

## **Why Communion Matters**

**4/30/2017**

**Acts 2:42**

**And they devoted themselves to Apostles' teaching,  
to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread,  
and to the prayers.  
...to the breaking of bread.**

**There were two physical things  
that Jesus commanded his followers to do,  
that we find repeated over and over in the book of Acts,  
and that we find mentioned in the letters.**

**He commanded his disciples to baptize  
those who would choose to become disciples,  
and we find that pattern being repeated every time**

- someone converts to Christianity,
- becomes a believer,
- is identified afterward

**as a disciple.**

**He commands his disciples  
to wash one another's feet in John 13,  
but we never see them repeat that particular activity,  
or teach others to repeat it.**

**The lesson seems to be in the sacrificial loving and serving,  
rather than in the particular activity of foot washing.**

**But the other physical activity,  
rich with meaning and history,**

that he commanded his disciples to practice  
was to remember the breaking of the bread  
and the drinking of the cup,  
that represented his broken body and shed blood  
on the cross.

That is what we are going to seek to understand  
in a deeper way this morning.

What did Jesus mean  
when he instituted this activity for his followers?

1. Early Christians were accused by their culture  
of cannibalism because of his words.
2. Wars have been fought over how to interpret his words,  
and we are not going to unravel all of that this morning.

What we CAN do is listen to Jesus,  
and do what he asks us to do,  
in loving appreciation for what he did for us.

**Matt. 26:17-29**

<sup>17</sup> Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?” <sup>18</sup> He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’ ” <sup>19</sup> And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

<sup>20</sup> When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said,  
“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

<sup>22</sup> And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?"

<sup>23</sup> He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."

<sup>24</sup> The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." <sup>25</sup> Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

<sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

#### Luke 22:14-20

<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

What has Jesus asked us to do?

1. Take, eat, this is my body.

Now I may not exactly understand that, but can I do it?

a. Take bread.

b. Eat bread.

c. Remember Jesus, Giving his body,  
while you are eating the bread.

2. (From the cup), Drink of it, all of you. (Why?)

For this is my blood of the covenant,  
which is poured out for many  
for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke says, "The new covenant in my blood."

Do I have to understand it all  
to follow through with Jesus' instructions  
to drink from the cup and remember his sacrifice for me,  
shedding his blood on the cross?

Sometimes we make things way too complicated,  
and make having perfect understanding-  
-which means you agree with my theological point of view-  
a litmus test for being pleasing to God.

But perfect understanding is something we will never have,  
and complete agreement  
on everything the Bible teaches  
is something we will never have.

So when it comes to Communion,  
why are we doing ANY of it?  
"Do this in remembrance of me."

1. Don't forget what is about to happen.
2. Do something physical, tangible,  
to help you remember.

Jesus says, "As often as you do it," do what?

1. Eat a meal together?
2. Celebrate the Passover?
3. How did the early church understand Jesus' words,  
there in the Upper Room, on the night he was betrayed?

In Acts 20, we learn that Paul  
and some of his traveling companions arrived at Troas,

V. 6 says they stayed there for 7 days.

(V. 7)

On the first day of the week,  
when we were gathered together to break bread,  
Paul talked with them,  
intending to depart on the next day,  
and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

It implies that the purpose of their gathering  
was to break bread,  
and that preaching was going to occur  
as part of that gathering.

Was it daily, weekly, monthly?

It doesn't clearly say,  
but it implies that they WERE gathering on that day  
for that purpose,  
out of the 7 day visit that Paul was having with them.

**Gathering to break bread.**

**Gathering to eat bread, and drink from the cup,  
in remembrance of what Jesus did for them on the cross.**

**In I Cor. 11:17, there were problems with how  
the church there in Corinth was partaking of Communion.  
We don't want to imitate their mistakes,  
but we CAN learn just from Paul's description  
of what was happening-**

**<sup>20</sup> When you come together (as a church, v. 19),  
it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.**

**(It seems like they did this  
when they were all together as a group.  
It was not a private, personal event.)**

**<sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal.  
One goes hungry, another gets drunk.**

**(It seems like the Lord's Supper DID occur  
as part of a community meal together.)**

**<sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?  
Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate  
those who have nothing?**

**What shall I say to you?  
Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.**

**(It may have been a meal,  
but they had reduced it to just a meal,  
and a selfish, self-serving meal at that.)**

**Paul says, let's back this up  
and remember how this was SUPPOSED to go.**

**<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you,  
that the Lord Jesus**

**on the night when he was betrayed took bread,  
<sup>24</sup> 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."**

**<sup>25</sup> 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."**

**<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,  
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

### **Communion matters.**

**Those early Christians who devoted themselves  
to the breaking of bread  
were regularly doing something to help them remember  
what Jesus had done for them, just as he told them to.**

**And Paul reminds the Corinthians,  
it's not just THAT you do it, but how and why you do it.**

**<sup>27</sup> 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.**

**<sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then,  
and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**

**<sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks  
without discerning the body  
eats and drinks judgment on himself.**

- <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill,  
and some have died.
- <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly,  
we would not be judged.
- <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord,  
we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned  
along with the world.

So what does it mean to “discern the body?”  
To NOT discern the body  
is to eat and drink judgment on ourselves.

(Some are sick, and some have died... this is serious stuff.)

- <sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat,  
wait for one another—
- <sup>34</sup> if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—  
so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.

Make sure that as you partake  
of the body and blood of Christ,  
that you do it with the sacrificial, thoughtful spirit of Christ,  
being attentive to the needs of those around you,  
just as Jesus watched out for YOUR needs,  
and gave himself completely for you.

What makes Communion memorable?

What were those times in your past  
that were particularly meaningful and special to you?

What if we could interview Jesus?

How would HE answer that same question?  
I think the times when his followers  
were thoughtful of each other,

**sacrificing for and attentive to each other's needs,  
would be the times that were memorable to Him,  
if Scripture is any kind of indicator.**

**Communion matters.**

**It is about remembering Jesus,  
but also remembering those  
for whom Christ suffered and died,  
which is why it is to be a "together time" of remembrance.**

**So eat, and drink, and remember,  
and discern the body of Christ all around you.**