. The first place I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you. And to some extent I believe it. So Paul's justice has taken it straight to him right there. He says, I believe that y'all got some stuff going on in your church today. And his calls and the judgment of God.

He says, Your meetings are doing more harm than good. Well, the question is, what meetings does Paul have in mind here? Well, in the first century, we realized that it was customary for churches to get together and have fellowship. And when churches got together and had fellowship, often the fellowship happened, happened in people's homes. And this house, churches, if you will, would be the center point and the center place for their worship and their fellowship together.

I mean, they couldn't wait to get together. There was no such thing in the first century as a bedside Baptists. Some of y'all get that later. They slow down. There was no such thing as a live stream where you can just tune in to service because you just didn't feel like coming to church. And the more to come on somebody, there was no such thing as these conveniences.

And even if they were to them in the first century, that idea would have seemed to them absurd because they loved the fellowship, they loved to get together. And often when they got together, guess what happened? They would break bread together. Their fellowship would culminate into a luxurious meal. It was a gorgeous it was a spread. I mean, it was like a great big potluck, like forever Young, the Saturday 5 p.m., those of you 50 and up.

Yeah, I had to throw that in there. But notice it's an example laid out for us in chapter two, which describes this fellowship that all the believers were together and they had everything in common. They sold their property and possessions to give to anyone who had need, and every day they continued to meet together. Can you see this fervency and this love for one another?

They couldn't be separated. They loved each other. And it was just every single day they had to get together. And so but they didn't only get together, they practiced love when they got together. And how did they do that? By the breaking of bread and communion. You see, communion was a message of love and inclusion when they broke this bread and they got together, it was a message of equality and oneness in the body.

But the problem with the Corinthian church was that of privilege, and they didn't want to give that up for their communion service and their fellowship meals in the Corinthian church. It pretty much broke down between the haves and the have nots. It was the wealthy against the poor and all sorts of other cultural divides that separated this church from one another.

And see, some in the Corinthian church were stuck up, and the self-absorbed hedonism that led them to seek security in their own comforts and led them to seek

security in their high class cliques and their high class social clubs. And they wanted to preserve these comforts at all costs. They didn't want to give up their privilege. Pastor Jarvis I consider him a sage amongst the staff at Grace Church.

And the reason for that is because every now and then, Pastor K.J., because he'll he'll come alongside you and you share a wise word of advice or some sort of proverb or something like that. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Octavia shared this thought with me and I want to share with you. He says this. He says, When when you are accustomed to privilege for such a long time, equality can feel like oppression.

I said they don't get that. After the second time I say it past Jesus, He says, When you are accustomed to privilege for for such a long time, equality can feel like oppression. And to the Corinthian church, these believers equality to them felt oppressive. And that became most apparent at their love feasts. Because what happened was whenever they would get together, I want you to know that it was more or less the privileged saints who had all the money and they had all the clout and they had all the respect, and it would pretty much be up to them to host these feasts in their own homes.

And whenever the privileged would get together, they would host these love feasts within their homes. The first thing they would do is invite the people on their friends lists first, which meant all the people that arrived first were more likely wealthy and of of of a different social class. It's not that the poor weren't invited. It's just that the disadvantages that came with being poor and the disadvantages that came with, let's say, being a woman or being a slave during that time prevented them from even arriving on time.

And oftentimes when they got there, the food would be all heat up and alcohol all gone. Yeah, they drank wine in the first century and that was all drank up. And they got there and they was being disrespected. The poor would get there, they were being overlooked. And it was the ultimate form of discrimination. And the more boozey saints didn't seem to care.

In fact, you get the sense from Paul's tone in this letter that their neglect of the poor, coupled together with their smug attitudes of indifference, it was probably even done intentionally in order to make some folks feel unwelcome. This church was a hot mess. Yeah. Yeah. And they wanted to make the poor and make them make everybody else feel unwelcome.

And so if you look at verse 19, notice Paul levels with them again, he says this. He says, No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you even has God's approval when you come together. It's not the Lord's Supper you eat, he says. This is no doubt there have to be differences among you.

The word differences here can be translated Facts, sins or disputes. They have to be factions and disputes among you to show which of you actually have God's approval,

because it's assumed that those who were not complicit in this type of behavior would be the actual believers in Jesus Christ. And so Paul says, look, there has to be these factions going on.

Think in terms schisms along tribal lines, and hopefully you're beginning to see just why. Agreed and how egregious this was to Paul. He's not taking them to task just simply because of bad manners. And he's not taking them to task because of poor table etiquette. And you didn't set the fork right on this side. You know, it's not about that Paul is rebuking this church because their biases and abuses threaten the very core of the gospel.

