

8/18/24

[Connection] Good morning, Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. Thank you for joining us. If this is your first time worshiping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you more. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

[Title] While you're doing that, we are going to dive into our sermon series 'Church in Crisis'. Where we have been studying the book of 1 Corinthians. We are in week 16. We have been talking about this letter from Paul, where he is addressing the problems and the questions from the church. They had a lot of things that they were doing that was jeopardizing the integrity and the representation of the gospel in their city. Paul goal in this letter is to help the church represent Christ well as his body and to make them more effective in their witness in sharing the gospel with the city of Corinth.

This week we are going to be talking about the topic of Communion. The church was practicing the sacrament of Communion, but their practice lacked in reverence and true deep spiritual engagement in what it was mean to be. Learning from Paul instruction we are going to see what the church did wrong and how we avoid their mistakes, but also for us in the modern era, how do we engage in communion to give it the honor and respect it deserves while understanding what it represents.

Today our scripture is going to be found in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. If you have your bibles go ahead and turn, there if you would like to follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of **1 Corinthians 11:26**. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God's word as we proclaim the truth in His Scripture.

[1] SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 11:26

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

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

INTRO

[2] For many of you that grew up in church, the practice of communion was something that you did on a regular basis. Whether it was quarterly, once a month or like what we do, and you participated every week. At Cornerstone we usually have a little mini sermon after the regular sermon that will communicate in 5 minutes or so what communion is and somehow tie it to the sermon and the passage that we went over. Even still the understanding of communion changes from denomination, and sometimes even with the period that the church is in.

I know for me growing up in the early 2000's contemporary Baptist background, as a kid I understood what it represented. But I was always taught that it was just highly symbolic. I knew that the bread represented Jesus' body. The grape juice represented Jesus' blood. The bible mentions wine, but it was always grape juice. In the Baptist church you couldn't serve alcohol and call it Jesus' blood. From my understanding as a kid it was always just symbolic. Which is why all the kids after church would gather in

the kitchen and eat all of the crackers and left-over grape juice because they couldn't save the little cups in the gold-plated trays.

It wasn't till I started my first full time ministry position that I had an experience that showed it to possibly be something more. It was at a catholic funeral that I attended for the grand-father of one of the kids in my youth group. They gave communion to everyone in attendance. Now at our church the way they gave out communion was similar to how we do it here. You would come up to the front and the pastor or an elder would give you the elements, you would take them and go back to your seat and pray until we ate the bread and the wine together.

At this catholic funeral there were several people from my church there and one of the ladies was just in front of me. At the catholic service we were in line coming up to get communion from the priest and the lady from my church grabbed the elements and started to walk to her seat with the bread in her hand. Now I am so thankful that she was in front of me because as she walked off the priest stopped the line and chased after her and said, "you have to eat the bread or give it back to me".

I was dumbfounded, like what just happened. Here's me this traditional Baptist youth pastor and I had no idea what I just witnessed. Why was he taking something that was symbolic to a place that I had never seen before. That moment caused me to launch into this deep dive into what communion was and why they took it so seriously when the church I grew up in made it to be more nonchalant. Here is what I found concerning communion...

[3] The sacrament of Communion is highly symbolic and deeply spiritually engaging.

BODY

The act of communion did not actually start with Jesus as many people believe. It truly started with Passover when Israel was delivered from Egypt. As a way of remembering the people of Israel being passed over by the angel of death and they were brought out of slavery in Egypt, God instituted the feast of Passover. When the last plague came on Egypt, the Israelites were to take a young lamb and sacrifice it. Taking the blood and painting it on the door posts and lintel. They were to roast the lamb over a fire and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They had to be fully dressed, ready for travel and eat it in haste leaving nothing left till the morning. Anything that they couldn't eat they were to burn¹.

This was commission by God to his people to be kept as a seven-day feast. This was for the Israelites remember how God delivered them from Egypt. It was a sign not just for the remembrance of what had happened, but they participated because they were God's people, and this sacrifice of the lamb showed that YHWH is their God, and he protects his people.

