

1 Corinthians 11:23-29
Maundy Thursday
Sermon Series: Ironies of the Passion
Do This In Remembrance of Me

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Winchester, VA
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²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

What do you normally do before you sit down to enjoy a meal? Do you have any customs in your family, or any things you personally like to do before you sit down to eat? One of the first things on Mom’s list growing up was that everyone should wash their hands. We also had clear, wipe, and set the table. And finally, we said a prayer of thanks to God before we ate.

Tonight we have a meal before us. A very special meal. We don’t need to clear and set the table, that’s already been done. I’m not going to stand here with my arms crossed until you all go wash your hands. But what do we want to do before we eat this sacred meal? According to those verses we just read, there are two things we want to make sure we do when we come to the Lord’s Supper. We want to remember Jesus and we want to examine ourselves.

When Jesus instituted this Supper that night before He died, He took the bread, thanked God for it, and then He said, “This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.” And then He took the cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood do this whenever you drink in it in remembrance of me.” So when we come to receive this sacrament we want to remember Jesus because that is what He has asked us to do.

But what does He want us to remember? The Lord’s Supper isn’t like a senior picture that you’d give to your high school friends to remember you by. Jesus didn’t want us to remember the color of His hair, the twinkle in His eyes, or the sound of His laughter. Jesus wants us to remember His death. And not so much the awful details of *how* He died, what He really wants us to remember is *why* He died. He died because we are sinful. He gave His body and blood—gave His life—for us so that we could have forgiveness from our sins.

He wants us to remember the truths of those passages that fill the pages of Scripture. He died because God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Co 5:21). He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with Him (1 Th 5:10). He died because the LORD had laid on Him the iniquity of us all and so that by His wounds, we would be healed (Is 53:5-6). He died to be the wages for our sin and to give us the gift of eternal life (Ro 6:23). He died so we might live no longer for

ourselves, but for Him who lived and died for us (2 Co 5:15). He died to show us how God so loved the world so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). He died to make a new covenant. **This cup is the new covenant in my blood**, Jesus proclaimed. So before we eat and drink the Lord's Supper, let us remember the covenant our God has made with us in which He promises that because Jesus died, He will remember our sins no more (He 8:12).

As we've gone through this series of sermons on the Ironies of the Passion, we've looked at people like High Priest Caiaphas, King Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders, and the mob at Jesus' trial, and even Jesus own disciples and the theme each time was, "Boy, isn't what they said or what they did ironic, considering what God was about to do." Tonight though, the real irony to be found isn't with any of the characters from the passion history, it's with us. Boy, isn't it ironic what we say and do, considering what God has done for us? Isn't it ironic that we would need a reminder at all of such an amazing act of love? But Jesus knew we would. He knew that again and again we would forget Him and His love for us, and that over and over we would need to be reminded of that love, and assured of that forgiveness.

We have to remember what Jesus has done for us and why, because as we participate in this sacrament, that's what we are proclaiming. When you eat this bread and drink this wine, you are by your very participation proclaiming to everyone else that is here Jesus' death and the forgiveness He won for you. When you come forward for Holy Communion you are stepping up to take your stand and testify before God and all of these witnesses: I remember Jesus' death. I believe that His body and blood which He gives me in this sacrament have won for me forgiveness and salvation. I believe that I need that salvation because I am sinful. I am sorry for my sins and I believe that Jesus' death is my only hope for salvation. When you eat and drink this meal, you are proclaiming why Jesus died.

So then, Paul tells us, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. In other words, if you join in this Holy Communion and you don't believe those things, you've lied, you've perjured yourself, and you've sinned against the body and blood of Jesus. Jesus is present here whether you believe it or not. His forgiveness is offered to you whether you believe you need it that day or not. But if you don't believe it God says that instead of forgiveness you will receive His judgment. That's a pretty serious charge, isn't it? And so we don't want to take this lightly. Before we approach the Lord's Table to receive His Supper, we want to examine ourselves to see that we do believe all that we're saying by coming to this sacrament.

If you take out your hymnals and to turn page 156 you'll find a section called *Personal Preparation for Holy Communion* those questions can help to guide you through that examination process. Or on page 320 of our catechism textbook, you'll find an even more in depth series of questions to help you prepare for the Lord's Supper. What those questions boil down to is this: Do you believe that you are a sinner? Are you repentant of your sins? Do you believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins? Finally, do you believe that His body and blood are present in this bread and wine to give that forgiveness of sins to you personally?

Whether you use those questions from the hymnal or the catechism or something of your own, God wants us to make an honest assessment of ourselves. Now we're a little biased usually when it comes to assessing ourselves. It's usually better to ask someone we know will tell us the

truth. In this case, we want to examine ourselves in light of the one who only speaks the truth. God alone is truthful with us at all times. And He tells us in His Word that we are sinful from birth and that even the very best we have to offer falls short of His perfect expectations.

As we look at these words from 1 Corinthians tonight, you might wonder if you've even been guilty at times of sinning against the body and blood of Jesus. Have you always examined yourself in light of the truth of God's Word? Have you always remembered Jesus' death when eating and drinking His body and blood and never carelessly or flippantly approached this table? It's possible you haven't and if that's the case, then Jesus gives you forgiveness here for that sin as well.

Yes, this Supper offers and gives to us forgiveness and peace through Jesus' body and blood. And so we walk away rejoicing, unburdened by guilt or fear of punishment, proclaiming as children of God that Jesus' body and blood free us from death and give us life. As you leave the Lord's altar after communing with Him, examine yourself. Look closely. Do you know what will you find? Nothing! Not one single sin to condemn you.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. Amen.