

Do This In Remembrance of Me

by Todd Atkinson

This sermon focuses on the significance of the Lord's Supper and the power of biblical remembrance, emphasizing the deep meaning behind the act of communion. It delves into the concept of remembrance in the Hebrew scriptures, highlighting how it goes beyond mere recollection to invoke God's past promises into the present. The sermon explores the connection between the Last Supper, the cross, and the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, emphasizing the transformative nature of partaking in communion and carrying Christ's presence into the world.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23, Genesis 8:1, Exodus 2:24, John 6:51, Luke 22:19

Topics: "Significance of the Lord's Supper", "Power of Remembrance"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like you to turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 11. I'm kind of echoey today. 1 Corinthians 11.

It's wonderful to be traveling through this period of the church year with you called Lent. I think people have parts of the church year that they may be most naturally inclined toward or understand. So for many people, it's Advent.

It's the run-up to Christmas. But for me, it's Lent. This is my favorite time.

It's actually birthed mostly in tough chapters of my life, where my solace was found at the foot of a cross. I was amazed to find that during times of Lent, where I could give many weeks over to meditating on the cross. It's placed in my life.

So this is without doubt, this is my favorite time of the Christian calendar. Let's take a reading from 1 Corinthians 11. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed took bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it. And he said, this is my body which is for you. So this is a Eucharistic passage.

But the center of it is the cross, is why we're doing this series during Lent. It's all about Jesus' brokenness. This is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Keyword remembrance. In the same way also he took the cup 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 this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever therefore eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood.

Well, we looked at this passage last week. It's a beloved passage, well-known. But let me just remind you what's happening here in this passage, is that this is a letter from the Apostle Paul to the church that is in Corinth.

It is a church that was started by Paul. It was a church that was taught the gospel by the Apostle Paul, established by Paul, loved by this Apostle dearly. And so he is the spiritual father of this church.

And in truth, they're not doing super well together as a community. Now don't get me wrong, they gather regularly. They worship regularly.

They listen to teaching together regularly. But just under the surface, there is a division. We looked at that last Sunday, which was a class division.

Some of the divisions that exist in Roman society were brought into the church. And so there's a division between the haves and the have-nots, between the rich and the poor. They've gathered together at the Lord's Supper.

Some have more than they can eat, some have next to nothing to eat. In Roman society, they were used to those divisions, used to living like that. And they hadn't yet realized is that that could not be true of Christian community.

Christian community could not be done like that, and still be called Christian community. And so Paul, the spiritual father, is writing them in such a way as to rectify this. And it's interesting, the way he addresses it, the way he challenges it, the way he rectifies this situation is by reminding them of the centrality of the cross, and the true meaning of the Lord's Supper.

So he addresses the challenges, and then the solution to what they're facing was found in the Lord's Supper. I receive from the Lord. Would I also deliver to you how that the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread.

And so then he quotes the words of Jesus from the Last Supper. Those are called the words of institution, because they are words that Jesus spoke. He instituted them.

And so from every Last Supper, from that moment to this moment, or 2,000 years, those words have been quoted. And so what I want to do today is to take a closer look at those words. Why are they so important? What do they mean? How did Paul hope that they would rectify this situation? And so let's take a little closer look at the words.

I receive from the Lord what I also deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. 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. These are packed words, condensed.

The amount of books and commentaries that have been written on these words has probably been as much as any other passage of scripture. So what I've been looking for is a way in. How do we understand this? And I think that a key to this passage, and to understanding its meaning, is bound up with one expression.

And it's this expression, do this in remembrance of me. And the reason why that expression is a key to understanding this passage has to do with that word remembrance. And the fact that there is so much more to that word than meets the eye.

When we hear the word remembrance, what do you think of? We might think of Remembrance Day. So we think of recalling the past. Of recollecting the old days.

Of thinking backwards. So recollection brings those thoughts to mind. But in the Hebrew scriptures, the thought of remembrance meant so much more than that.

And so we think of any number of verses, but Genesis chapter eight, verse one is a good example. It's speaking about Noah. And the scripture says this, but God remembered Noah and all the beasts, and God made a wind blow and the waters subsided.

So God remembered Noah. Something's going on there that's more than Remembrance Day. So if you're around a dinner table and you're recalling old stories, or telling stories amongst friends, there's something going on that's more than just remembering old stories.

And God remembered Noah means God remembered something He had said to Noah. So He remembered something from the past, which caused Him to act in a certain way in the present. So the scripture says, and God remembered Noah and a wind blew on the earth and the waters subsided.

He remembered that He would bring Noah to a safe place, that the waters would only cover the face of the earth for a period of time, and then they would subside. He remembered something from the past, which unlocked something in the present. He acted in the present.