You don't want to mess with that, Paul says. I can't praise you all for that because your meetings are doing more harm than good. It's not the Lord's Supper you eat, Paul says. When you segregate yourself from the body, it's not the Lord's Supper. You eat when you mistreat the poor, it's not the Lord's supper you eat when you prefer factions over fellowship.

It's not the Lord's Supper we eat when we prefer politics that pull us apart. No, Paul says, Notice this is not the Lord's Supper. This is your own thing. This is your own thing. And notice how repugnant they were about it. I mean, they was pig out right in front of the board looking for 21 four as you each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody and one remains hungry.

Another gets drunk as a skunk and tore up from the flow up and just blitzed them. I mean, what's wrong with Charles? What? Paul, can you understand? Can you believe what's happening? You're saying it's not the Lord's Supper? Look at you. You're doing it all chaotically and out of order. What was supposed to be the Lord's Supper ended up being a humiliating show of shame and disrespect to the least of these in the body.

Yeah, and here's the point for you and me. The ladies and gentlemen. We cannot worship the Lord at the table of communion if we ignore the unity of the church. We can't do it. That's what this passage is all about. Our union in Jesus Christ. And anything that is opposed to that is a threat to God's to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

We cannot worship Jesus at the table of communion while ignoring the unity of the church. That's why Paul says it's not the Lord's Supper you eat. You're doing your own thing by prioritizing your own clicks. And Paul says, We can't have that in the church. And the question I have for you this morning is how is your heart attitude towards those who are different from you?

Do you find yourself pulling away from other believers who may not fit within your categories? Can we still have fellowship? If you're suburban and I'm city, if you're black and I'm white, if you're Asian and I'm maybe Hispanic, can we still have



fellowship? If you're a Republican and I'm a Democrat, can we still have fellowship? Can we still meet at this table today?

Can we still have fellowship if we differ on church polity issues? If not, ladies and gentlemen, our meetings are doing more harm than good. We've got to get it right. You know, if you ever want to tick God off, tamper with the unity his church, God don't play when it comes to his church. And notice that's where we going next.

Paul wants to remind them and get them to reflect upon the implications of this division going on. In verse 27, Paul says, as we sit down, Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner underline that were those two words unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body in the blood of the Lord.

Verse 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks the cup for anyone who eats of the eats and drinks without recognizing, discerning the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on themselves. Oh, wait. Yeah. Paul ain't playing today, is it? Oh, yeah. Yeah. Right away we see the communion. Ain't no joke.

We ought to approach the table today with a level of caution and holiness and reverence. But notice that the word unworthy here, how it can be translated. This word for unworthy could actually be translated unworthy lead in verse 27. So, in other words, this verse literally could read like this. Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworldly will be guilty of sending against the body in the blood.

This raises a couple of questions for us today. The first question is what does it mean to eat and drink on worthily? And the second is like it. What does it mean to discern the body of the Lord? Now, traditionally, we've kind of divided over this and isolated this verse from the rest of the context in Chapter 11.

What do I mean by that? A lot of times when we approach communion, we approach it and we give these warnings out and they're sort of based upon Christian moralism. In other words, if you say, you know, if you have sin in your life, then perhaps you should let the elements pass, or if he was out at the club last night, you just walk in and, you know, maybe you should let that if you happen to be a Browns fan, then perhaps you should let the elements pass.

So we've isolated this and made it into sort of a Christian moralism type thing. Others take the extreme view that unworthy here means to treat the elements themselves with irreverence and disrespect. Meaning you have to when you come to the table, you have to recognize that the elements that we partake the bread in the cup, these literally transform into the body in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Our Catholic friends take this view. It's a view known as the doctrine of transubstantiation, meaning that when we take these elements, they transform into the literal actual body in the blood of Jesus Christ, and it imparts a measure of saving

grace in our lives. But I differ from that because I don't see that anywhere in the Bible. And furthermore, most Protestants, we view this as more of a memorial when we come together, when we take communion.

It's more of a memorial where the presence of Jesus, yes, he's here, but it's more or less in a spiritual sense. That's another argument for another day. Suffice to say, we keep this context in mind. Don't lose me here. The greater theme of this passage has to do with factions, disputes and abuses within the body of Jesus Christ.

And so to eat the bread and to drink the cup unworldly must have something to do with what's going on in this text. It must have something to do with the love looseness that this Corinthian church is practicing towards one another. In other words, we have to recognize that you and I, ladies and gentlemen, we are an interconnected people.

What affects one affects us all. Let me say that again. You and I are one. We are an interconnected people group. What affects one of us affects us all. And no other religion on the face of this earth can lay such a claim, and no other faith can literally unite former enemies into one body. No other faith, No other faith can transform sinners into saints, turn enemies into friends, turn strangers into brothers and turn adversaries into allies.

