

Title: The Lord's Supper

Text: I Cor 11:17-34

In early church history we have proof that Christians meet not just for the bread and the cup. But, they had a meal together. They tried to re-create the night our Lord meat with his disciples. It was even called the christian Pass-over. They had the meal. They had the bread and the cup. And they even washed one anothers feet. They tried to do just what Jesus Christ did. It was a very precious time. Early church history records that the favority name used was AGAPA...Literally, THE LOVE FEAST.

That title is used in the Bible in 2 Peter chapter 2 as well as the book of Juda. And appearantly the early christians loved that title. They loved to call their service "THE LOVE FEAST." Because it represented the fellowship and unity and love which they enjoyed.

Well, things were not always rosy and great in the early church. As a matter of fact in 1 Corinthians 11, we have a very serious matter. For christians began to have divisions and strife in their midst. And they were not fellowshiping together. And as a result they did not see the reason, ^{WHY} they came together. There was much disharmony and hurts resulted.

I Corinthians 11 beginning with verse 17....(READ Vs 17-34)

PRAYER

The problems among believers affect their understanding of why the church comes together. That is true, folks, no matter what problems you are talking about. When we are not getting along with each other, it affects our understanding of why we even meet together as a church.

Let me remaind you that a church is an assemble of people who have been called out of the world to a new relationship with Jesus Christ.

An assemble can mean a lot of things. Forexample, in the O.T. when Israel was in the wildersness, and the trumpets were blown to gather all the people together, it was called an assmble. Literally..a church.

We have, also, in the N.T. a "mob" in the great arean in the city of Epheses. Ten thousand strong shouting out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Trying to drownd our the Apostle Paul and all his co-workers.

That mob is called "an assemble." And it is the same word "church."

Another example. The Greek city-states. They would gather the people together what what we would call "a town meeting". It was called a "church." An assemble. The people in their homes were not a part of the assemble. Have you ever heard the remark: "Well, I am in the true church. I don't have to meet in a formal way on Sunday morning." Or, "I am going to fellowship with God under a tree." Or, there are two or three of us who have gathered in His name. We don't need to gather with the rest of the christians."

You are mistaken. You are pulling things out of context. Only that which is assembled is God's concept of the "church." And that is why He says, in Hebrews 10:25...."Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the habit of some, and all the more as we see the day drawing near."

The point is: We need each other, dear friends, we really do. We cannot live in isolation from one another. We need each other. And a lot of us don't see that. And worse. A lot of us have problems. A lot of problems among us which affect our understanding. You see, these problems are caused, according to the Bible, by divisions and factions. Vs 17 and 19 shows us that. The problems that we have which affect our understanding as to why we come together and why we need one another. AND I ASK YOU: what are divisions and factions?

The word "divisions" is used in Vs 18. If you have footnotes in your Bible, in the margin you find the word "schisms." And the word means "to tear or rip." It means that there is some tear, some rip between you and someone else.

Now, this can happen over any matter. I dare say that some husbands and wives on their way to church had a little rip. And it is possible to have a little tear in the relationship. And the Bible says that you had better be careful about that because that will effect your understanding as to why the christians have gathered together, It will hurt. It will keep you from really enjoying that relationship. And from ministering to other people. A little rip between parents and child.....a little tear between brother and sister... It can happen so easily.

But, in Vs 19 He seems to indicate that if you don't deal with it something else will happen. He says, "for there must also be factions among you."

You know, when ever you have divisions that you let go on, eventually you will have a faction? WHAT IS A FACTION? A faction is a desire to seek to win followers to your view. To divide people one from another. To make claims that your view is right and any other persons view is wrong. So, you develop clecks and groups in which other believers can not come or be a part. BEcause it is your little group. And you have a tendency to divide people because there was a rife between you.

This is also used of heresy and doctrine. The point is that if there is a rife between you an another believer, you sometimes cling to a minor ppoint of doctrine, emphasing it, hoping to get other people to see the point of it and develop some sort of super saint. And thus this minor points separates you from other christians.

If it is not docrtrinal, it is just practical. And that is we usually like to join and fellowship with those who like to join and fellowship with us. Do you know what I mean? We like those who like us. And we like those who agreee with us.