Biblical remembrance is different than we think it is. It's more than just recollection. Exodus chapter two, verse 24 is another good example.

This is the period of time where the Hebrew people are enslaved to the nation of Egypt. And once again, in chapter two, verse 24, the scripture says, and God heard their groanings and He remembered. He heard their groanings and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob.

And then the very next verses is how He raised up Moses as a deliverer. God remembered. He remembered the covenant that He had made with the patriarchs.

And He remembered something from the past that He was in covenant relationship with these people. And so out of that covenant, He acted in the present. So there's a lot more than just recollection, telling old stories that's happening.

Biblical remembrance is when you think back to something in the past that causes something to happen in the present, a God thing to happen in your presence, to happen in the present. The Old Testament prophets, it was common to call God's people to remember the covenant. So that doesn't mean just around dinner table, they say, hey, remember that time long ago where we made a covenant with God? That was fun, wasn't it? When the prophets called people to remember the covenant, what they meant is remember to it, think back upon it, and then live with fidelity to it in the present.

Think back about the agreement with God that you made, and then be true to it now. Let it affect you in the present. Walk in the power of that covenant in the now.

Biblical remembrance. We have a book that I felt says it so much. Ralph Martin writes a book called *Worship in the Early Church*.

He was a scholar at Fuller Theological Seminary, so kind of an icon in the evangelical world. He just says some great things. He says, at the table of remembrance, the church does not simply reflect as a mental exercise upon the cross of Calvary, but it relives the accomplished redemption.

It is taken back to the upper room. It is taken back to the hill of Calvary, and it shares in that saving work, which it knows as a present reality. Second quote.

To recall in biblical thought means to transport an action which is buried in the past in such a way that its original potency and vitality are not lost, but are carried over into the present. In remembrance of me, then, is no bare historical reflection upon the cross, but it is a recalling of the crucified and living Christ in such a way that he is personally present in all the fullness and reality of his saving power now. Biblical remembrance.

We think back to something that happened in the past, a God thing, and we bring it and all of its power into the present. That is biblical remembrance. And so when I exercise biblical remembrance, part of me is almost transported to Calvary.

I've been doing this for a lot of years now. I swear, when I practice biblical remembrance, I feel like I'm on the hill. I feel like I can feel the wind, I can feel the dark cloud, I can hear the soldiers.

It's like I'm being there, but it's even better than being there. Biblical remembrance is more than just being on Mount Calvary. It's when the power of what happened at Calvary is transported into my presence in such a way that there is no gap.

I'm not just thinking back upon the past, but that the power of what is accomplished on the cross is brought into my present and experienced in the now. That's biblical remembrance. And so when I'm wondering, does Jesus forgive my sins? I remember the cross because there's no way that I can look upon that picture and doubt what was done for me.

If I'm ever wondering, does God love me? I look back upon the cross. Yes, I'm looking back, but his love and power is experienced by me in the present, and I could never doubt in the present. Something that he did for me so long ago is experienced by me afresh in the here and in the now.

That is biblical remembrance. And you know, it's what every one of us, what our heart longs for. We don't want to think back upon the cross of Calvary like it was just something out of a historical encyclopedia.

We don't want to look back upon it like it's at the same status as World War II. Every one of us want to enter into. And experience the power of Calvary in our lives right now.

And so we look again at these words. For I receive from the Lord what I also deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, this is my body, which is for you.

So what's transported into our present? Love, the cross was the greatest demonstration of God's love ever. That love is transported into our present. Forgiveness, he made himself the lamb slain from the foundation of the world to secure forgiveness and redemption.

So the power of forgiveness, real forgiveness, and the power of redemption is experienced now in our present. But there's so much more to that end. When we think back to the Last Supper, it's more than just Jesus' words that are brought into the present.

It's the one who spoke those words. You can't imagine the Lord's Supper without the Lord being there, just like you can't imagine Mount Calvary without the Savior being there. And so we don't just transport his forgiveness, we don't just transport his redemption, but we actually transport his very presence into our present.

And so when he spoke these words, this is my body, he made the closest association of himself, an identification of his very presence with this Eucharistic feast, with the Last Supper, with the Lord's Supper. He identified himself very self with this bread and with this wine, this is my body. Jesus, of course, spoke Aramaic.

In the Aramaic, there wouldn't have been the word is there. This is my body. It was simply this, holding it up, my body.

This, my blood. And so he identified himself with the Eucharist. At Christmas, we spent many weeks in Advent understanding the incarnation, how that a human body became the bearer of Christ's presence, that Christ, the only divine Son of God, the Logos, existed from the foundation of the world, but then poured his presence into the body of a little baby.