Only Jesus Christ can do that. Only Jesus. And so no matter how much we try to protest, how much we don't like each other, we might as well get along because we stuck together. And that's a good thing because it glorifies God. And so therefore, to eat and drink the cup on worthily and without recognizing thing, the body must mean to ignore that common oneness that you and I have in Jesus Christ.

You see. You see believers are not just connected to Christ by faith. You and I are connected to one another through love. And that's Paul's message interconnectedness, union and Jesus Christ, oneness and harmony and the Lord through love. This is further supported by First Corinthians chapter ten, verse 16. Notice what Paul says here, he says, is not the cup of Thanksgiving for which we give thanks or participation in the blood of Christ.

By the way, participation comes from the Greek word koinonia, which is where we get our English word fellowship from. And so it's not the cup of Thanksgiving that we give thanks of fellowship together in the blood of Jesus. And it's not the bread that we break or sharing or participation in the body of Christ. Because there was one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

It's about oneness. It's about our unity in Jesus Christ. And in case you didn't know, that's why we call it communion in the first place. Communion stands for our common Union and Christ, and it's our common union in Christ that reflects the core message of the gospel. And I'm here to tell somebody today that if you desecrate

that common union and with divisions, and if you substitute that oneness with, hey, guess what?

We always stand to invoke the judgment of God. That's Paul's message. We stand to invoke judgment. But don't take my word for it. Take what God says himself, what Jesus said, what the law says and say, Look at verse 30. Paul says, That's why many of you are weak. Many of you are sick. And a number of you have even fallen asleep.

But if we judge or discern for ourselves, we would not come under judgment. We are judged by the Lord. We are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the rest of the world. This here is some heavy stuff, y'all. I know, I know. Because Paul pretty much says in this section is when it comes to the table of the law, check yourself lest you wreck yourself.

Check yourself. God disciplines those he loves. And Paul says these weaknesses, if you look at the form of discipline that Paul uses, that he says is going on in this church. Paul says that this there's an outbreak of something going on. It was weaknesses. Sickness and death. Sound to me like a pandemic. Sound an awful lot like a pandemic to me.

Weaknesses, sickness and death. No doubt about it. It was a health crisis that seemed abnormal to Paul and Paul with a prophetic sense of discernment. He picks up on this pattern and he associates their ongoing divisions together with this pattern of distress breaking out in their church. And he says this is happening because of your divine. This is the judgment of God.

Now, this wouldn't have been the first instance in the Bible where God chose to use a form of discipline that even included death for a church member. It's not a normative thing to describe in the Book of Acts, but we know the famous story of an analysis of fire in Acts Chapter five, where God discipline them because they shun themselves from the rest of the body and they hoarded their finances and they had apathy and indifference towards one another.

And and so they died right there in full view of the entire church. Now, that's an extreme view. And again, that's not a normal thing to happen. But the Bible does affirm in Hebrews Chapter 12 that God has the prerogative to discipline the church, however, and with whatever He chooses, the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he chases everyone He accepts as a son.

Now, don't get me wrong. Now, I'm not saying hear me now that every plague and in every distress and every sickness, every illness that goes on and that is related to some way in God's to God's judgment of us. That's not what I'm saying. But if we're honest with ourselves, it's kind of hard to miss the parallel over these last few years between all of our tribalism and all of our trials and tribulations over the last few years.

I mean, I'm here to tell somebody the American church today is undergoing an identity crisis. We're confused about who we are and confused about a sense of direction and confused about our allegiances. And I believe, honestly, that God is bringing that to bear through a form of discipline in this country. You might ask how we've been weakened in many ways.

Have you not noticed it? We've been weakened ever since COVID. We've been weakened in terms of numbers and influence. We've been weakened in terms of weak credibility. We've been weakened in terms of integrity. The church has been weakened. And even embattled sicknesses and diseases. When is the last time you ever thought in a million years that the church would have to close its doors because of a pandemic?

Interestingly enough, that happened at the peak of our divisions when we were divided over so many different things, so many different things. It's hard to miss the connection between our grumblings and our grief, our strife and our stresses in this land. And so Paul says, Look, you all need to check yourself. And so the question for us this morning is, is God trying to get our attention over maybe some abnormal things or afflictions going on in our lives?

Is God trying to get your attention, to get you to wake up to your cynicism and your troublesome adult attitude towards other believers? It's God trying to get your attention. Do you demonize those who you deem to be too woke in this church? Or to put it another way, do you demonize those who you consider to be too privileged or too conservative or too Republican?

Paul saying, you know what? You better recognize that there is a problem and it needs reflecting upon because you cannot come to the table of the Lord with that attitude. Your face discipline. Your face discipline. But just like the Apostle Paul, he doesn't leave us without hope. I skipped over this, but we read it together. Verse 23. Paul pretty much says, You know what?

Here's the solution for all we can fix this thing. How many you believe we can fix this thing, this division going on and on in the church? We can fix this thing, but we cannot fix it until we fix our eyes on Jesus first. And so Paul says, we need to rediscover the foundation for our faith. In verse 23.

Paul says, For our receive from the Lord what I passed on to you, the Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broken and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In other words, what Paul is trying to get the Corinthian church to do is return back to the cross to find their their form of unity at the base of the cross.

He's saying, remember the cross saying, are you all divided over this, that and the other? These are idols. He says, Come back to the cross. You know, I know the church has had its fair share problems over the years and we've had our fair share of troubles

and all that. But we also have our fair share of promises and God's word that should ignite hope in each one of us.

So first of all, Paul reminds them of the source of the tradition that he hands down to them. Paul says, I didn't hand this thing down to you from the world. He says, I didn't get this tradition called communion. I didn't get this from any elitist social group or a pagan political party. He says, I receive this tradition from the Lord and what I receive from the Lord I now pass down to you.

And what he received from the Lord and passed down was the gospel message of Jesus Christ. See, communion is a testament to the Gospel. That's why this is so important to Paul. And Paul takes them back to the very beginning to remind them of that fact. How does he take them back? He takes them back to the beginning by getting them to reflect upon the night that Jesus was betrayed.

Yes, He says. When when Jesus was betrayed, that was a dark night. Your you know, the night that he was betrayed. It was a night of intense sorrow. The night that Jesus was betrayed was a night of severe stress as anxiety gripped the soul. And the night Jesus was betrayed, he stared death down in the face, knowing that it would save you and me.

And Jesus looked forward to the cross on the night he was betrayed. Looking forward to taking on God's wrath for you and me. Jesus didn't die for an individual. Jesus died for a church. And He did this on the night he was betrayed. He didn't die for a political party. He didn't die for no racial category and with full knowledge of what would soon take place.

Jesus takes the bread, He gives thanks, He breaks it, and he says to the church, This is my body, which is for you. Now, don't you ever forget what I'm getting ready to do for you. This is what Jesus did for us. This is what the bread means. This is what the wine means. It means our oneness and inclusion.

Because what he's getting ready to do is go to the cross for you and me. And at the cross, Jesus says. Broken body was shed on that cross. Blood was spilled on that cross. And with agony, he cried out to his own father on that cross. My God, my God, why has you forsaken me? Realizing that he had to be forsaken and he had to be ignored and he had to face the scorn, the mockery and the contempt of the cross.

Because had he not faced it, you and I would be stuck in our sins. I think this describes the night that Jesus was betrayed. This is what he had to look forward to. And so as he takes the cup and as he takes the bread he has in mind, he's getting ready to do. And what Jesus was getting ready to do was make all things new.

Look at verse 20. And the same way after the supper he took the cup saying, This cup is the New covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. In other words, Jesus is making all things new. He's making all things new by

making all of us one. Well, there's neither Jew nor Greek slave, nor free female or male.

We're all one in Christ Jesus. And so we say together, when we take communion today, we say thank you, Lord. We say thank you. Because of the testimony that you and I share in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that testimony is quite clear. And verse 2326, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, Paul says, Something powerful is happening when you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's Death until he comes.

Now, I don't know about you, but I want to take communion today with honor and respect for not just what Jesus Christ did for me on the cross, but what He did for you, too. And so all of us, when we take communion today, have in mind not just Jesus, but have in mind your fellow brother and sister in Christ, because He brought us all together and made all of us one.

In our harmony and oneness in the body makes a statement to the watching world around us that there is power, Power, wonderful working power in the blood of the lamb. Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.

To pray with me. Father, we thank you for the words that you give us today. As a reminder, as a stern warning and a rebuke, but also with encouragement that, Lord, you died to save sinners, unite sinners together as one. Thank you for this body of Christ. Lord is a reflection of diversity in this world. We see people black, white, Hispanic.

We see Jews, Messianic Jews. We see all people from all different walks of life, all culminating together in this house of the Lord to celebrate and worship Jesus. Thank you for the beauty of the cross. Thank you for the beauty of the gospel. And now, Lord, as we transition into communion, we remember Lord, that night on the cross, on that night when you were looking death down, staring death in the face.

Lord, you had each of us in mind. Communion is not about individuals. It's about our collective union as one in Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. And now, as the servers make their way down. I want to do something different today. Since Communion is about our fellowship and our oneness. I want you to hold on to the bread. But rather than taking that bread individually, keep this in mind.

The person sitting next to you. I want you to reach out, maybe hold their hand, touch their shoulder as we partake of these elements, we're going to partake together as one body in Jesus today. And so hold onto those elements that we sing and praise for the Lord.