So, let' suppose that you have two christians who on opposite side of the coin. And the one is talking to a certain groujp of friends. And the other one is talking to another group of friends. It is vaery hard not to have factions as a result of that. Clecks and groups develop. And people sick together and don't talk to others because of some little rified. Some little problem.

Yes, it is caused by divisions and factions. But, frankly it doesn't end there. Because it always leads to selfishness. Always. When ever you have that little ^{rified}~~rified~~ and you don't deal with it, it always leads to a self centered approach. Selfishness in all areas of your life. Rather than loving and building up, we tear down. Because we are looking at it from the view point of self. It is what we see. And we are not interested in what the other person sees. And we really don't care. Sometimes we just want to get a monkey off our backs And there is really no christian compassion or christian love involved.

Division...rifes...They are terrible. And I believe that will effect several areas. For example, in this church it effected their attitude towards the Lord's Supper in particular. Vs 20 says, "Therefor when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's supper.

I don't know how you came to church today. But just let me give you a few thoughts. You were on your way to church today and you thought: "I sure hope that Harrison is good today, I am tired." Or, here is another one. "I am not goint to set in that section if I have to set my so and so." "Do you think so and so is going to be there today." Some people look at the church as a glorified Elks or Rotary club. It has a little spiritual name on it. But, that is the way you are looking at it. It is a social occastion. Meet some folks and so forth.

Listen, social compatability is not the church of Jesus Christ. Not at all. Even though, naturally, our relationship to Christ produces some wonderful social occassions. That is not the point.

You see, selfishness can get into our hearts and we see things only from our viewpoint. You didn't come to minister. Was it in your mind when you came into church? Boy, I can hardly wiat to bring comfort and encouragement to some believer here today. Or, did you come in as many folks do saying: "If no one talks to me today, I will never go back to that church again."

Listen, the desire to minister is fundamental as to why we are meeting together. It is very, very important.

() It can also effect your attitude towards other believers. Look at Vs 22 again. He not only said "do you despise the church of God". But he also said, "and shame those who have nothing?"

Let me tell you how this happened. The wealthy christians had food. That brought food to the meeting. They ate. And boy did they eat. They gorged themselves. And many got drunk. And the poor christians didn't have any food at all. And those who had food didn't care.

Now, how many of you know what a "Pot-luck" is? O.K. Now, I know this sounds wried. But, I believe a christian pot-luck is Biblical.

You say, "Well, I knew it would happen. The Pastor has fliped on this one. He is suggesting 'church suppers.'" Well, of course. The Bible says that they came together for the Lord's Supper.

But, let me show you why I believe church pot-lucks are Biblical. In the pot-luck, the way I see it, there is one of two kinds of people that brings this dish that several people are going to eat out off. If it is really your best dish, I mean it is super, what usually happens is that it is gone before you can get into line to get any yourself..Right? But, you are happy. You are excited.

Then, there is the other kind. It is something that you threw together. And you are hoping that it is gone because you don't want to take any of it home....Well, let's hope that it is the first. ..Right? You came and you brought this glorious dish. And everybody participates and shares from you dish. That is Biblical ..WHY? .. Because you are sharing with other members of the body of Christ. Do you understand what they were doing? They were just coming with their little lunch and keeping it for themselves. They didn't want to share with others.

And some folks who were poor. They had nothing. And others who had would not share. There was no Christian love. Dear friends, I don't care if it is a meal, or whatever it is. So, many of us lack love and compassion and understanding as to why we come together as a church. It is not simply to be ministered unto. But, to minister. As our Lord did. He was always serving, always ministering, always helping, always loving. Doing what he could to meet the needs of others.

Well, there are problems, dear friends, And they will divide us. And that is why Paul said, "You are not coming together for the better. We are not getting build up and encouraged. It is just the opposite. We are going away with hurts. Because there are clicks and divisions and a lack of love. There are factions and splits and divisions and resentments and bitterness. () And this brings us to the next paragraph. He lays out the principles behind the Lord's Supper. And there is a very important reason. Not just to teach you about the bread and the cup. But to emphasis what makes us one. And why we should come together with the right spirit. Namely, the center point of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the heart of it. He is first, second, last.

He is the whole ball game. Jesus is why we come together. And I want to show you three basic principles, here, that I believe are very important as we come together to minister and help one another.

