

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED:

I Corinthians 11:23-29**EXAMINE YOUR HEARTS - SHARE HIS MEAL**

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body

What is one of the joys of attending a reception or an open house? It's spending time with people you know—whether you're visiting while standing or sitting. On the other hand how much fun is it to be in a group or seated at a table with people that you particularly don't appreciate or care about? It's much more fun to be with friends or to get to know someone new and find out you have much in common. It's crucial that your heart be in it.

The same is true at The Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion. It's a special "communion" special coming together, a little "community," shall we say of the sinner and the Savior. It's also the a special coming together of sinner with sinner. It's important, as our text says, that your heart be in tune with what this special meal, this sacrament, this sharing of bread and wine, is all about.

The roots go back to the Jewish Passover Festival, as you heard in the Old Testament reading tonight. The people of Israel were bonded to the Lord who was about to rescue them from Egyptian slaver, and they were bonded in their closeness with one another. That night, they ate of the very lamb whose blood was the mark on their doorframes of their trust in God's promise of rescue and freedom for them. They trusted that the blood of the lamb would spare them from the wrath about to be dispensed upon the stubborn Egyptians. They trusted that God would "break" Pharaoh so that they could go free. They trusted that the very flesh of that same lamb, roasted over fire, would nourish them for the journey out—the Exodus. They trusted that the unleavened bread they ate by the Lord's command would sustain them as they set out to the land of Promise. Every year they were to celebrate Passover.

Jesus Himself, true God and true man, was celebrating Passover with His disciples, the very night before His betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, death and burial. Jesus knew what was about to happen. He was not tricking or talking in mysterious riddles with His disciples. Just as they had shared in the roast lamb-meat and the unleavened bread of the meal, with that fresh in their minds, Jesus gave them another most blessed meal, the Passover fulfillment! He took unleavened bread and clearly said to them "This is My body broken for you." Having the thought of Passover in mind, how their fathers ate of the lamb that gave them their freedom in Egypt, how could they not think in parallel fashion, that Jesus meant exactly what He said. This bread that He gave them was also, in a supernatural manner--His body for them. As John the Baptist had identified, He was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Then the cup of wine, the "new covenant" in His blood. Throughout the Old Testament, the atonement—the making up for—the payment—for sin was pictured by the shedding of blood. Jesus says this is the new covenant, the new agreement, the new "will-and-testament" of God, sins atoned for through His holy precious blood. This was NOT just a parable or figure of speech. He did not say, as He did in His parables. "The Kingdom of God is like . . .". He did not say, "This bread and this cup are like, are symbols of, "represent," My body and blood. He said, "This is My body and blood for you."—broken-down in death for you. Take it into yourselves, a personal nourishing and assurance that you are set free from slavery to sin, death, the devil, and hell--through Me. The same with the wine--by His power the blood excruciatingly shed on the cross, yet shed in love, for your freedom. Like Israel in Egypt, in the Lamb you are spared and are free.

There are many who do not trust that in Holy Communion four elements are received—bread, wine, body, blood. It can only be two, they say; for it looks and tastes like unleavened, unsalted bread wafers, and fermented juice of grapes, that is grape wine. They say it can be no more. It's just symbolical by which we show

alignment with God, they say. They also offer, didn't Jesus Himself call it a "remembrance," Do this in remembrance of Me. Isn't it just a sign, a symbol? Dear friends, Jesus did not say this bread and this wine or "cup" symbolize His body and blood, or are a picture of His body and blood, He said IS. He used the word "remembrance" to tell the disciple to DO THIS in remembrance of Him. The doing of it, the celebration of Holy Communion is the remembrance. *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.* The celebration is a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for us. The bread and the wine themselves are much more than a remembrance or symbol or representation of His body and blood. These words come from the mouth of the Son of God Himself, our dearest Friend, as He was preparing to face the judgment of death for us.

This Communion meal, which we continue to celebrate until He comes, is a most special meal and sharing with the Savior. It is not child's play. It is not merely an act, or a habit, or deed of merit and accomplishment. It is Jesus coming to you and doing something for you, telling your sin-burdened heart and your guilty conscience, that in His death for you, you are spared and are free! Do not make a mockery of it, or participate in it with an unworthy heart. *Whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself.*

But how will you make yourself worthy?! What do you have to do?! Is it the finest clothes to wear that will make you worthy? Is it the fact that you just showered before you came? Is it a matter of what you ate or did not eat prior to this meal with Jesus? Is it that you didn't sin? If you didn't sin, you don't need a Savior! Do these things make you worthy? Martin Luther in his catechism wrote, "Fasting and bodily preparation are indeed a fine outward custom, but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words—Given and shed for you for the remission of sins."

In other words, "Let a man examine himself," lest he be like the one at a social meal for a couple that he doesn't really like. He's there as an outward nicety, basically there as a pretender, a hypocrite. Let a man examine himself, lest he's sitting at a meal with the Savior whom He doesn't care for, but just going through the motions. Examine yourself, before coming to the Supper of the Lord. Is your heart in tune with Him and His sacrifice?

But how do you examine yourself?

#1 Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner? That you have offended God and rightly deserve His wrath? If you do not acknowledge that you are a sinner, then you are making a joke of this blessed meal—Jesus giving you His very body and blood with the bread and the wine, by which He spared you and set you free. Indeed you are not worthy under such a charade. Realize you have a big problem—sin.

#2 Do you trust that Jesus is your Savior from sin and its punishment? Do you trust in Him, like you trust the man who stops at the side of the road after you've driven into the ditch and says, I'll hook on and pull you out. Or do you believe that you are your own Savior, or do you have faith that someone or something other than Jesus can make you right with God? If that is the case then do not add one sin upon another by recklessly coming to His table pretending that you need Him. Trust Him. He is your Savior sent from the Father, crucified and risen for you.

#3 Do you believe that the body and blood of Christ are given to you and given for you in this special meal? Do you realize that if you are *not discerning the Lord's body*, it is an issue with the Lord? Do you discern the Lord's body? If you consider the sacrament just a cracker and a glass of juice, you are mistaken and ridicule the special food for the soul and the special sacrifice of Himself that Christ has given for you. Receive with joy His personal pledge of forgiveness and love for you. There are four elements present.

For someone to think as the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Assemblies of God, etc. churches do, that it's only bread and wine, is not Biblical and is not correct. And to think as the Roman Catholic church does, that the bread and wine become only the body and blood, and then these are re-offered by the priest as another payment for sins is not Biblical and is not correct. Christ paid for sins "once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 10:27) --- "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16). All four are present.

#4 Do you intend with the help of God to amend, to change, your sinful life? Do you come to communion saying thanks for the forgiveness, but I intend to turn right around and do the same things again? Such a heart is just "using" Jesus for its own devilish intents. Such a heart is unworthy and unprepared. But can you ever stop repeating your sins? No, no matter how hard you want to and how hard you try, you won't. You need forgiveness and a Savior every day. But do not come to the Lord's Table seeking forgiveness with the deliberate intent to sin again. Then you are unworthy.

Trust in Christ, in Him is forgiveness every day. Receive His special supper in peace for strengthening and assurance. Dine with Him from the heart!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach----