

Meditation on Communion

by David Ravenhill

Communion is a celebration of what Jesus Christ has done for us, and it's a reminder of our relationship with Him, which should motivate us to live a life of worthy communion and proclamation of His work.

Duration: 19:25

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:24

Topics: "Lord's Supper", "Christian Freedom"

Description

This sermon focuses on the significance of communion in the New Testament, highlighting the themes of substitution, celebration, examination, condemnation, restoration, proclamation, abolition, liberation, and inauguration. It emphasizes the importance of remembering Jesus' sacrifice, celebrating the victory and freedom we have in Him, examining our hearts and relationships, and looking forward to His return and reign.

Transcript

We'll bless you this morning. If you take your seats just for a moment, it is my joy and privilege to lead you in communion. Let the ushers begin to pass out the cup and the bread.

You can do that now. We're celebrating again what we've been singing about, the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

What a tremendous way to begin this new year. I was reading recently in my devotional time, reading through the book of Leviticus, that's quite a chore, and I began to thank God that I was not living under the old covenant. All the rules and regulations and rituals, you know, if you suspected your wife of cheating on you, you know, you'd drag her in the church, they'd sweep the floor, make her drink the dust of the floor with some water and so on.

I mean, you know, all the incredible details that they had to remember and so on. When we come to the all of those rituals, all of those ordinances, I've done away with, and we are left with basically three New Testament ceremonies, if you like, or rituals. I don't like the word ritual exactly, but you know what I'm talking about.

One is baptism, one is marriage, and the other is communion. There are some denominations that throw in a fourth one, foot washing, but I don't think that applies anymore, you know, or not that parking lot is not

full of camels and donkeys and horses and so on, and thank God if it was, we'd have ushers at the door washing your feet because the stench would be unbearable otherwise. So we can do away with that one.

Two of those ordinances are not to be repeated over and over again. It doesn't say as often as you get married or as often as you're baptized, but when it comes to communion, it's as often as you do this. So it's the one ongoing ordinance, if you like, that we have, and I want to just draw your attention to some things this morning.

First of all, the Bible says, do this in remembrance of me. It's never to become a ritual. It is to remember a relationship.

Paul says he has brought us into the fellowship of his son. We are having communion this morning with our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. What an incredible privilege that is.

And so I want to just summarize some things with one word, and the first word is the word substitution. Substitution. You realize as you're holding that cup this morning that represents the blood of Jesus Christ, that that blood really should be your blood and my blood.

The wages of sin is death, but as the old song says, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. He was wounded for my transgressions, for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and so on. He became our substitute.

What an incredible thing that is, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the spotless Lamb of God gave his life for you and I this morning, that we could have eternal life. So he became, again, the substitute. The next thing is the word celebration.

Again, this is not a morbid thing. It's not something that we, you know, come in with a sort of a heaviness in spirit. Paul said, writing to the Corinthians, we are to celebrate the feasts.

All the feasts of Israel in the Old Testament were days of celebration. I mean, there was dancing, there was music, there was feasting, eating, and so on, and this is the fulfillment of all of that. This is the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover, and Paul says we are to celebrate it.

It is a cup of blessing this morning that we partake of. It says when Jesus had the communion, if you like, with his disciples, it said he gave thanks, the Eucharist, the giving of thanks, and so we come to celebrate this morning what Jesus Christ has done for us. Listen, if somebody paid off your credit card, wouldn't you be excited? I understand the average credit card these days is up in the thousands, but, you know, if that happens to be your lot, I'm sure this morning if somebody wrote you a check and said, listen, I want to wipe out that debt, you would hug them, you would embrace them, you would be full of thanksgiving.

Listen, our debt of sin has been paid, totally eradicated by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should celebrate. This is a celebration this morning, these emblems that you're holding in your hand.

Now, this may sound contradictory. The next thing is examination. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, we are to examine ourselves, and he's dealing with our relationship one with another.

He said if we partake of the body in an unworthy manner, we become guilty of the blood of Christ himself. Now, that's a solemn thought, isn't it? You know, if you've ever read through the Word of God, and I'm sure you have, God is so incredibly jealous for the unity of his body. His ultimate prayer, that high priestly

prayer of John 17, that they may be one.

And when we are one, God commands a blessing of life evermore. And so unity is so important. But in the Corinthian church, there was incredible division.

You know, some were followers of Paul, pride of themselves, I'm a Paul, I'm a Paulus, I'm a Cephas, whatever, I'm of Christ, and so on. The rich would come in and sort of snub their noses at the poor when there was a communion service, which of course was a feast in the sense of a meal as well. They would come early and scarf down all the food and the poor people, the slaves, you know, that maybe hadn't worked right up until the last minute.

By the time they got there, all the food was gone and so on. I mean, there was a tremendous schism in the body. And Paul is dealing with that.

