

How The Practice of Communion Shapes Us

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

1. Introduction

- a. Welcome
- b. Vision & Strategic Planning - Survey + Wed PM
- c. Next Series -- A Better Way: Engaging Culture Like Jesus
- d. Today: Communion Sunday -- How the Practice of Communion Shapes Us
- e. Labor Day - 1894, Grover Cleveland - McGuire, carpenter v. Maguire, machinist
 - i. When we forget the story, we lose the meaning.
- f. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
 - i. **23** For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, 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, and said, "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.
 - ii. Jesus gave us a practice for telling and retelling his story so that we don't lose its meaning. Telling this story and understanding its meaning shapes us. We'll do it the first Sunday of every month at LNBC.

2. Communion reminds us to be thankful to God for the gift of Jesus (24a).

- a. Names
 - i. Lord's Supper = describes the first passover instituted by Jesus
 - ii. Communion = demonstrates union with Christ and one another
 - iii. Eucharist = thanksgiving
- b. Importance of thankfulness in response to God
 - i. Hebrews 12:28. Through thanksgiving we serve God acceptably with reverence and awe.

3. Communion helps us recognize Christ's presence with us (24b).

- a. We're going to talk about two battles today. Two heated debates that show how significant communion is.

- b. The first battle is over how to interpret Jesus' words: "this is my body."
 - i. Lutheran and Roman Catholic = "real presence"
 - 1. Martin Luther. "The consecrated bread *is* the body; the consecrated wine *is* the blood of Christ. How that is possible, no person on earth can say. What we know is that Christ himself gave this explanation by saying: 'This *is* my body ... This *is* my blood of the new covenant.'" On the basis of these words of Christ, Luther believes in the Real Presence without trying to build up a theory ... to answer the question: How could the Real Presence be possible?
 - 2. St. Thomas Aquinas. "Now faith has to do with unseen realities, and just as he offers his divinity to our acceptance as something that we do not see, so in this sacrament he offers his very flesh to us in like manner."
 - 3. Thomas Merton. "The mystery of the Incarnation is deep enough, in itself: but when Christ dwelt among us as a historical Person, at least His humanity was evident, even though His divinity remained hidden. But here in this admirable Sacrament both humanity and divinity are hidden. Yet the Sacrament is nonetheless Christ, the whole Christ, really and integrally present as a person."
 - ii. Reformed = "spiritual presence"
 - 1. John Calvin. Opposed the real presence view and argued for symbolism, but at the same time said things like, "we must certainly consider him truly shown to us, just as if Christ himself present were set before our gaze and touched by our hands."
 - a. Calvin spoke of spiritual presence in a more general way, but still emphasized Christ's presence in a special way.
4. **Communion helps us remember Christ's sacrifice for us (24c).**
- a. Baptist and others = "symbolic memorial"
 - i. Zwingli. "Christ says, "do this in remembrance of me." For the words "do this" are not to refer to eating the body, but to giving thanks, that we ought

to do so plainly, in memory of him. For the apostle expounds them thus, “as often as you eat this bread, you do show the Lord’s death.” He did not say, “as often as you eat this bread, you eat the Lord’s body.”

1. Heated debate with strong language. Just like Jesus!
2. This is the second battle. It’s between Jesus and the crowds that just wanted to see him do miracles without truly hearing and believing what he was saying.
 - a. John 6 describes a scene that took place the day after Jesus fed 5000 people in the wilderness.
 - b. The crowd found him and asked for a sign, like manna, the bread from heaven.
 - c. Jesus said manna wasn’t bread from heaven, he is bread from heaven. The bread of life.
 - d. They didn’t like that statement and said, “isn’t this just Joseph’s son?”
 - e. **John 6:52-58.** At that, the Jews argued among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” **53** So Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. **54** The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, **55** because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. **56** The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. **57** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. **58** This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your ancestors ate—and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.”
3. Jesus’ words highlight at least two things.
 - a. There’s something special and serious going on when we take the bread and cup of communion. It’s more than just remembering.
 - b. Jesus spoke figuratively about these things. That’s certainly the case here and likely the case with “this is my body”

also. So taking communion is likely something less than his real body.

4. Paul brings these together in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

a. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? **17** Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread.

5. So, when we take communion we do well both to recognize his presence here today among us in a special way as we remember his sacrifice through the symbols of the bread and the cup. We are sharing in his body and blood as we eat and drink the elements together.

5. Communion reminds us of how we're saved through Jesus (25).

a. "New Covenant in my blood"

- i. Jesus connected himself to the old covenant as the final sacrifice
- ii. This is also what he was saying with "this is my body." I am the sacrifice symbolized in the bread of the passover. It's me.
- iii. The first Lord's Supper was a reinterpretation of the Jewish Passover that reminded Jews of the passover lamb whose blood was shed for their salvation. That was the old covenant. Salvation through Jesus' sacrifice is the new covenant.

6. Communion points us forward to Jesus' second coming (26).

a. We "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

7. Communion reminds us to examine our lives and respond appropriately.

a. **1 Corinthians 11:27-29.** So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. **29** For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body,

eats and drinks judgment on himself.

8. Practicing Communion

a. Time of reflection/examination

- i. Recognize his presence with you today
- ii. Remember his sacrifice for your salvation
- iii. Respond in confession, repentance, thankfulness!

b. Who should take communion?

- i. Open communion—don't have to be member or regular here, but you do need to be a follower of Jesus. That doesn't mean you're perfect, but it does mean sincere heart to believe and obey Jesus.
- ii. If you're not a follower of Jesus—just not there yet, still exploring, etc—no shame at all, but just let it pass. This honors the significance of this.
- iii. Better yet, if you're ready, put your faith in Jesus right now. Just communicate to God your need for forgiveness and desire, and take the Lord's supper today as your first act of commitment as a believer.

c. Invite servers forward

- i. In a moment when the servers come around, go ahead and take the bread and the cup. Hold on to them. I'll lead us in taking the elements together.

d. Pray & distribute trays to servers

- i. Several minutes of reflection/examination

e. Taking the LS

- i. "On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread ... take and eat."
- ii. "In the same way after supper, Jesus took the cup ... take and drink"

f. After the first Lord's supper, Jesus' disciples sang a hymn and went out. So we're going to conclude today in the same way.