[4] Fast forward to Jesus, who participated in the feast of Passover every year that he was alive. However, on the night that he was betrayed into the hand of the religious leaders to be killed, He assigned a new meaning to the Passover meal. Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room, and it was the first of the seven days of eating the unleavened bread. After they finished eating, Jesus took bread and wine before his disciples. He broke bread for his disciples and gave it to them to eat and said that it represented his body that was going to be broken and the cup was his blood that was going to be poured out to bring about the kingdom of God and atonement of sins through his death².

¹ Exodus 12:1-28

² Luke 22:14-20

For the disciples, this would have been seen as a replacement for the lamb being sacrificed at Passover. Jesus was going to be the new marker of God being faithful to deliver his people. The blood on the doorposts and lentil would be replaced by the blood on the cross. The Passover meal was not just symbolism but a deep connection for the people to God the Father.

So, when we see it as this deep connection to the death and atonement of Jesus Christ, the harsh words in 1 Corinthians where Paul is pointing out how God is punishing them for their misuse of this sacred practice, makes more sense. It would be hard to make the case that judgement fell and Paul responded so harshly, on something that was just symbolic.

[5] 1 Corinthians 11:17-19

“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.”

He said in the previous passage last week that he commended them and praised them for remembering some of the practices that they learned from Paul, but Paul is saying here yeah you remember some but you're forgetting the important ones. The Lord's Supper is meant to be something that is beneficial and good for the church but the way that they have been practicing it has been causing harm to the community.

Paul talked about in chapter 1 of this letter about how terrible the divisions that exists between them in the church are. He says that he hates them and that they should be unified. Here Paul points out that this division that was being made concerning the Lord's Supper had one benefit. He says that it pointed out the true believers among them. Pretty much saying everyone that has taken a side in these divisions has identified themselves and not a genuine believer. Which is harsh but remember these are people that have caused harm to the church which we already know from previous chapters Paul does not address those things with kid gloves and he absolutely shouldn't.

[6] 1 Corinthians 11:20-22

“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.”

Paul is pointing out where the division is among them concerning the Lord's Supper. In the early church they would meet in people's homes of wealthy believers. They would often hold a worship gathering and a meal for the believers in the community. Now the poor among the believers would work longer hours than the wealthy believers. Often, they would probably arrive late to these worship gatherings. The meal that they would have shared as a community was probably already gone and the poor then would not be included in it.

Following the example of what Jesus did. The Lord's supper would have been probably included in the meal and the poor would have been removed from that practice as well. Which is why he saying that there are some that go hungry and another gets drunk or participates in excess because of the others that were not there.

The wealthy believers had shown disdain for the poor among them. They showed this hatred towards them being a part of the church by intentionally removing them from the community of sharing a meal together, the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper. They would probably rush to start the meal and by the time the poor believers arrived the meal was gone and the Lord's supper had already been taken. Obviously, Paul cannot commend them for marginalizing the poor and destroying the unity among the believers.

What they don't realize is that by keeping people from communion, in their hearts they were also wishing to keep those they despised, from salvation. Communion is the remembrance of their deliverance from sin and the deep spiritual engagement with their Lord and Savior. These wealthy believers were keeping them from that. Paul points this out when he addresses what he taught them about communion.

[7] 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

"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."

This is where communion bares the true nature of the practice. It is deeply symbolic in what it represents. It is the representation of the body and blood of Jesus in the sacrifice that was made on our behalf, to deliver us from our sin. It is the reminder of the mercy and grace that was poured out on us so that we can be presented as righteous before our Father in heaven. Redeemed from condemnation and adopted into sonship.

However, it cannot only be symbolic, because we are engaging in the work of the kingdom by our participation. It says that by eating the bread and drinking of the cup, we are proclaiming the Lord's death. We preach the gospel, and we engage in the work of the gospel when we accept communion as the body of Christ. This is not something that should ever be taken lightly. We must come to this table with the understanding of what it is and give this practice the reverence that it deserves. Also, it is not something that should be used to marginalize people or something that should be used to divide a body, from baptized to unbaptized or you can come to the table, and you cannot. Those who chose to engage or chose not to, is on the conscious of the believer.

[8] 1 Corinthians 11:27-28

"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."

