

The Lord's Supper-Memorial

Written by Kevin P. Morkassel

5/25/08 AM
Salem

1 Corinthians 11:18ff

INTRODUCTION:

Tomorrow we will celebrate a holiday that many have been looking forward to and anticipating because it means a day off of work.

- We get to dust off the grill, and just relax in the sun on the deck with friends and family.
- Memorial Day is one of six or seven holidays that most people have off in our country.
- We look forward to these holidays because it can be nice to get away from the daily routine.
- We love to have a break from the normal hustle and bustle.
- It is easy, however, to forget the reason behind the holiday and to disregard the purpose of having that day off.
- As we all know, Memorial Day comes only once a year and is a day that is set-aside for us to remember those who sacrificed their lives for us in this country.

This morning, I would like us to think about a memorial celebration from the Bible every first day of the week because of the One who sacrificed His life for us.

- In the same way we often disregard the purpose of Memorial Day, the purpose of the Lord's Supper is many times also easily forgotten.

With all of this in mind, let us ask ourselves, "In the history of the world, what series of events are the most significant for mankind today?"

- I am certain that we would all agree that Christ's death on the cross, his burial in the tomb, and his resurrection are undoubtedly the most important events in the entire history of the world.
- Though we are thankful for the veterans who lost their lives for us, we are much more indebted to Christ who was the perfect sacrifice for a sinful and lost world.
- The Apostle Paul confirms this when he said in **1 Corinthians 2:2**, "*For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*"
- In essence Paul was saying, "**Nothing else matters except the fact that Jesus Christ died for you!**"
- Jesus has left us no monuments or memorial relics of Himself except for a simple feast, the Lord's Supper.
- The Lord's Supper is in fact the world's greatest monument to commemorate the world's greatest event.

Our text this evening will be coming from **1 Corinthians 11**.

- We find in this passage that many of the Christians in Corinth had forgotten the meaning of The Lord's Supper.
- Paul saw their actions and issued a sharp rebuke to them.
- I would like us to examine this rebuke and to clearly understand the 1) purpose of the Lord's Supper, 2) how often it should be taken and most importantly we will examine the 3) significance of the Lord's Supper today.

In the previous chapter, Paul had been urging the church to be united by remembering the Lord's Supper.

- In **chapter 10:16 & 17** he said, "*Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread, which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*"
- And in **verse 21** he said that they needed to drink only from "*the cup of the Lord*" and no longer from the "*cup of the demons.*"
- He continued this thought in **Chapter 11** where I would like to pick up by reading **vss 18-22**.

18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.

19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

This evening, I would like us to think about three different questions as we consider this passage and evaluate it more closely.

I. The first question... WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The answer is in the picture on the screen... Those in the church in Corinth had obviously forgotten to take of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ.

- This memorial service was designed by Christ to help them stay on track and yet it was being grossly misused.
- They were treating it like a regular meal and were eating excessively.
- Some were trying to be the first ones to eat and they were allowing others to go hungry.
- Even more shameful, some were even getting drunk.
- Paul told them that if they were going to treat this like a regular meal, that they should have eaten at their own homes before coming together for the Lord's Supper.
- They had lost sight of its purpose.

Let's take a closer look, therefore, at **1 Corinthians 11**, as Paul begins to share his thoughts on the purpose of the Lord's Supper.

- Please read with me the next two verses... **verses 23 & 24.**

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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."

After Paul rebuked the Corinthians for treating the service so disdainfully, he reminded them what it was all about.

- He said that this message, "[he had] **received from the Lord**".
- This wasn't just some advice offered by a coworker.
- This was a commandment that came from the top!
- Paul also mentioned that the Lord Jesus initiated this communion service on the very night He was betrayed.
- Paul was trying to remind them of its purpose and the importance.
- At the end of **verse 24**, Paul tells them the first reason that they need to be breaking the bread.
- He said the same message that is written on many communion tables today. "**Do this in remembrance of me.**"

There are many different things that can serve as memorials.

- A memorial is simply an object or service, which reminds us of something from the past.
- If you drove past the cemetery on the other side of the tracks today, you probably saw all the American flags and the white crosses in memory of lost soldiers.
- Memorials can be anything from a gravestone to a statue near a government building or other public place.
- A memorial could also be a picture of a loved one that is carried and cherished while the two are apart from each other.

Retired General Tommy Franks, spoke at Harding University a few years ago and before that he spoke in Dallas.

- When he was there, he said that he carries with him three different memorials.
- He said, "**When I am in the battlefield or at home, there are three things that I keep with me and close to my heart. In my pocket, I always have a New Testament and a flag as reminders of my commitment to God and my country. The third thing is my wedding band, a symbol of my commitment to my wife and my marriage.**"
- These objects that General Franks carries are memorials of the most important things in his life.

For us, the Lord's Supper is the only memorial that we have which reminds us that Christ made the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

- Jesus specifically commanded his disciples to "**Do this in remembrance of me.**"

Paul continues on in **verses 25 & 26** and says, *“In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, **“This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.**”*

- I would like to suggest that another purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to remind us that the old covenant was done away with and we are now living not under the Mosaic Law, but under the Christian Law.
- Three of the four gospels confirm this new law when they mention the covenant established by Christ’s blood.
- Luke’s account says, *“**This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.**”*
- This is also a fulfillment of a prophesy that was given by the prophet Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 31:31** which says, *“**Behold, days are coming,**” declares the LORD, **“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.**”*
- That new covenant was established with Christ’s blood and we are to remember that new covenant as we partake of communion.

Another part of the purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to proclaim Christ’s death to others.

- It is not just for our own personal benefit and to glorify God, it is a way for us to let others know about the significance of Christ’s death.
- *“**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.**”*
- We proclaim his death to those who may be visiting with us.
- Those who may not fully understand its importance.
- The Lord’s Supper is one more opportunity during every worship service for us to let people know why we have hope.

There is a final very important purpose of the Lord’s Supper, found in **verses 27-34**. This passage says...

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.

28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

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

34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment.

In 1818 one out of every six women who had children died of something called **“childbirth fever.”**

- A doctor’s daily routine back then started in the dissecting room, where he performed autopsies, and from there he made his rounds to examine expectant mothers.
- No one even thought to wash his hands...at least not until a doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis began to practice strict hand washing.
- He was the very first doctor to associate a lack of hand washing with the huge fatality rate.
- Dr. Semmelweis only lost one in fifty, yet his colleagues laughed at him.
- Once he said, **“Childbirth fever is caused by decomposed material conveyed to a wound...I have shown how it can be prevented. I have proven all that I’ve said. But while we talk, talk, women are dying.. I’m not asking for anything world shaking, only that you wash your hands.”**

In a similar way, we need to wash our hands of the filth that we acquire from our sins.

- We need to examine ourselves and be certain that our hearts are purified and cleansed when we commune.
- Communion is a time to consider our sins, to regularly wash our souls before God.
- It is essential! The failure to think about our sins will result in spiritual infection that will cause spiritual death.

The state of the Corinthians' hearts was terrible when Paul rebuked them.

- Throughout this letter, Paul scolded them for all kinds of different problems.
- They needed to be doing some serious analyzing of themselves.
- As a matter of fact, in **verse 30** Paul said, "*For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.*"
- It is imperative for a Christian to examine ones self and to make a regular commitment to become stronger Christians, to become healthier Christians, and to wake up.
- If we don't, **verse 31** says we will be judged.

There is a second question that I would like us to ask ourselves...

II. HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE LORD'S SUPPER BE TAKEN?

I personally believe that it is important to conduct the Lord's Supper in the manner in which it was done in the New Testament.

- We do not just have the Lord's Supper on special occasions, quarterly, or every other month.
- At this congregation, we choose to do as the Bereans did in **Acts 17**; and that is to conduct ourselves only in accordance with Scriptures.

In **Acts 20:7** we are given a Bible example of when the Lord's supper was to take place... "*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.*"

- One thing that I find most compelling about this verse is the reason that they gathered together.
- I checked four different translations of the Bible just to make sure I understood the reason for gathering.
- New American—"...*we were gathered together to break bread.*..."
- New International—"... *we came together to break bread.*..."
- New Revised Standard—"... *we met to break bread.*..."
- New King James—"... *the disciples came together to break bread.*..."
- They didn't just happen to break bread because they were together... They were together to break bread!
- There is also significant evidence from the previous verses to indicate that Paul stayed here in the city of Troas a couple of extra days for a reason.
- I would like to suggest that that reason was so that he could be with the Christians in Troas on the first day of the week in order to break bread with them.
- The verse we just read, specifically said that Paul intended to leave the following day.

They clearly met on the first day of the week for worship and when they did, their worship included the breaking of bread.

- I believe that there is a certain significance of meeting on the first day of every week.
- There is a pattern in much of the New Testament that indicates when Christians met.
- In **Matthew 28:1**, Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week.
- In **John 20:26**, The disciples began gathering together on the first day of the week following the crucifixion.
- In **Acts 2**, the church was established on the first day of the week. (The day of Pentecost)
- In **Acts 20:7** that we just read they partook of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week.
- In **1 Corinthians 11:20-21**, the Lords supper was taken when they met for worship on the first day of the week.
- And finally, in **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**, the collection was taken on the first day of every week.

I do not understand why any church would choose to take the communion less frequently than every Sunday.

- **Acts 2:42** says, "*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" "*continually...*"
- Knowing what the Lord's supper stands for, I just can't comprehend why people would choose to only have the service a few times a year.
- The only answer I can come up with is that fact that many churches have forgotten the past.
- Clearly, the Lord's Supper was taken on the first day of every week.

The final question that we can ask ourselves, is...

III. WHY IS THE LORD'S SUPPER SO SIGNIFICANT?

There was a young man one day who asked, "Dad what do you think about during the communion service?"

- "Well, son, when the brethren assemble at the table to serve communion, I think of the disciples of Jesus at the Last Supper before our Lord's crucifixion. I 'hear' Jesus blessing the bread and the cup, and I 'see' Him distributing the bread and the fruit of the vine to the apostles, saying, 'This do in remembrance of me.'"
- "As the bread is passed among the members, I think of Jesus as He was betrayed by Judas, taken by the mob, and tried by the officials. I marvel at what God's Son was willing to undergo for our benefit."
- "As I eat the bread, a picture forms in my mind—a picture of Jesus falling under the weight of the cross, a picture of the soldiers driving nails through His hands and feet to attach Him to the cross. I am filled with wonder at the meaning of the divine suffering in human flesh for our benefit."
- "In drinking the fruit of the vine, my mind is filled with views of the blood dripping from the nail wounds and flowing from the wound in His side. I meditate about the saving power of this blood, how it serves as a 'cleaning agent' in God's plan to save us from our sins."
- "Son, the Lord's Supper is an occasion when Christians think about Christ. It is a time when Christians are thinking about the same things at the same time. This is communion. The inward experience of the communion service makes me spiritually stronger."
- "As the service closes, I feel relieved and satisfied in the knowledge that our Savior, who suffered and died for us, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven where He now is. The Lord's Supper keeps us reminded of what Christ did for us until He comes again."

I would like to pose this same question as the boy asked his dad... "What do you think about during the communion service?"

SUMMARY:

This evening, we have been exploring three different questions.

- First of all, we have learned that the purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember the sacrifice that Christ made. It is a reminder that He established a new covenant at His death. It helps us to proclaim His name until He returns. And finally, it is an opportunity for us to examine ourselves.
- We have learned that the pattern established in the Bible was for it to be done on the first day of every week.
- The final question we addressed had to do with its significance...
- To me, the significance of the Lord's supper comes from the fact that...
 - It is a time to pause and to consider the value of his death burial and resurrection...
 - It is a time to consider that He loves me so much that He was willing to sacrifice for me...
 - And to know that I have been cleansed because of His blood that was shed on the cross...

CONCLUSION:

During the Lord's Supper, our minds are to be focused on the most important event in the history of the world.

- The Lord's Supper is significant because Christians are a part of Christ's body and this memorial service reminds us that we have hope for a bright and glorious future.

I would like to conclude this worship service with one final passage. If you will, please turn with me to **John 6**.

- As we read this... notice the eternal significance of the partaking of the Lord's Supper.
- Please read with me **verses 53-58**. *"So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."*

INVITATION:

When we are baptized, we become a part of Christ's body. (**Galatians 3:27**)

- We then begin to live our lives "***In Him.***" (**Romans 6:3-4**)
- If you have not yet made the decision to live your life in Christ, I would like to encourage you to make the decision to dedicate your life to Him today and to be obedient
- The benefits are out of this world!