

Heart of Worship

Lesson 4: The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming -- 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

It is a strange thing, when you stop to think about it, that the Lord of glory chose bread and a cup to be remembered by. He could have left his people a monument, a mountain, a magnificent temple. Instead, on the last night of his earthly life, in a borrowed upstairs room, with the cross only hours away, he took ordinary bread and an ordinary cup and made them carry the weight of the world's salvation. This do, he said, in remembrance of me. And ever since, wherever his people gather, the simplest of meals has become the most profound act of worship the church knows.

Paul did not invent the Supper, and neither did the church. "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," he writes, and then he hands the Corinthians the very words of Jesus from that final night. The bread is his body, given for them. The cup is the new covenant in his blood. The Supper reaches back to a real night, a real table, and a real death, and it reaches forward to a real return, for we proclaim the Lord's death "until he comes." Between those two points, the cross behind and the coming ahead, the church gathers at the table and remembers.

But something had gone wrong in Corinth. They were coming together, Paul says, not for the better but for the worse. They had turned the Lord's table into an occasion for division and self-indulgence, some going hungry while others had too much, treating the holiest meal as if it were a common supper. So Paul calls them back to the words of Jesus and to the meaning of the bread and cup. He tells them to examine themselves, to discern the body, to come to the table as people who know what they are doing and whom they are remembering.

Many of us need that same call back. The Supper can become, even for the faithful, a familiar few minutes near the end of the assembly, a tray passed and a moment endured before the closing song. Paul will not let it stay small. Here is the death of the Son of God, preached without words every week in bread and cup, a memorial of love and a proclamation of the gospel, until the day he comes again. Read these words slowly, and let them restore the table to its proper place: the beating heart of the church's worship, where we meet the crucified and risen Lord.

Group Discussion: Jesus left his church a simple meal of bread and cup to remember him by, rather than a monument or a ritual of human grandeur. Why do you think he chose something so humble and so repeatable, and what does that choice tell us about how he wants to be remembered by his people?

Personal Reflection: Paul calls each person to examine himself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. When you come to the Lord's table, how much of your heart and mind is

actually engaged? Be honest about whether the Supper has become routine for you, and consider what it would take to come to it each week as Paul describes.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–29

Study Questions

1. Paul says he “received from the Lord” what he delivered to the church about the Supper (v. 23). Why does it matter that the Lord’s Supper comes from Christ himself, and not from human tradition or church custom, and how should that shape the way we approach it?
2. Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me” (vv. 24–25). Remembering is an act of the heart and mind, not just the hands. What helps you actually remember Christ at the table, and what most often crowds your mind out of that remembrance?
3. Jesus calls the cup “the new covenant in my blood” (v. 25). What is the new covenant, and how does the Supper put the blood of Christ and the covenant it sealed continually before the eyes of his people?
4. The bread represents the body of Christ “which is for you,” and the cup his blood poured out for you (vv. 24–25). When you take the Supper, do you receive it as something done personally for you, or only as a general truth? How would taking it personally change the moment?
5. Paul says that as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, “you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (v. 26). In what sense is the Supper a proclamation, a kind of preaching, and what gospel does it announce every time the church observes it?

6. The Supper both looks back to the cross and forward to Christ's return ("until he comes"). How does holding both the cross and the coming together at the table guard your heart from despair on one hand and from drifting on the other?
7. In Corinth the Supper had become an occasion for division and self-indulgence (vv. 20–22), so Paul calls them to "discern the body" (v. 29). What does it mean to discern the body, both the body of Christ given for us and the body of believers gathered around the table?
8. Paul says, "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat" (v. 28). What does honest self-examination at the table involve for you, and how can it be a means of grace rather than a source of dread or mere guilt?
9. The New Testament shows the disciples gathering on the first day of every week to break bread (Acts 20:7), and Paul presents the Supper as a continual proclamation of the Lord's death "until he comes," a memorial of a sacrifice already finished once for all (Hebrews 10:10–14). How does this guard us against treating the Supper as a sacrifice that is repeated or re-offered, and how does it also guard us against treating it as an occasional or optional observance rather than the church's weekly remembrance? Why is the weekly table such a gift to the people of God?
10. Look back across the whole passage: a body given, a covenant sealed in blood, a death proclaimed, a Lord who is coming. Name one specific way Christ is calling you to a deeper devotion at his table, and one concrete change you will make so that the Supper becomes, week by week, a true remembering and proclaiming rather than a routine.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 20:7, the disciples gathered on the first day of the week to break bread; Matthew 26:26–29, Jesus institutes the Supper on the night he was betrayed; Hebrews 10:10–14, the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that needs no repeating; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, the cup and the bread as a sharing in the blood and body of Christ that makes us one; Luke 22:19–20, the Lord's own words, this do in remembrance of me.