

As Often as You Do This. . .Remember

As we draw near to the Lord's table at the beginning of this new year, the command and the invitation are offered three times. In Luke 22:19, Jesus said, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In I Corinthians 11:24 & 25, Paul reports Jesus saying, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." And, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The question I would like us to sit with for a few minutes this morning is this: In what sense are we to eat the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus? What does this remembrance consist of?

First of all, I think this remembrance does mean what most of us probably think it means when we first hear the phrase. It means remembering the event that this Ordinance commemorates. It means remembering Jesus' betrayal and abandonment by His disciples. It means remembering the way He was taken into custody and horribly mistreated by the Roman soldiers. It means remembering His journey down the Via Dolorosa and up the hill to Calvary, or Golgotha, the Place of the Skull. It means remembering the story of how a crown of thorns was pounded into his scalp and how nails were driven through His

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hands and feet pinning Him to a rough wooden cross. It means remembering His blood, His agony, His words of human need and divine grace spoken in the midst of His agony, and it means remembering His death. Paul tells us that in this way we proclaim, and thus remember, His death until He comes--until He returns to earth again.

A second thing this "in remembrance of Me" means, is that we are to remember His death and the purpose for His death. It's interesting how evil at it's worst and God's best meet at the cross. On the one hand, the crucifixion is driven by man's greed, lust for power, fear, anger, and by his capacity for extreme cruelty. On the other hand, the crucifixion is the high water mark of God's mercy and love for us. Romans 5:6-8 remind us to remember, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." In other words just when we were being the cruelest to God, God was revealing His kindness to us. Paul goes on in this same passage to tell us that we have been justified, or made right, and reconciled to God through Christ's death. Once enemies to God because of our thoughts and actions, we have now been forgiven, cleansed, made new, and enabled to live as God's friends. That

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little baby, born in Bethlehem's stable and laid in a manger, came into this world for one overriding purpose; He came to absorb our evil and to receive the penalty for our sins that we might be reunited with God and be freed from our fear of death and hell. We are to remember the fact of Christ's death and the purpose for it.

A third thing we are to remember in this remembrance is that Jesus, resurrected from the dead, is present in our midst; and, if we have faith to receive it, Jesus is present at this table in a very powerful way. Luke 22:19-20 say, "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" In John 6:53-56 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him." I know that these words of Jesus are difficult for our reason to deal with and that the literal interpretation of His words are offensive to our civilized sensibilities. But we need to remember that this was also true in the original context. John 6:60 says, "On hearing

it, many his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' And, verse 66 says, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."

I recognize that this is a great mystery, but for those who truly believe in the risen Christ, Communion is really communion; it is a spiritual gateway and portal, through which we are spiritually connected to the life, death, resurrection, and living presence of Jesus Christ. And if we receive the bread and cup with open minds and receptive hearts, we receive forgiveness, cleansing, and new birth; we receive a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. To eat and drink of the Lord's table, in remembrance of Him, is to remind ourselves that He lives to live and reign in us. And, we must learn to live our lives in and through Him.

So we need to remember the fact, purpose, and potential of Jesus' death. A fourth and final thing that doing what we do this morning in remembrance of Him, means is to remember Him remembering us. In other words, when we come to this table, not only are we remembering Jesus, but Jesus is also remembering us. He is mindful of us; He is thinking about us. Do you ever think about God thinking about you? King David did. In Psalm 139 David is mindful of the Lord's constant presence and involvement in His life. In verses 17-

18, as translated by God's Word Translation of the Bible, David prays, "How precious are your thoughts concerning me, O God! How vast in number they are! If I try to count them, there would be more of them than there are grains of sand." God is thinking about us all the time, but when we gather together like this to come to the table of His Son, He draws near, and His love for us is never stronger. It brings Him joy to see that we receive and are grateful for His wondrous gift of salvation. I would encourage you to think about God thinking about you this day.

As we come to the Lord's table then, we remember Jesus' sufferings and death. We remember that He died for the forgiveness of our sins and to restore our relationship with God. We remember that He has promised to be present to us in the gifts of this table. We remember Him remembering us. Remembrance is the act of faith that connects us with God. We need to actively remember. This is the Christian's chief work-to remember--and to praise God. We come here today to remember Him.

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**"As Often as You Do This
. . . Remember"**

**Luke 22:14-20;
I Corinthians 11:23-26**

Jon R. Neely, Pastor