That body became the bearer of the divine Son of God. And guess what, that baby didn't look any different than any other baby. It didn't lose any of its human properties.

That's why we refer to Christ as fully God and fully man. It didn't lose anything human. It wasn't less human in the process.

He didn't transform the body of the baby Jesus, but there was something added to that body, and it was the presence of the divine Son of God. So the divine Son of God came to us in a human body, and you actually had to receive the humanity of Jesus in order to receive his divinity. You had to welcome him as a man.

This was a stumbling block for many. He claims to be the Son of God, and here he is in human form, and he looks no different than the rest of us. And so you remember that some of the people who found it hardest to receive Jesus were his own family, because they were overly familiar.

The divine Son of God came to us as the human Jesus, and you had to receive the human Jesus in order to receive the divine Son of God. When Jesus identified himself with the Eucharist, when he identified himself with the body and blood, the bread and the wine, he spoke these words, this my body. He was signaling the time when the Eucharist would become the next bearer of his presence.

And so I've not been able to find sympathy with the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. When Christ inhabited a body, it was still a human body. It never became less than human.

That was the beauty of the incarnation. So I've never been able to find sympathy with the Roman Catholic doctrine that when Christ's presence comes in the elements, that somehow the present elements change, that they're not actually bread, that they're not actually wine, and the theological gymnastics that maybe they have to go to to explain those things. No, of course it's bread.

When Jesus inhabited the human body, it was still a human body. It didn't become a heavenly body. That's the beauty of the incarnation.

Don't miss its central message. And just through that ordinary human body, it became the bearer of the divine Son of God. But don't get me wrong.

You had to receive the human in order to receive the divine. And now at the Eucharist, he set it up in such a way that his divine presence is communicated to us. It's conveyed to us in the most ordinary way once again.

Bread and wine. Does the bread ever become anything less than bread? No. Does the wine ever become anything less than wine? No.

But does it become a bearer of something? Absolutely yes. For those that will, receive it. For those that will, receive it.

Therefore, when I am receiving the Eucharist, I'm receiving him. When I'm taking them in, I'm taking him in. I'm taking in his very presence.

And so in the liturgy, there's this beautiful phrase. This is the body of Christ broken for you. Feed on him in your heart by faith.

And as I'm preparing for communion, I think back to the gospels, how that Jesus was a manly human body like you and I. You can touch him. You can walk with him. You can listen to him.

And yet if you receive that human body, you receive what was internal, what you couldn't see, the only eternal love of us, the Holy Son of God. I meditate on that as I prepare for communion. Some people say, why do you kneel before communion? I say, well, I feel like saying, well, why don't you? I mean, if this is a place where his presence is, you'll notice me on the front off the one worship.

When the presence of the king draws near, my body language wants to kneel. It's almost universal human language that in the presence of royalty, doesn't matter what the culture is, humans have a tendency to want to bow or kneel in the presence of royalty. And when I stand before the king of kings, and when I'm in his presence, my body language wants to humble itself before his greatness.

And so when we, as a body, invite him to come and be present in the Eucharist, then my body wants to acknowledge his presence humbly. And so it's been the most beautiful thing is we've watched people's

understanding of the Lord's table grow. What has happened with that is their anticipation grows, their faith level goes, their faith is engaging with what's happening.

You know, people walked with Jesus for 30 years before they realized who was in him, before he was. And many people have taken the Eucharist for 30 years before realizing what they're doing. As they start to though, you watch it, it's in their body language.

It's in their eyes, it's in the way they hold their hands. They're looking to him who says, he said, I am the bread that has come down from heaven. He who feeds on me will live forever.

They're looking to him and feeding on him and on his presence in their heart, their faith, to come to the Lord's table. It is now the bearer of the holy and glorious son of Jesus, the bearer of his presence. And as we partake of the Lord's table, then the body of Christ, we become the bearers of his presence.

And what do we do? We then go out full of his presence in our ordinary bodies. We become the bearers of his presence. And the moment we leave those doors, we are carrying through Jesus' presence into a world that desperately needs him.

So, you might be new to this journey or as Todd said, you might have come to the Lord's table and always understood remembrance as recollection. And so, we want to give you opportunity to allow a different kind of remembrance to settle in your heart. That changes everything in some respects.

And so, there is opportunity for you to come this morning without fully understanding, without sort of having all that stuff settled in your head and say, okay, I get that. But come this morning to receive, to enter into something in a new way. Not to think lofty thoughts or to be sad about the cross but to receive in the elements, in the bread and the wine, the presence of Jesus and that you would not, it is our prayer, those of us who serve you, that you would not see us but that you would see Jesus and that you would receive from him.

