

The Lord's Supper Worship

November 19, 2017

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Please hold up your Bible. We tend to take for granted what these Bibles cost. I am not talking about much you paid for them. During the 14th to 16th centuries brave men we executed for translating the Bible into the common language of their people. The Protestant Reformation of 16th to the early 17th century cost 25% of Europe's population or about 40 million people to obtain religious freedom from the Roman Catholic Church. Without the brave men who translated the Latin Vulgate into the common languages of each country and the millions who died to defend that right - you would not have this most precious of all books in your possession. But even before the Protestant Reformation the cost was great – Christians were openly persecuted by both the Romans and Jews and in the first 200 years of the church and hundreds of thousands of saints gave their lives for the truth of the Bible you hold in your hands. However, even before this the cost was beyond belief. Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of the God of everything came to the earth to teach the new covenant that would become the Bible and for his efforts to teach truth he was crucified. Praise be to the God who is the Creator of all for he raised Jesus on the 3rd day and sealed the fate of Satan and all who follow him. He also sealed the fate for all who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Now, look at the Bible you hold and remember the price it cost and praise God for his mercies and blessings.

Christ created the church and one cannot be a Christian in the fullest sense if they are not in a church community. Yes, I know the church has many problems and it is full of sinners, but through faith he gave us, and the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ has redeemed us. Jesus called the disciples and they were his team and they began the building of his church that continues until this very day. We need Christ's Church for as Paul wrote, ⁴“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in

Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:4-8) Each of us fit uniquely into the church and provide service and blessings that adds to the beauty and life of the church. Christ died for his church and for each believer and for God’s Word.

It is because of the price Christ paid that you may hold a Bible in your hands and have his gift of a regenerated soul and it is this that we are focusing on this morning.

The Essence Of Worship

It is fitting that we deal with the place and meaning of the Lord’s Supper in worship. This is true even though the eating of the Lord’s Supper is never specially called “worship” in the New Testament and the gathering of the church where the Supper is partaken of is never labeled as “worship” in the New Testament. Even so, the Lord’s Supper is to be worship.

The point of stressing this is to break us of the habit of equating worship mainly with what happens here on Sunday morning. Sunday morning is worship. We should perhaps call it “congregational worship” or “church community worship.” Because if we fall into the habit of thinking Sunday is the only time worship of the church, we will miss the new and radical point of the New Testament - namely, that worship is driven into the heart as a matter of spirit and truth, and out from the heart, worship should be a natural outflow of our hearts in **all** situations and circumstances of life, not just in Sunday worship services. Sunday is when we have the privilege of gathering together.

The essence of worship is the inner experience of treasuring the true beauty, worth and holiness of God. The outward forms of worship are the acts that show how much we treasure the beauty, worth and holiness of God. Therefore God created all of life as worship because he has told us, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31) Do everything you do in a way that expresses your treasuring of God and the salvation He has given you.

In the gathering of Christ’s church, one of the external acts of treasuring Christ is celebrating the Lord’s Supper. You can see this in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, “For, in the first place, when you come together as a church ...” (v.18) Paul spends the next few verses describing what is going on in the Corinthian church. They were not coming together to honor and worship Christ or to serve one another. Verse 20 begins “Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper...” They came to church for a number of reasons, but worshipping Christ was not the focus. Apostle Paul goes on to criticize the Corinthian church for making a mockery of the Lord’s Supper where some gorged themselves and even got drunk on their own food and drink, while others were going hungry at the church gatherings. So Paul tells them in verse 22 to eat and drink for physical nourishment at home.

When we “come together as a church” the spirit and demeanor of the gathering should be one of focus on the Lord and sensitivity to the needs of others, not careless eating and drinking. This is one of the reasons that the way we do the Lord’s Supper is so important. Paul really did distinguish it from the eating and drinking we do for our physical and social needs. Verse 22 says, “What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink?” Church is for our spiritual nourishment.

So, we learn that the “Lord's Supper” as Paul calls this ordinance in verse 20, is

something that is to happen in Christ's gathered church and within the congregational life of the church. It is something different from other meals that we eat at home to meet our physical needs. The Lord's Supper is spiritual food.

So, the question for us is – “If the Lord's Supper is worship, how does it express our inner treasuring of Christ's beauty, worth and His holiness?” Let me mention four things from this text in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. We express the value of Christ as our Lord and Savior by - remembering, proclaiming, nourishing and understanding.

Remembering

First, the Lord's Supper expresses the value of Christ by reminding us of Him. Notice the word “remembrance” twice; once in relation to the bread in verse 24 and once in relation to the cup in verse 25. Begin reading in verse 23 where Paul gives the words of the Lord on the institution of the Supper to his disciples, ²³ “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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 He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ ”

In other words, Christ gave his disciples and he gives us this simple “Supper” to help us keep Him in our memory, especially the memory of sacrificing His blood and body given up in death for believers. Originally in the early church the Lord's Supper was known as the Eucharist the word taken both from the Latin (*eucharistia*) meaning thanksgiving and the Greek (*eukharistia*) meaning grateful.

The Lord's Supper is worship if in the observance and partaking there is heartfelt recognition of the gift of redemption through Christ and deep affection for the life

He has breathed into us. We must remember His death because it is the most important death and the most important event in history.” Setting out this tangible reminder of Christ, time after time, in the life of the church will be worship if our hearts feel the preciousness of remembering Christ and tremble at the prospect of forgetting him. Do we not forget Christ if we do not live Christ in faith?