(1) One, is the principle of Christ's authority. In Vs 23 Paul wants you to know that this isn't just his private opinion. He says, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you."

Jesus said this. This is His will. He told us why we should come together as a church. He told us what ministry was all about. He is the one who gave us instruction. Our meeting together is centered around Him.

(2) And this leads us to the principle of remembrance. In Vs 24 and 25 the Bible says that when Jesus broke that bread and gave it to them to eat, he said "this is body." This due in remembrance of what? WHAT DOES IT SAY? ME! Not the church. Remembrance of me. Jesus is fundamental. Due we come together to remember Jesus?

A little tip here. One of the reasons why Christian fellowship's or friendship's don't last is because they are not centered around Jesus. They maybe social in nature. And some of us when we get together with Christian friends, we try to pick those who are socialable compatible with us. Who like to do the same things and go to the same places that we like. So, that is really what we look at when we look at christian fellowship. And really we are wrong. Social compatibility is not the bases for christian fellowship. It is Jesus. And I believe that a lot of us have forgotten that. to remember Jesus. And the words of encouragement that we give one another is because of Jsus. It is He who makes us one. We maybe very different in likes and dislikes, but dear friends I ask you: Is it Jesus we are remembering? Are we looking at Him? Remembering that He died on the cross for our sins. You see, that leads into some definite problems in relationships if you don't remember Him.

(3) The third principle is the principle of proclamation. Vs 26..."For as often as y ou eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

What are we preaching around here? What are we proclaiming? What are we doing this for? Is it to preach ourselves?...Hardly!

I would like to say a word right here about what I see is a terrible tendency, right now, among christians. It is coming in the media, through Television and radio, it is saturated in our christian bookstores. Every where we turn the emphases is on SELF..SELF..SELF

How to get your act together. How to be happy in 10 easy steps. Think positively..And on and on it goes. And it is a doctrine of total selfishness. And it was a problem in the church of Corinth. And a lot of us are glorifying it and acting like that is what is important. Get your act together. And don't care about anyone else. It is your rights that are important. It is your self image that is important.

Dear Friends, those things are important. But they are out of balance today. We have a man centered theology. Rather than a God-centered theology. And it is hurting us. It is Jesus that we proclaim. Listen, to these words from Paul..I Corinthians 2:2.."I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Then listen to 2 Cor 4:5.."For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord."

Or, how about this from Galatians 6:14 .."But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

Do you want to know where the problem is among christians in our relationships one with another? Why we are not having the depth and meaningful fellowship that we ought to have? It is because some where along the line we have let Jesus out. In spite of our commitment to Him, in spite of saying that we have come to know Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we have left him out. And as a result we just tack Him on to our lives when we need him. But, he doesn't have that practical benefit and meaning to our lives right now in relationship to each other. I think this is a very serious problem. The centrality of Christ is what is needed in our lives.

The centrality of Christ was being missed. They were not remembering Him. And Paul was rebuking them because they came with selfishness and factions and splits and bad attitudes and resentments and bitternesses towards one another. Instead of remembering the Lord Jesus. And proclaiming him.

() Well, God is going to do something about it, dear friends, if we don't. Did you know that? That is one of the interesting things about sin in your life. If you don't want to handle it, I want you to know that somebody will. God is going to handle it. Did you know that?

The practices of believers, you see, are going to be judged by the Lord, if we don't deal with them ourselves. And that is the point of verses 27 to 34.

What you and I do in our relationships, if it is not right, if you don't deal with it, God will. You can count on it. He really will.

Now, this passage, verses 27-34, is a very important passage. Yet, it is a passage that is quite often misunderstood. It is also mis-interpreted. Now, I want you to look at this passage carefully.

Vs 27 begins with the word "therefore." When ever you see a "therefore" find out what it is there for. Everything that went on before Vs 27 is building up to this application. And the application is dealing with problems that christians are having. The factions, the splits, the bad attitudes, the rotten ideas about ministering, and coming together and not having fellowship and love. That is context behind this instruction. So, let's take a look at it carefully.

Vs 26..."For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Vs 27..Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord."

So, in terms of our responsibility we have this matter of personal guilt. He says "you are guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord."