So, just come with that in your heart. And see what he might do for you this morning. All who truly turn to Christ, repent of your sins and seek to be reconciled with those around you, your neighbors and intend to lead the new life, following the commandments of God and walking in his holy ways.

If those are your intentions, then draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to strengthen, to comfort, to nourish you and make your humble confession. So, let's take a moment. The scriptures advise us that the Lord's table is so sacred a place.

It's because his presence is here. He says that those who do not first examine themselves would be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of our Lord, diminishing the sacrifice. And so, we examine ourselves before partaking.

Take a moment, acknowledge his presence. And say to your heart, I will not sin against his presence. If you acknowledge your presence, what's the Lord's supper without the Lord? And so, we invite you to preside over your table.

And you are the great high priest. You're the only one that mediates between us and God. So, we ask you to minister in your priestly role that you would open the door of heaven so that all the power and the glory of heaven would pour forth over this table and into our hearts this morning, that heaven would visit earth.

And one day, we will go and make our home in heaven. And the great high priest has made both possible. Tom Holden said, the power of the last supper, the power of Calvary would be brought into our presence.

Together, let us confess our sins. Merciful Father, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. And what we have done and by what we have left undone.

Forgive us where the cares of this world have become our cares. Where we have succumbed to the love of things. Where we have used our minds, our bodies, our words in impure ways.

Forgive us where we have given way to discouragement, despair, self-pity. False comforts, harmful addictions, and selfishness. Forgive us where we have neglected your two great commands.

Where we have not loved you with our whole heart. And we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Lord, we're truly sorry.

And Lord, we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us.

And forgive us. That we may delight in your will. And walk in your ways.

By the power of your Spirit. To the glory of your Almighty God, our Heavenly Father. Who of his great mercy has promised the forgiveness of sins.

To all those who with heartfelt repentance and true faith turn to him. Have mercy upon you. Pardon and deliver you from all your sins.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. We need you to stand with us. As we worship in faith.

In the presence of our God. ■ ■ And oh Spirit, we will wait for you. ■ ■ Your presence, we will wait for you.

■ ■ We will go before you. ■ ■ We will go without you. ■ ■ We will go before you.

■ ■ We will go without you. ■ ■ And oh Spirit, we will wait for you. ■ ■ Your presence, we will wait for you.

■ ■ We will go before you. ■ ■ We will go without you. ■ ■ We will go before you.

■ ■ We will go without you. ■ ■ Yeah. ■ ■ So open heaven's doors.

■ ■ Let your glory fall upon. ■ ■ Hearts that have long desired. ■ ■ To see your presence.

■ ■ So open heaven's doors. ■ ■ Let your glory fall upon. ■ ■ Hearts that have long desired.

■ ■ To see your presence. ■ ■ To see your presence. ■ ■ In your presence there is hope for the hopeless.

■ ■ In your presence there is peace for the restless. ■ ■ In your presence there is joy for the broken. ■ ■ In your presence there is grace for the fallen.

■ ■ In your presence there is hope for the hopeless. ■ ■ In your presence there is peace for the restless. ■ ■ In your presence there is joy for the broken.

■ ■ In your presence there is grace for the fallen. ■ ■ So open heaven's doors. ■ ■ Let your glory fall upon.

■ ■ To see your presence. ■ ■ To see your presence. ■ We will dance.

We will dance and we will sing. In the presence of our King. We are free, we are alive.

In the presence of our King. We will shout your presence. We will dance.

We will dance and we will sing. In the presence of our King. We are free, we are alive.

In the presence of our King. We will shout your presence. Open heaven's doors.

Open. To see your presence. For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered to you.

How that the Lord Jesus, on the night that he was handed over, took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and he gave it to his disciples saying, take, eat. This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in biblical remembrance of me.

And likewise after supper he took the cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, drink this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink this, do it in remembrance of me.

Father, we are your covenant people. This is the blood of the new covenant. We remember the covenant that we are in with you.

A covenant that was ratified by the shedding of your son's blood. We call it to mind. And we bring the power of that covenant and the blessings of that covenant into our present today, that when Jesus died, he overcame every sin, every sickness and every spirit so that those of us that are in covenant with him would be free of all three.

And so the table brings us back to our covenant. Hallelujah. Father, we offer you this bread and this cup.

And we ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these elements that your spirit would convey the very presence of Jesus. The same spirit that hovered over Mary would hover over this table. These elements may become the bearers of your real presence.

This table might be. What we do together today would be all about you. Pray that all who eat and drink at this table may be truly one body because we all eat one bread.

That we'd be a holy people and we would be a living sacrifice for him who sacrificed so much.

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