As James wrote,¹⁸ “But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’—and he was called a friend of God.²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” (James 4:18-24) James inspired by God the Holy Spirit is saying, remember Christ and then live out your faith. How you live and your works are evidence of what is in your heart. Does our heart treasure Christ, if so, we will love God with all our being, serve others as he did and proclaim his gospel to the world. This is why Christ commanded, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31)

Proclaiming

Second, the Lord’s Supper expresses the value of Christ by proclaiming his death and resurrection. Verse 26 reads, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you **proclaim** the Lord’s death until He comes.” If “remembering” means

calling to mind what Christ did by His death and resurrection, then “proclaiming” means recalling to each other what Christ did by His death and resurrection. This is the normal movement of worship; the valuableness of Christ presses itself on our memory and then that inner remembering breaks out in proclaiming the worth of what we remember. If you really value something that is relevant for others as well as yourself - if it moves you and delights you - you will speak of it. You will declare it! So the Lord’s Supper is worship – if, if in so doing there is an authentic heart experience which says, “This death and resurrection of Jesus, and all it achieved is so valuable that it must not only be remembered but it must be proclaimed.” My beloved we were spiritually dead and Christ gave us eternal life. Just as he commanded the possessed man, who he had cast out Legends from, Christ says to us also, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” (Mark 5:19) How are you proclaiming Christ in your life as a witness to others?

These two meanings of the Lord’s Supper support each other. Remembering enables us to proclaim, since you can’t proclaim what you don’t remember and proclaiming helps us remember, because not everyone remembers in depth and with the same intensity, and we need His death and resurrection to be proclaimed with word and bread and cup lest we forget the preciousness of His death. My beloved, we are to remember and proclaim!

Nourishing

Third, the Lord’s Supper expresses the value of Christ by spiritually nourishing our life in Christ. If we come to Christ over and over and say, “By this, O my Lord Christ, I feed on You. By this, O Jesus Christ, I nourish my life in You. By this I share in all the grace You bought for me with Your own blood and body” (*see 1 Corinthians 10:16*) If we come to Christ over and over with this longing and this

conviction in our heart - then Christ spiritually nourishes us by faith, then the Lord's Supper will be a deep and wonderful act of worship. It shows the worth and preciousness of Christ so much as when we come to Him to feed our hungry souls and are filled to overflowing.

Where do we see this nourishing in the text? We see it in the fact that the Lord's Supper is a supper. We are eating and drinking. Why are we eating and drinking? Eating and drinking is for nourishing and sustaining life. Here Jesus tells us that the bread we are eating symbolizes His body, and the cup we are drinking is the new covenant in His blood. So the eating and drinking is no ordinary eating and drinking. The spiritual nourishment that is in the Lord's Supper comes not from bread and wine or juice. Paul already said in verse 22 that we should take care of our bodily needs by eating and drinking at home before we come to church. This supper is not about physical nourishment. It is about spiritual nourishment.

Understanding

Our understanding of the Lord's Supper is that the bread and wine are emblems or symbols of the real, literal body of Christ that was crucified in history and today he is in heaven at the Father's right hand. But we believe that there is a real feeding on Christ spiritually by faith - not on His physical body, but on His real spiritual presence. Even though a believer can nourish himself any time and anywhere on the presence of Christ in His Word, there is a special spiritual nourishing offered in eating the Lord's Supper and hearing the preaching of God's word. As Paul wrote, "So faith *comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*" (Romans 10:17) It is a special privilege to gather with other believers to hear God's Word, pray and celebrate the Lord's Supper. This morning we experience all of these. Luke of this experience, ⁴² "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every

soul...” (Acts 2:42-43) Also this morning as Paul instructed, ¹⁶“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16) This is what our coming together is about and this is why we celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

I want to share one last way of seeing the Lord’s Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:25 Paul wrote, “In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.’” I am not aware of anyone in the Protestant tradition who says that the cup is literally the covenant. Nor is the wine or juice in the cup the covenant. The new covenant is God’s commitment to save to the uttermost those who trust in and believe in Jesus. The cup of wine or juice represents this covenant because the blood of Christ bought the covenant for us. However, the bread and wine does not become this covenant.

So, I conclude that, in a few minutes, when we eat the bread and drink the cup, we may nourish our souls by faith on the spiritual presence of Christ. When we remember and proclaim His death, Christ manifests Himself to us as infinitely precious. He shows us all that God promises to be for us in Himself, the Savior. This is the food of our souls. With this we are nourished and find strength to live as Christians in a broken world.

The Lord’s Supper is worship because it expresses the infinite worth of Christ. No One is more worthy to be remembered. No One is more worthy to be proclaimed. No One can nourish our souls with eternal life but Christ. So let us come and remember and proclaim and eat and celebrate.

My beloved, prepare your heart and mind for the Lord’s Supper. Paul warned, ²⁷“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. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29) Let us now take time in prayer to examine ourselves, and to come before our Holy God, thanking him for our salvation and repent our sins.

Pray

Bring people to the Lord's Supper with opening prayer.

Pass out the elements

We now remember, so we may proclaim Christ to the fallen world. ²³ “...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.’ **My brothers and sisters in Christ eat and remember.** 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.’” **Let us drink and remember.** We celebrate this Lord's Supper ²⁶ “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) My beloved may we live out our faith until our King returns.

Amen!

Let us now get into small groups and pray for each other. Let us remember our blessings in prayer this thanksgiving season.