

“Why We Celebrate Communion”

1 Corinthians 11:22 - 33

Big Idea – We celebrate communion to remember the Lord’s death until His return.

Why is communion important? What does the Greek word for communion - “koinonia” mean?

It means fellowship. Now notice what God says in chap. 10:

16 When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ? And when we break the loaf of bread, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the body of Christ?

20c...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

“Jesus said, No one can serve two masters...” Matthew 6:

1. Problems in the Corinthian church

Divisions

1 Cor. 11:18 First of all, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church,

Personalities were what they were divided over. Notice:

1 Cor. 3:3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

What divides people today? Personalities...buildings...service times...music...seats/chairs...building programs...clothing...

What does God say to us?

Eph. 4: 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Psa. 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Selfishness

11: 20 It's not the Lord's Supper you are concerned about when you come together.

21 For I am told that some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk.

22 What? Is this really true? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace the church of God and shame the poor?

2. Purposes of the communion/Lord's table

To picture the Lord Jesus – vs. 24,25

The bread and juice reminded them of the Lord Jesus whom they were not going to see for many years. Like a photograph – you only need a photo when you don't really have the person there.

To proclaim the Lord's death until He comes

The bread symbolized Christ's body on the cross, and the wine symbolized the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed on the cross for our sins. Jesus was God's Passover Lamb; that is why the Lord took the Passover Meal, and turned it into the Lord's Table.

He wants us to tell others that He died for them too.

3. Preparations for participation in the Lord's table

Careful consideration – don't be careless; "unworthily" means in a flippant or careless attitude.

Self – examination –

2 Cor. 13: 5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified.

Psalm 139:23, 24 Search me o God and know my heart...

Confession and repentance of sin. One of the major sins

In the church today is pride and unforgiveness.

Mark 11: 25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

26 "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

"Those who are unrepentant should flee the table rather than trivialize the sacred, for God does not view this sacred act lightly. "

Pat Novak, was a pastor and hospital chaplain just outside of Boston several years ago. While Pat was making his rounds one summer morning he was called to visit a patient admitted with an undiagnosed ailment. John, a man in his sixties, had not responded to any treatment; medical tests showed nothing; psychological tests were inconclusive. Yet he was wasting away; he had not even been able to swallow for two weeks. The nurses tried everything. Finally they called the chaplain's office.

When Pat walked into the room, John was sitting limply in his bed, strung with IV tubes, staring listlessly at the wall. He was a tall, grandfatherly man, balding a little, but his sallow skin hung loosely on his face, neck, and arms where the weight had dropped from his frame. His eyes were hollow.

Pat was terrified; he had no idea what to do. But John seemed to brighten a bit as soon as he saw Pat's chaplain badge and invited him to sit down.

As they talked, Pat sensed that God was urging him to do something specific: He knew he was to ask John if he wanted to take Communion. Chaplains were not encouraged to ask this type of thing in this public hospital, but Pat did. At that John broke down. "I can't!" he cried. "I've sinned and can't be forgiven."

Pat paused a moment, knowing he was about to break policy again. Then he told John about 1 Corinthians 11 and Paul's admonition that whoever takes Communion in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself. And he asked John if he wanted to confess his sin. John nodded gratefully.

To this day Pat can't remember the particular sin John confessed, but he recalls that it did not strike him as particularly awful. Yet it had been draining the life from this man. John wept as he confessed, and Pat laid hands on him, hugged him, and told John his sins were forgiven.

Then Pat got the second urging from the Holy Spirit: Ask him if he wants to take Communion. He did. Pat gave John a Bible and told him he would be back later. Already John was sitting up straighter, with a flicker of light in his eyes. Pat visited a few more patients and then ate some lunch in the hospital cafeteria. When he left he wrapped an extra piece of bread in a napkin and borrowed a coffee cup from the cafeteria. He ran out to a shop a few blocks away and bought a container of grape juice.

Then he returned to John's room with the elements and celebrated Communion with him, again reciting 1 Corinthians 11. John took the bread and chewed it slowly. It was the first time in weeks he had been able to take solid food in his mouth. He took the cup and swallowed. He had been set free.

Within three days John walked out of that hospital. The nurses were so amazed they called the newspaper, which later featured the story of John and Pat, appropriately, in its "LIFE" section.