Now, if you were raised in a tradition that believes the bread and the cup turn into the actual body and blood of christ, you, right now, have lost your salvation. And that is the official teaching from that tradition.

So, it is important not to take it in any unworthy manner. Right? And sometimes that means by people that you should confess your sins before you take it.

Now, don't tell me that this is just a Catholic problem. It is a Protestant problem, also. You see, at the time of the Reformation all the Protestants did was to turn the Catholic doctrine of confession into private confession. And so we have developed a great doctrine among Evangelicals, even today. It is called confession of sin. Just name the sin and it clears up everything. RIGHT?.... Are you kidding. God never taught in the Word. Christians made that up.

So, whether you are Protestant or Catholic, the view of this is .."Oh, we have to confess our sins before we take of the communion elements."

I don't know if that bothers you. But, I have so many sins, I am afraid that I might miss one. Do you know what I mean? So, you are standing there getting ready to take communion and you think: "Oh, boy I hope I got all of them confessed before I take these elements. And if they don't give you enough time before the elements are served, you could really panic. Because if you take those elements without total confession, you will have the problems of this passage. Sick..weak..and some even dead. "Lord, I don't want to die over this thing. Help me remember."

You see, what I am trying to say is that your denominational background here, does effect your view. And if you don't understand this in its context, you will miss it.

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner" is talking about how they were doing it. With factions, and spilts. Not caring for one another. That was the problem. And that is how you come and take communion in an unworthy manner.

Let me explain it in another way. How are you guilty of the body and blood of the Lord? He died over 19 hundred years ago. Now, how are you guilty of it? Listen, this is written to Christians. Not non-christians. So, how are you and I guilty?

I will show in the context. When we fail to show love towards others, we are hurting those for whom the Lord died. And so, in reality we are hurting Jesus Christ. And we are guilty of not understanding total forgiveness and cleansing which He has provided. If we did understand that, we would not have factions and spits. So, you are guilty of the body and blood of Christ when you do not understand that His body and blood provided eternal redemption and forgiveness for us.

Listen, you and I are always basing our relationships with each other on performance and responses. You know that as well as I do. If a person doesn't respond to you the way you thought, what happens? You have a problem, right?

That is not the way it should be. We are to accept one another. Dear friends what do you do when you are talking with another Christian and you both disagree? What do you do?

You say, "Well, if that is the way he feels, I am never going to talk to him again." That is not the way it should be. Romans says "to accept one another without questioning motives all the time."

Listen, dear friends, so many of us are basing our relationships on whether or not we perform or respond. That is not what the Bible says. If you understand total forgiveness, then shouldn't you already accept them? No matter who they are or what they have done? No matter what they have done to you? Do you totally forgive the people you are talking about?

You see, if you don't believe that God has truly forgiven people, of all sin they have ever committed, even the ones that you are experiencing with them, then you can't have fellowship with them, you can't have the right relationship with them, you can't agree to disagree. You will never achieve it. Because you do not understand the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Dear friends, this is so important to get a hold of ..So important.

(2) The second area about responsibility is this matter of examining yourself.
Vs 28...WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? Self-examination.

Well, a lot of denominations say that it means "confession." Well, if it means "confession" why didn't Paul use the word "confess.?"

It is not the word "confess." The word "confession" comes short of what God says here. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EXAMINE YOURSELF? It was used of "metals" tested by fire. And rejecting that which was bad. And approving that which is good. It is a testing processes.

Do you know how God tests us concerning our love of people? He gives us problems with each other? Have you ever noticed that? The way God is going to test you as to whether you really love anybody ...He is going to bring you up against other Christians who totally disagree with your viewpoint. And he is going to test you as to whether or not you really love them.

And in that testing God says "deal with what is wrong. Get rid of it like you do with the metals. And approve only that which is good." Get rid of the roots of bitterness and resentments. Get rid of those feelings you have. And come and recognize the total forgiveness granted by the blood of Jesus Christ at the cross. And accept people and relate to them without factions, without splits, without difference. Regardless of what has happened...WOW!!!

(3) Well, there is also responsibility as it relates to possible judgement. Look at Vs 29 and 30.. "For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body right; y. For this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep."