And he says, listen, if you partake in an unworthy manner, you bring judgment upon yourself. And so it says that we can betray, if you like, Christ himself. Paul had a very impactful, if you like, revelation of that.

The moment he got saved on that Damascus road, God spoke from heaven, Jesus spoke from heaven, and he said to Paul, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Why are you persecuting me? That's pretty strong language, persecution. Why are you persecuting me? Jesus already ascended. He was sitting at the right hand of the Father.

He was in his resurrection body and so on, and yet he felt the pain that Paul was inflicting on the body of Christ. Jesus said, as much as you've done it unto the least of these, you've done it unto me. And if we partake of the cup in an unworthy manner, in other words, we're looking down on a brother or sister, you know, we're at odds with another member of the body of Christ, then we come under condemnation.

And so, pulpit commentary, I was just reading this yesterday. Let me just read you this little statement. How can the selfish have communion with the infinitely unselfish one? If we have a self-seeking, grasping, greedy spirit, what part can we have with him who gave himself for us? Excuse me.

How alien to the spirit of Christ is the spirit of selfishness. If we sit with it at the table of the Lord, we sit there as Judas did. In other words, Paul begins this portion of scripture in 1 Corinthians 11, and he reminds us the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread.

And Paul is basically saying, listen, I betrayed him. I betrayed him by destroying the early church. We can betray him even this morning by having a wrong relationship to another brother or sister in the body of Christ.

The next thing is condemnation. Again, if we fail to judge ourselves by not repenting over the divisions, then we come under the judgment of God. This is a very serious thing.

I wish I had more time to sort of develop it. But in verse 29, he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself. If he does not judge the body rightly.

For this reason, in other words, because we are at odds with each other for this reason, Paul says, many are weak and sick and a number have already gone to a premature death. He doesn't say this is a rare thing. And I'm not saying this morning, please don't misunderstand me that all sickness is a result of not being right with a brother or sister, but neither do I want to diminish that because Paul does not say a few,

he says many.

And I wrote down just last night, the physical condition of the body of Christ is symptomatic of the spiritual condition of the body of Christ and vice versa. In other words, if there's tremendous sickness in the body of Christ, it is symptomatic of the fact that there is spiritual sickness and wrong relationships one with another. And so we need to take this seriously.

So Paul says, listen, don't just sort of scoff down these emblems this morning, take time and examine yourself. Otherwise you come under judgment. Now God's judgment, of course, is always for our benefit.

He is not an abuser of his children. There's a difference between abuse and discipline, but he is a disciplinary. And he says, listen, if you don't do what I'm telling you to do, love one another, bear one another's burdens and so on and so forth, you will come under my judgment.

And that judgment is in the form again of weakness, sickness and death. The next one is restoration, because we don't have to come under judgment. It says, but if we judge ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.

In other words, if we're honest about our situation, if we are prepared to go to a brother or sister, obviously, if they don't know that we've got a wrong attitude towards them, then don't go to them. You'll only create a problem, but get right with God in your heart. But if we judge the body correctly, then there is no need.

We can reverse, if you like, the weakness and the sickness and so on. He also says, he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not discern the body correctly. I have a book written by a master in the Greek and the Hebrew languages, and he said that word discern means to make a distinction between.

And I don't have time to go into the whole thing this morning, but he says many times we fail to make a distinction between the cup and the bread. We know what the cup represents. The cup represents cleansing.

By his shed blood, again, there is forgiveness of sins. But the bread represents healing. By his stripes we are healed.

And he says, because you don't make a distinction, because you don't discern the body, not the cup, the body, that is symbolic again by the bread, for this cause, again, you're weak and sick. And so there's sort of layers of truth there, if you like. The next thing is proclamation.

It says we proclaim, verse 26, the Lord's death until he comes. We are proclaiming three things. We're proclaiming the past, the present, and the future.

We are proclaiming the past is death, burial, and resurrection. We need to remember we are not proclaiming the death alone of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, if Christ be not risen, we are for all men most to be pitied, most miserable.

We are still in our sin. If Jesus Christ simply had died on the cross and remained in the grave, there would be no reason for us to be here this morning. But we celebrate along these emblems represent, remember, this was done after the resurrection of Christ.

Remember what he's done. He not only died, but he rose again. So we remember the past, but we also remember the present, that he ever lives to make intercession for us.

What an incredible thought. But also we can have fellowship with him. Again, he wants to come, as he says in Revelation, behold, I stand at the door, knock, I want to come and I want to sup with you.

I want to have fellowship. I want to have intimacy. I want to have a relationship with you.

There is an ongoing relationship that we can have with the Lord Jesus Christ. And then the last thing, the future, we do this, the Bible says, until he comes. Thank God that he's coming again.

He's coming again. That day is getting closer. Every single, we're closer today than we were yesterday.

Is that right? And as I look at the news and I see what's going on, I see creation groaning like never before, you know, wars, rumors and earthquakes and all those things, all signs. Again, the contractions have begun. How long it's going to be, I don't know.

You know, some women get give birth before they get to the hospital. Others are in the hospital for 24 hours or 48 hours. I don't know what period of time, but I know this, the contractions have begun.

The next thing is abolition or destruction. In the Old Testament, when the Passover, when they put the blood on the doorposts and so on, God declared through Moses, he said, this night I'm going to do something. Not only am I going to set you free, but I'm going to show that I am the Lord.

And I'm going to show that against all the gods of Egypt. Now, the gods of Egypt were not simply wooden stone idols. There was tremendous power.

They were involved in a demonic realm. When Moses cast down his rod, it became a serpent and Pharaoh was not that impressed. He called the magicians and they did the same thing.

In other words, the gods of Egypt were satanic gods, demonic gods. But God said, I'm going to show who's boss, basically. This night, the fulfillment of that, of course, the substance is always greater than the shadow.

Jesus Christ, it says in Colossians, he made an open show of the enemy and he triumphed over him. He stripped him of his authority, stripped him of his power. So we celebrate a victory this morning that you no longer have to be in bondage.

Whatever the enemy has held over you, you know, whether it's pornography or cigarettes or whatever, claim your victory this morning. What a great day to begin the new year by saying, listen, the son of God has set me free. I don't have to be a slave any longer to this particular addiction.

Jesus Christ has triumphed and I can walk in that triumph. The next thing is liberation. Obviously, if Jesus Christ has done that, then we are liberated.

It says that through death, Hebrews 2 and verse 14, he might render powerless him that had the power of death, that is the devil. You know, there are various reasons that Jesus Christ came. We focus, of course, on the fact that he came to shed his blood, that we might be forgiven.

But it says here that through death, he might render powerless he that had the power of death and set free those who all their lifetime was subject to bondage. You know, there are all sorts of phobias. I forget how many there are exactly, but you don't have to suffer that fear any longer because Jesus Christ can set you free from it.

You can be liberated. Galatians says it was for freedom that Christ set free. And then the last thing, inauguration or coronation, if you like.

Again, looking forward to that day when Jesus Christ will return, set up his kingdom. I think that's getting closer, whether it will be after my lifetime or not. I don't know how many days I've got left, the months I've got left, the years I've got left, but I know it's getting close.

But I look forward to that day when heaven and earth will pass away. There'll be a new heaven, new earth in which dwells righteousness, where Jesus shall reign. As the old song says, Jesus shall reign from north and south and east and west.

You know, thank God for that. Every knee is going to bow one day and acknowledge. We're going to see ISIS bow.

We're going to see all the Hollywood crowd bow. We're going to see everybody else bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. And so we celebrate that.

That's what these symbols represent this morning. Let's stand to our feet as we partake together. I've already had the privilege of partaking earlier with the part of the team, so I won't be partaking.

But we are one body. Let's declare that oneness this morning. Even now, if you've got, you know, ought against somebody, ask Jesus Christ to forgive you.

Why come under judgment? Why come under, you know, some sickness or weakness or whatever? You don't have to this morning. Examine yourself, and let's partake in a worthy manner. So Father, we thank you.

We thank you for this cup this morning. Thank you, Lord, that the blood of Jesus Christ still cleanses from all sin. Thank you, Lord, that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb as we've sung this morning.

And Lord, we declare the principalities and powers that you no longer have the right to rule over us. We are blood-bought. We've been set free from the slavery and the mastery of sin.

And we declare that victory this morning. Father, we thank you again. We celebrate this feast.

Thank you. Our debts have been paid. But Lord, you've paid the ultimate price.

But Lord, it was for freedom that Christ set us free. And so, Lord, we partake. We partake of this bread this morning, thanking you that, Lord, by your stripes, we are healed.

Lord, I ask, Lord, just for the healing power of God right now to come into this meeting. Father, pray for Pastor Tim as he's baffling with his backache and others, Lord, that have got sicknesses. Father, we declare again that by your stripes, not by our efforts, not by our works, but Lord, by your stripes, we are healed.

And we thank you for it. Lord, we celebrate the goodness of the Lord, the cup of blessing. Father, we take blessing this morning in Jesus' name.

It's our portion. It's what you promised us. We thank you for it.

Let's just partake together. Let's rejoice. If you want to kick up your heels, you know, in the Old Testament, Miriam grabbed the tambourine and began dancing and led all the women in dancing.

I used to be part of a church in New Zealand. Boy, did we dance. We danced and danced and danced.

I mean, every chance that senior pastor, he loved to dance. But anyway, we won't do that this morning, but rejoice. At least smile, you know, after you've partaken.

Give somebody a hug. We're all members of the body. The Bible says the whole family in heaven and earth derives its name from the name of Jesus.

We're a family this morning. We're a body this morning. We are united this morning because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

God bless you.

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