

The Lord's Supper

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I've been thinking for several weeks about what we call the Communion, the Lord's Supper. I've been reading several books not of even our fellowship that challenged me on some thoughts that I will share with you. Perhaps it will challenge us to re-look at what we call The Supper and see if I can glean some new meaning from the study and have a fresher approach to what is the center of worship.

If we think about it, what we call The Lord's Supper has different names; in Acts 2, it says the apostles continued daily in the apostle's teaching, prayers and the breaking of the bread...so one of the things that we could say is the "breaking of the bread".

In I Corinthians 10, Paul calls it the Lord's Table; you come around the Lord's Table. In I Corinthians 11, he refers to it as the Lord's Supper. In I Corinthians 10, he also refers to it as a Communion; you are in communion with God and with the body.

Mark makes a statement that some of the religious groups have used a word that is foreign to our fellowship but is an excellent word. We often hear other groups talk about the Eucharist. When you hear the word Eucharist, what does that mean to you? The Eucharist means thanksgiving; that's what the word means, it is a thanksgiving.

Mark says that when Jesus took the fruit of the vine he gave thanks and we talk about giving thanks but Mark emphasizes the fact that this thing that Jesus was doing was a thanksgiving, a thanksgiving for the body, a thanksgiving for the fruit of the vine...for the blood. And so Mark uses the word thanksgiving and many people picked up that and said

we're going to call this the Eucharist because it is a time of giving thanks for the body and the blood. So when you hear that word don't let it be a hindrance but recognize that someone is looking at this and they're saying it's a time of thanksgiving which it truly is for us. We just don't use that word.

The other thing about The Supper of the Lord's Table, the Communion is that every Protestant and Catholic group all observe the communion, every single one of them. It is something that we share in common with what we call the Christian world or the Christian faith; they all observe The Supper, they all observe the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine or the wine. Everyone uses the same emblems.

We all share similar reasons for observing The Supper. Whether you're Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian – all of us share in the fact that we do it in observance, we do it in remembrance, we do it to commemorate and we do it as recognition of the communion that we have with Christ and His Church.

The difference in the groups is how often; there are some religious groups that take it every Sunday; we're not the only ones that do that. Some take it quarterly, some take it on special occasions and then there are different procedures for taking the Lord's Supper. We have a standard way of doing it and that is common to many but there are many other ways. It was a shock to Wayne's system and also to ours when they on occasion at the prison will dip the wafer into the fruit of the vine and hand it to the participant. This is quite common in the Episcopal and Catholic groups.

There are many of our own fellowship and some of other Christian fellowships that still use a one loaf and a one cup of the communion.

In the past as you look at the church from a historical standpoint and from the writings of secular men and from the scripture you find that The Supper, the Communion was the central theme for Christians to gathering together. We came together for the purpose of remembering and taking the communion and really that's what started this meeting. We came together in order to share the communion with Terry. The fact that he's a tremendous singer and we love to sing was a part of it but our purpose and our intent is that we share with Terry the communion; we allow him to have fellowship with us around the table.

The lessons that Loren and others have given in reality they are not the focal point; the focal point is The Supper itself. **One thing I wanted to ask was in many groups it's call the sacrament and I'm not exactly sure why.* Sacrament is a visual; some have said that we come to know Christ through the hearing, through the preaching of the word. It is through the sacraments—the Catholic Church has a certain number of sacraments and the Lutheran Church came to realize and teach that there are two; the Catholics have, I think, five.

The Lutheran Church has two basic sacraments, one of them is baptism and the other is the Lord's Supper. Here is another term that is a good term; we just don't use it but sacrament means it is a visual or it is an active participation with presence of Christ. So you hear the gospel with your ear but you participate in the gospel with a sacrament which is the fruit of the vine. You taste it, you eat it, you drink it; it is a participation.

In baptism you do the same thing. You hear the gospel but in baptism you actually see visually the death, the burial and the resurrection. Here again, there is nothing wrong

with the Eucharist; there is nothing wrong with the term of sacrament if we understand what it is. It's a visualization; it is an active participation of what scriptures teach.

The other aspect that I wanted to share with you and also I would like for us to look at scriptures again, go and study the gospels and also the epistle's account of The Supper. And when you read these passages of scripture as Matthew, Mark and Luke; John does not mention The Supper. Acts, the Corinthian letter and when you read them don't read them with ok, I know what they say and let me see if they agree with what I already believe but try to block out what you have been taught or what you believe and look at them afresh and see if you cannot hear something. You may not; I'm not suggesting that you will but I'm just saying try to see when you look at these scriptures if you see anything fresh in them, if you see anything new in them.

The other thing about The Supper is that it requires a personal introspective. We get this from I Corinthians 11 and also I Corinthians 10. A passage probably that has been misunderstood and I know that it has been mis-taught because I'm guilty in my younger days of saying things about this passage that I have later come to believe it does not say. I want to read you from The Message which is not a translation but it's a different way of looking at it. I Corinthians 11:

"After The Supper he did the same thing with the cup. Each time you drink the cup remember me. What you must solemnly realize is that every time you eat this bread and every time you drink this cup you re-enact in your words and actions the death of the Master. You'll be drawn back to this meal again and again until the Master returns. You must never let familiarity breed contempt. Anyone who eats the bread or

drinks the cup of the Master irreverently is like a part of the crowd that jeered and spit on him at his death. Is this the kind of remembrance you want to be a part of? Examine your motives, test your heart, come to this meal in holy awe.

Pretty strong isn't it? The RSV which is one that we are most familiar with:

...whoever therefore eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and the blood of Christ. Let a man examine himself and so eat the bread and drink of the cup. For if anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment unto himself.

Now, it's interesting that we sometimes look at this word "body" and we think of what? **The congregation as the body of Christ.* Well, Karen, I'm impressed that that's the way you look at it because in the past most of us have thought about this as you didn't discern or you were not aware of the body which was Christ. But I think you're right in that because I Corinthians 10 talks about that we have the fellowship with the body.

What he is saying here in my view is that when we come together at this table, there are two things that we should be aware of. We should be aware of that we are in the presence of Christ; we have his body and his blood – and that we are in the presence of the body of Christ which is his church.

The condemnation of the Corinthians was not that they dishonored Christ in the way that they participated in The Supper but they dishonored one another. He said you don't even wait for each other; you're not conscious of the poor among you or those that are rich. What he was saying was that you are in a way violating the Spirit of Christ in that you are not aware of the body that you are a part of...that you must realize that you are

communing and we've talked about this previously. You are communing with people that are hurting, people that are sad, people that are in sin but that we are all accepted.

It's like the Hebrew scripture that Loren read and you will find this concept over and over again when he said "visit those in prison as if you were a prisoner". You experience the suffering of people as if you were suffering and Christ here in I Corinthians 10 and 11 is saying when we gather around the table we should be sensitive that our brothers and sisters have the same problems we have; have the same fears that we have and it is a fellowship and that we are to come to the table thankful that God has allowed us, has accepted us and that we are also thankful that he's accepted H.M. and he's accepted Terry and we're to rejoice that Loren is there and that I am there and that Sarah is there. We're to be aware of the body.

Two things: the presence of the Holy One and the presence of the Redeemed One. If we can get this in our mind, I think it will make us participate in this thing in a reverent and awesome way because it's not something that we just do it is really something that we participate with Christ in.

In the future I'll explore that but I'm just telling you to go and re-look at some of these things because we're going to talk about in the future four religious views of the Lord's Supper from a sacramental view to a remembrance view and we'll approach some of those. What I'm trying to do is to get you to think; get you to explore, to search the scripture and I challenge you to do that.

Thank you!

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