Now, the word "sleep". Is that referring to sack time? NO WAY! It is talking about death. Physical death can happen to a person who continues in carnality. Factions and splits and unforgiveness carried all their life. I wonder how much sickness exist right now in our presence because we do not forgive.

Now, all sickness is not the result of specific sinning in your life. That is very clear from passages in the Bible. So, all sickness is not the result of sin. Some sickness is the result of sin. And of course if you deal with the sin, you can bring the healing.

Let me show you that. Turn to Proverbs 3. Proverbs chapter 3 verses 5-8

(Read Vs 5-8)

WHAT WILL BE HEALING TO MY BODY? If I turn away from the evil. If I am not wise in my own eyes, but turn away from the evil. God will bring healing to the body and refreshment to your bones. Wonderful news.

(4) There is a fourth thing involved in our responsibility. And that is repentence. Vs 31 puts it this way: "if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged."

God is very patient with us. He is wanting you to deal with the problem. And if you will, he will not bring the judgment. He is very patient.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO JUDGE YOURSELF?

The Greek word means "to judge though something." Meaning all the surface problems. Judge through it. It is also used of discernment. DO YOU REALLY JUDGE THROUGH TO FIND OUT THE MOTIVE?

You say, "wait a minute. I don't know the motives of my heart." YES..But, the Bible does. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is "able to point out the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE IN DOING WHAT YOU DO? God's Word tells you. Have you ever read about the motives in the Bible? Have you ever taken a strong look at that? It is not really my idea of fun and games. You read what the Bible says about you, it is convicting. God tells us point blank what we are like. And you don't like what you are reading.

DO YOU JUDGE YOURSELF RIGHTLY? WHO KNOWS? God's Word knows. Dear friends, do you understand what God's Word says about YOU? And your relationship to other believers?

This is so important. Because the reason for the lord's judgement is not wrath like he will on the world. Vs 32 says.."But we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world."

God judges the world with his wrath. But not Christians. Hebrews 12 say the Lord loves whom He disciplines.

But, let me explain how this works. I believe the Lord gives us a long : . rope. And while you are running around doing your thing, you don't feel anything. You are saying, "Man, I can sin and get away with it."

"Hay, I have had these problems with christians for years. But, I am not being judged for them."

Then all of a sudden the Lord tightens the rope. You feel it. He brings his discipline. You see, if you deal with the problem, you will not be judged. But if you do not deal with the problem, you can count on it. God is going to deal with you. If you will not come clean on the issue, God will bring his judgement to you. He promised that. Because he loves you. And he doesn't want us to ruin our lives.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESULT THEN? What should be the result that we all experience in our relationship with each other?

Look at Vs 33.."So, , then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another."

In other words, is there a loving patience in your life towards other believers?

I love what my son, the school teacher said to me once. He said, "Dad, I love teaching. It's just the students that I can't stand."

We can all identify with that. Right? People have problems. And being impatient with people. The whole point of this is: when you come together to eat --don't do your own thing...don't be self-centered.NO WAY!

Loving patience...waiting for one another. WHY? Because your motive is to draw the body toghether . Your motive is unity. It is love. It is fellowship

It is not proving my point. It is love. Because, frankly, dear friends, we are going to continue at times to have disagreements. Did you know that?

Sure you do? SOME OF YOU ARE SMILING. We are going to have disagreements. But, when you can agree to disagree. And love the brother or sister no matter what...That is when you know whether or not you understand christian fellowship. It is so important.

() And the fianal thing, is the beautiful conclusion in Vs 34.."if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home."

The point is that you do need a spiritual purpose as to why you come together. If you are coming together just to eat, you have a wrong purpose. You are not coming to honor the Lord and to encourage other believers.

So, we ask ourselves about any ministry. No matter what it is. WHY ARE WE COMING TOGETHER AS CHRISTIANS? WHAT IS THE POINT OF IT? DO WE HAVE A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE?

Now, I want to challenge you. A practical specific application. Right now I would like to challenge you to put your eyes and mind on some one in particular to whom you are going to minister even before you leave the church grounds, today.

You say, Do I have to? ---NO!! But I just want to challege you. Some one you can minister to before you leave today.

Who knows what word of encouragement from you might bless the heart of someone else.

Let's close in a word of prayer