These wealthy believers decided for others who could come and who could not. They were coming to the table without the consideration for their own souls. They had not weighed the sin in their hearts as they engaged in the relationship with their Savior. In fact, they are removing others from that engagement. Where they did not examine themselves before participating, they also removed the ability and opportunity of others to examine themselves in this practice in connection to their heavenly Father.

[9] 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

*“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.”*

The dismissive behavior of their own conscious when they come to the table, has consequences. They lacked the consideration of their own sin when they come before the Father. That judgement has fallen on them, making some of them sick, ill and even resulting in the death of some of them. This is not the type of reaction or consequence that falls on people who participate in something that is just symbolic.

This table is deeply spiritually connecting with your father, but it is not just done as an individual it is meant to be done as the body of Christ. Which is why Paul says that it is given to their benefit but in their practice has caused harm to the church as a whole. The church is meant to participate in this deep connection to God unified in the experience. Bonding with him as one body, and a community of believers united in the purpose of their faith.

By doing so we are not only engaging in our relationship with Christ, but we are engaging in our relationship with each other. We are saying these are my brothers and sister, that I love and care for, that I am standing shoulder to shoulder with to further the kingdom of God because we have all been saved by the same blood of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. By the wealthy removing the poor from this they communicated that they did not want to stand with them in the purpose of the community of believers they did not want to be united with them.

[10] 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

“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.”

When we truly examine our hearts and come to the practice of communion with a humble heart. One that is broken over our own sin. The same wrongdoing that created the need for Jesus to come and die, when our heart is broken over our own sin, we come to this practice understanding the deep need we have for salvation. We are not worried about others. We are not looking to say oh they are taking communion, or they are not.

We are not concerned about anyone else except our brokenness, our need for a Savior and the beautiful community that we have been brought in on where we are all deeply aware how much we need a savior every day. Not that I was saved when I was 9 and I am good now. Or that I prayed to be saved last week and I'm covered. His mercies are renewed every day. Not because Jesus needs to be praised for what he did every day, but that every day we need to be washed and renewed by the mercy of his love. It is not a one and done deal but an awareness of a constant need for his love.

[11] 1 Corinthians 11:33-34

“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.”

When we come to the Lord's supper we wait, we do it together, and we don't come to the table to be physically filled and satisfied. The bread and juice is not meant to meet your physical needs. We are not walking back to our seats with a handful of these pieces of bread. Even though this is a small little piece of bread and barely a sip of juice, this is a full meal that will lead to satisfaction. This is a meal that will

satisfy us spiritually because it is a full immersion into the atonement of Jesus Christ and deep spiritual connection in his body, which is the church.

APPLICATION

[12] The sacrament of Communion is highly symbolic and deeply spiritually engaging.

This deep spiritual engagement, to truly involve ourselves in what it was intended to be from the Old Testament, to Jesus, to now Paul talking about it, to truly engage in it requires 2 things from us as believers.

[13] The first is that we must be deeply and sometimes painfully aware and broken hearted over our sin. This means when the preacher is up talking about something we are not looking around for that specific person to make sure they are listening and thinking that they need to hear this. When we are in a frame and posture of the heart of worship, we are absolutely wrecked by our own sin.

We are disgusted by it. We are in turmoil over its continued existence within us and we are painfully aware of our continued need of a savior. I know that when I am spending time with the Lord, sometimes I cannot stand to be in my own skin. I am just consumed by the weight of my own sin. My anger, my harsh words, my sometimes hateful, and sinful thoughts. Not that I am beating myself in a way of punishing myself, but in a way that I consider, how can I be loved by God? How could I have ever thought that I was good in the eyes of a God that is so perfect, so holy, and so powerful.

I can look at my life my internal struggles with sin, and my external engagements with sin and judge in my heart that if left to my own devices I would be so far and separated from God that I would not even be able to look upon him even if I tried. Doing what Paul instructs here, judging myself truly and honestly, to know that I will never measure up, I am a wretch that is deserving of eternal damnation, rightly deserving eternal punishment in hell for all of eternity. I am like Paul, the chief of all sinners the worst of the worst.

[14] The second part that we must come with in communion is so closely related to the first that they almost coexist but are two separate things. Where I know I am a wretched sinner, deserving of every possible punishment that God could possibly conceive of, and yet...I am saved by grace because of his sacrifice. God saw it in his grace and mercy to see a wretched sinner like me with no hope, no future but punishment and incapable of finding salvation and righteousness in his eyes.

He saw me and had compassion towards me. So much so that he came down out of the glory of heaven to take on flesh and die a horrible and brutal death. A death that I am fully deserving of, and he endured that punishment for me. Not because I deserved it. Not because I was close and I just needed a boost, but because I was lost in the pit of despair and he rescued me from my sin so that I can be equipped with his righteousness, his glory, and his honor. He did this so that he could find me worthy of the kingdom of God. Not because of anything within me but having to do everything that is found worthy in him. He gave to me, because he loves me.

Those 2 things are at the heart of the believer when they come to the communion table. That is what Paul means when he says that when we judge ourselves truly, we will not be judged. Because if we understand how undeserving of the gift of mercy and grace that we truly are we are passionate about bringing other people to this table.

With a mentality and a posture of the heart of worship acknowledging those 2 things, there is no room for self-righteousness. There is no room for exclusive and selective invitation. That is the mentality that proclaims, boldly, the death of Christ until he comes again. It is that posture, like the woman at the well in John 8, where she goes off into the town and says come meet the man that has told me everything that I have done. We proclaim at this table, I am a horrible human being, a horrible rebel of God. Come and see my God that knows all of my sins, yet loved me more in a singular moment, than all of humanity could in an entire lifetime.

[15] In the reality of our brokenness and the present redemption of his mercy and grace we find salvation. We humbly approach the table that helps us to remember the sacrifice that was made on our behalf. We recommit to the work of God within us and in our world. Because we fall away, we lose our footing, and we stumble in our battle against our sinful flesh. By coming to this table with this mentality, we are reinvigorated because we know what has been done and we are committed to knowing we need is grace daily.



In that commitment we rejoice, because we have been made worthy, we have been sanctified and glorified before the Father. Unable to fathom how God could use a wretched sinner like me. He use us to preach his message, build his kingdom, and glorify himself through our actions.

[16] This sacrament of communion as great and as glorious as it is, it is only temporary. Which is both exhilarating and terrifying. We are exhilarated because one day there will no longer be a need to proclaim his death, because we will not be eating the meal to look forward to a future glory, we will be seated at a table in heaven in the very presence of God himself.

It is also terrifying because this practice is only temporary. There will come a day where all of those around us will have run out of time to engage deeply with their heavenly father. They will have lost the ability to let the atonement of Christ wash away their sins. At that time, they will be judged for their sins and will spend eternity paying the price for them.

Not because of ignorance. Not because they simply did not know, but because they acted in open rebellion to the God in heaven. What is so unfortunate about that reality is that they don't have to but they will. Jesus Christ paid for the price of sin that is sufficient for all but only applicable to some. Salvation is applied through faith and repentance. If we believe in him, turn away from our sins and follow his commands we will be saved. On earth, those that chose to live without God, when the time of judgement comes, the heavenly father will honor their choice in eternity, and they will be removed from his presence forever.

This temporary practice cannot and should not ever be made to be exclusive.

[17] Our only concern for its participation, is for us to judge for ourselves if we can or should take it. It is on us to prepare ourselves for it. We are worried about ourselves. We are concerned for our sin, our salvation, and our personal relationship with God.

In a moment we are going to be taking communion as the body of Christ here on earth, but we cannot approach it without proper preparation. Examine yourself. Come to the reality of your sin and your desperate need for a savior. But do not let that mentality come to an end when we take the bread and the cup. We should take this with us in our every single interaction, so that we can proclaim the gospel, perpetuate the message of the death and salvation found in Christ.

Let us enter into a time of prayer. A time to prepare for our hearts for this heavily symbolic sacrament and this deeply spiritual engagement with our Savior and each other. Pray that the Lord positions our heart to be prepared for communion but pray also that this does not end today. Pray that we acknowledge the awareness of our sin and the beauty of the savior in our everyday life. That we maintain that posture of worship to proclaim the kingdom of God to anyone willing to listen.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION