

Breaking Of Bread A Two Fold Testimony

by Zac Poonen

This sermon delves into the significance of the first breaking of bread instituted by the Lord, transitioning from the Passover feast to the new covenant in Christ's blood. It emphasizes the exclusivity of the invitation to the apostles, the importance of genuine fellowship and desire for communion, the need for self-examination and repentance before partaking in the breaking of bread, and the essence of giving oneself to God and others in purity and service.

Scripture: Luke 22:15, Luke 22:20, Acts 20:35, 1 Corinthians 11:27, 1 Corinthians 10:16, James 5:16, John 13:14, Acts 20:33

Topics: "Communion", "Self-Examination"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like you to turn to Luke's Gospel in chapter 22. This is the first time that the Lord instituted the breaking of bread. It was till then the Israelites celebrated the Passover, which meant the day the angel passed over their houses in Egypt and did not kill their firstborn child because they put the blood of the lamb on the door, a picture of how God saves us from judgment as we trust in the blood of Christ to forgive our sin.

So it was to eat the Passover as we read in Luke 22, 15. But then what they did there was not eating the Passover. They were not eating a lamb there, which is what the Passover feast is.

They had bread and a jar of grape juice. That's what they passed around and when Jesus broke the bread and gave it there and passed the cup around. And for the first time in Jesus' life, in this entire Gospel, you see him use a word which is never used before.

That is in verse 20, new covenant. The word we use so frequently here was used by Jesus for the first time at the breaking of bread. It's a prophecy in the old covenant that there will be a new covenant God will establish with his people.

But this is the first time he used that word. And he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. So what I want you to see here is, first of all, he had only the apostles with him in verse 14.

There were many other times when Jesus spoke when we invited everybody. There were 10,000 people sometimes, huge crowds and he would speak to all of them and he never sent anybody away. But when he was breaking bread, he didn't tell those people, hey fellas, we are breaking bread.

Would you all like to come and join me in the upper room? He never gave a public invitation for the breaking of bread. Very important to see that. He gave a public invitation to people to repent, come into God's kingdom.

But when it came to the breaking of bread, he told his 12 disciples, this is only for you. And if somebody else came to the 12 disciples and say, hey, what about us? Can we join you there? They would have said, sorry, you're not invited. And some of them would complain like people do today, hey, what is this, some exclusive club that we can't be there? Who do they think they are? People say that today also.

The disciples those days were not bothered and today we are not bothered. People say what they like. It is Jesus who first made that group selective of those who wanted to follow him.

And that is why we also gather together in the same spirit of those who want to follow him. Are there some crooks sitting here who say they want to follow but don't follow? Well, in Jesus' group also, there was one crook sitting there. Okay.

Jesus allowed him to sit and we also allow some crooks to sit till God judges them. So we cannot say this is a perfect group. Even the first group of 12 was not perfect.

You'll never have a perfect church on the earth. 8% of that first group were crooks, 1 out of 12. So if you have 400 people here and there are 32 crooks, it's a very good church, only 8%.

So don't be disturbed with anybody, worry about yourself. This morning I quoted that verse, if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged. You know where that verse comes? In relation to the breaking of bread.

So what I want you to see here is in verse 15, Jesus said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. And then he took the cup and he was converting the Passover into the breaking of bread, the new covenant. But the point I want you to notice is there was a great longing in Jesus' heart for fellowship, not with everybody, no, no, no, no, no.

With these people who said they wanted to follow him. I want to ask you whether you have the spirit of Christ when you come to break bread. Because when we eat the bread, we are saying, I want to take part in your body.

And we drink the cup, you're saying, I want to fellowship in your blood that was shed for my sin. But also this spirit that Jesus had that brought him to the breaking of bread, I earnestly desire to fellowship with you. I want to ask you, my brother, sister, can you say that as you look around at some people here? We are not 12.

If we were 12, we could know everybody. But we are much bigger. Even I don't know everybody.

But even if I don't know your name and I never even probably met you, if you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and you're seeking to follow in his steps according to your light, not my light, according to your light, you're keeping a good conscience and you're wanting to follow Jesus. I want to say to you, I earnestly desire to fellowship with you, even if I may never know your name, because as a church gets bigger, we don't get to know everybody. But do you have an earnest desire to fellowship with those who really want to follow Jesus Christ? That is the question which you can answer to the Lord and not to me, because that is how Jesus sat at the Lord's table at the first time the Lord's supper was instituted.

Here he was at the head of the table saying, I earnestly desire to have this fellowship with you. It was not a ritual. It was not a ritual because it was an expression of an earnest desire for fellowship.

So if you don't have an earnest desire for fellowship with others here, then it is a ritual for you. It is meaningless. It is like in the temples they give a prasadam, everybody eats and thinks something holy is there.

There is nothing like that here. In fact, you can eat that prasadam and there is no danger perhaps. But if you eat the breaking of bread without such a desire, it is dangerous.

Do you know that this bread and cup can be poison to you? Let me read to you in 1 Corinthians 11. There are two things we proclaim when we break bread and drink the cup. 1 Corinthians 11.26. When you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes.

There are two things. Jesus died 2,000 years ago. His coming is in the future.

And we are in between. And both are mentioned here. The Lord's death until he comes.

And we are in between now. And we are proclaiming the Lord's death. And we are also proclaiming he is going to come soon when there will be no more breaking of bread anymore.

Do you believe that? Are you ready for his coming? We proclaim Jesus died for my sins. And if I, before I do eat, take part in it, it says in verse 27, I can eat this bread and drink the cup in an unworthy manner. That doesn't mean I am unworthy.

All of us are unworthy. There is no person worthy to be in God's kingdom. He is not saying only those of you who feel worthy should take part.

No, I don't feel worthy to be in God's kingdom. I am an unworthy servant. But he is talking about an unworthy manner.

That means the way you are taking part is wrong. How is it that you can take part in a wrong way? Then you will be guilty. Verse 27, if you take part in the bread and cup in a wrong way, you are guilty.

Let me paraphrase it, of crucifying Jesus Christ. Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord means you are guilty of crucifying Christ. How can that be? Ask yourself, why was Jesus Christ crucified? He was crucified only for one reason.

And let me tell you that. It was not to take us to heaven. Nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus died to take us to heaven.

It says Christ died for our sins. So he died not to take us to heaven. He died to take away our sins.

So if you don't want to get rid of your sins, and you take part in this, it's like crucifying Christ again. You are crucifying Christ saying, I don't want to get rid of my sin, but I want to take part in this. No, you can't.

So what you are testifying to in the breaking of bread is, this symbolizes your death on the cross, which is not to go to heaven. I am not particularly thinking of going to heaven now, I am thinking of my sin. Do I want to give up my sin? Not have you given up all your sin, but do you want to give up every sin in your life that displeases the Lord? Do you want to? If you don't want to, I want to say to you in Jesus' name, as you break bread today, you are going to take part in an unworthy manner, and then you are guilty of crucifying Christ, because you are treating his death as if unimportant.

My sin is more important than your death. Then you should not take part. So a man must examine himself, verse 28, what should he examine himself? What is my attitude to sin? Whatever sin your conscience is convicting you about right now, ask yourself, do I want to give it up? Do you want to give it up or not? And then eat the bread and drink the cup, because again he warns you, if you don't eat properly, if you don't judge yourself, you are eating and drinking judgment to yourself, if you don't judge the body rightly.

When he speaks about the body, there are two bodies of Christ. One is the body of Christ that was crucified on Calvary's hill 2000 years ago, and the other is the body of Christ right here. Christ has a physical body, he still has that in heaven, with the nail prints in his hands.

And he's got a spiritual body here, that means you are not recognizing what happened in Jesus' body on the cross, and you are not recognizing that you are breaking bread with the body of Christ here. And for this reason, verse 30, many of you in the church in Corinth were weak and sick, and some died. Do you understand why it is poison? Why did some people, not some people, sorry, many people in Corinth remain weak, sick, and why did a number die? Here is the plain reason.

They took part in the breaking of bread without judging themselves rightly. But, verse 31, if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged. Now there is weakness and sickness and death which is not due to sin.

I mean, even Jesus died. So all weakness and sickness and death are not due to sin, but there is some weakness and sickness and death due to sin. That's what it says here in verse 30.

That's why in James 5 it says, you must confess your sin when you pray for the sick. You must confess your sin. It's important.

It's the only place in the New Testament where it says you must confess your sin before other believers. It's in relation to healing before the elders. But here it tells us how some people are sick and weak and die because they did not judge themselves rightly.

If we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged. So it's in this connection that the Bible says we must judge ourselves. And so, when the Lord disciplines us, verse 32, with weakness or sickness or death, it is to save us from being condemned to the rest of the world.

So, in relation to the body, chapter 10, 1 Corinthians 10, verse 16, the cup of blessing which we bless, 1 Corinthians 10, 16, it's not the blood of Christ. Let me make it clear. There are some people who take this cup and call it the blood of Christ or they pray for it.

I've even heard people say, praying that this will become the blood of Christ. It can never become the blood of Christ. Nothing can replace that precious blood which is worth more than all the silver and gold in the world, which is drained out of Jesus' body on the cross of Calvary.

That blood is not on the earth today. This cup is a sharing, verse 16, or as some translations say, a fellowship. Let me read it.

This cup of blessing is not the blood of Christ. It is a fellowship in the blood of Christ. This bread is not the body of Christ.

It's a fellowship in the body of Christ. Make it very clear. Because there are people who teach that this bread becomes the body of Christ.

That's nonsense. It's a false teaching. Or this cup becomes.

That's against, verse 16. It's a fellowship. I'm testifying to my fellowship in the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In other words, that I also am crucified with Christ. See, when Jesus broke the bread, He was saying, this is my body which is broken. And now when you break it and eat it, you're saying, I also want to be broken like that.

I want to be crucified with Christ. I want to live the crucified life. When His blood was poured out, the pastor comes and says, do you want to drink this? Do you want to die with me? That is a sharing in the body and blood of Christ.

It's a testimony that I want to go the way Jesus went, the way of the cross. Now, you may have never understood it till now, but at least you understand it today. And it's not just a question of this moment.

You're testifying the way you want to live the rest of your life. I want to walk this way, Lord, all my life. And secondly, it is also a testimony that I am in one fellowship with other people here who want to be in fellowship with me.

Because it says in verse 17, there is one bread, and we who are many are one body. You see, you're taking part in a bread which is being shared with other people also here. That's the point.

You're not just eating yourself. You're sharing the bread, and the bread goes on to other people who are sharing it. And because of the numbers, we can't have one huge loaf here, but the principle is the same.

That we are sharing together in one bread, and thereby testifying that we are one body. That means I am in fellowship with these other people. So I want to ask you, is your heart open and clear in your conscience towards everybody sitting here? Don't worry if their heart is not open.

That's not your business. They have to judge themselves. You don't have to judge any other person sitting here.

You know, sometimes we say, that guy is not interested in fellowship with me. Shall I tell you something? That is none of your business. You mind your own business.

Do you want to have fellowship with everybody sitting here? Just yes or no. I'm not saying how many times you meet them. All the question is, are you walking in the light you have in your conscience? Do you have a grudge against anybody here? If you have a grudge against anybody, my sincere advice to you is, don't break bread.

There is nothing wrong in passing the plate to somebody else. Get rid of that grudge. Or at least tell the Lord, as soon as I get opportunity, I'm going to set matters right with that person.

I hurt that person. You know, remember Jesus said, when you come to the table, and you remember when you come to offering, and you remember somebody has got something against you. Not because you stand for the Lord.

I mean, the world is full of people who have got something against me, because I stand for the Lord. I'm not bothered. They are against Jesus too.

But if somebody has got something against me, because I hurt them with my words or my actions, then I must leave the offering there, leave the bread there, leave the cup there, go and set it right first. Then come and take part in the breaking of bread, maybe next month. Quite okay.

God will see that, that you want to honor him. But if it is a person you have not forgiven, then you can forgive that person sitting right there in your chair. You don't have to meet a person to forgive him.

To ask forgiveness, you have to meet a person. But to forgive a person, you can do that right in your chair. And you know the Lord sees the intention.

So supposing you decide, Lord, I'd like to break bread today, but I think I need to go and ask somebody's forgiveness first. The Lord says, Are you willing to do it today or at the first opportunity? The Lord says, Okay, you can break bread. I'll tell you why.

Zacchaeus had cheated many people. And he told the Lord one day, I'm going to give back four times. Everyone I've cheated.

There are many people whose address I don't know. I'm not going to keep that money. I'll give that money to the poor.

You see, if you don't know somebody's address, don't keep that money. Give it to the poor. Because it's not rightfully yours.

And how long do you think Zacchaeus took to set all that matter right? Probably a whole year. But Jesus said, Today salvation has come. How did salvation come to Zacchaeus' house before he had set everything right? Because the Lord saw his intention.

I see that this man is sincere. He wants to set it right. It may take him one year to settle it.

But salvation has come today. That is why I say, If you sit here, and you have a genuine intention to go and ask somebody's forgiveness at the very first opportunity, you can still break bread. God is so good.

But don't play games with God. Don't play the fool with God and go home and say, Well, I've changed my mind. God will change His mind also about you then.

Because He treats us as we treat other people. So, it's very serious. Because we are talking about a fellowship and a commitment.

See, these 12 disciples who sat with Jesus, they were not visitors. That's why we don't want visitors breaking bread with us. Or those who have the spirit of a visitor.

Those who are committed, they were willing to do anything for Jesus. I want to ask you, Are you willing to do anything? For this church? Anything? I used to tell, Jesus also demonstrated it by washing the disciples' feet. As far as we know, He did it only once.

And that was at the breaking of bread. So, that's another thing. See, those days, washing feet was necessary because the feet were dirty.

Now, today, there are some people who say, Okay, we'll take off everybody's shoes and socks. It's already clean. What's the point washing their feet when it's already clean? You may put your dirty water there and spoil that fellow's feet because you washed somebody else's feet with that water.

You don't keep changing the bucket when you go to the next person. It's all crazy. What did Jesus mean when He said, you must wash one another's feet? It means, here is a dirty job that slaves do to wash people's feet because they wear sandals those days.

You must be willing to do dirty jobs for one another. That is the legitimate translation of that statement. Not remove their socks and shoes.

Are you willing to do dirty jobs for one another? That is why I've often said, if you come to this church, you must be willing to clean the toilets because that's one of the dirtiest jobs that people do. And I hope sometime in your life, you will clean the toilets in this church. I've done it.

I'm willing to do it today. Especially those of you who, as I've often said, who do the elite ministries like choir and media ministry and all. Once in a while, go and clean the toilets.

Genuinely, wanting to serve the church with that spirit. Not to keep a ritual. Brother Zach said this on Sunday.

So I've done it. And tick off your name saying, I did it once. Not that.

It's a spirit. A willingness to serve and to give. So, you know, Jesus made a great statement once.

Which was the principle by which Paul lived. In Acts chapter 20. See, we know that in this church, we don't take an offering.

Not only we don't take an offering, the elders in this church receive no salary. None of us have ever received one cent or one paisa as a salary in this church in 42 and a half years. And that's not only true here.

It's true of all the 130 fellowships we have around the world. Or, no, sorry, about 70 to 100 churches and 130 elders that we have. None of them take a salary.

None of them ask for money. None of them send reports of their work. They serve and give without expecting anything in return.

You know who are the people who receive money in this church? The poor. Who are the people who receive money in other CFC churches? The poor. Not the elders or preachers.

Because that's how it was in the Acts of the Apostles. They always talked about giving to the poor. In Acts of the Apostles, 2 Corinthians 8, 2 Corinthians 9. They never talked about, Paul never talked about giving him money.

No. So we are following that example. But today, unfortunately, all the preachers say, give me money.

They take from the poor. It's the reverse. Those days they gave to the poor.

Now the preachers are taking from the poor. Do you know there's a verse in the Bible for doing the opposite of what Jesus Christ did? That's the spirit of the Antichrist. Christ taught his disciples to give to the poor.

And today when people take from the poor to make themselves rich, what is that, the spirit of the Antichrist? Don't ever forget that. And that's what we don't want to do. You must never take money from a person poorer than you.

Never, never, never. Paul did receive gifts. And if somebody gives you a gift, it's perfectly alright to take it.

Sometimes people give me a gift, I take it. But I always check, is this man poorer than me? Is he living at a lower standard than me? Which is the case with many, many people in India, in our churches. Then I will not use that money for myself.

I will receive it so that I don't insult him. And if he's living at a lower standard than me, when he's not looking, I put it in the offering box. Or give it away.

I cannot touch it. If I touch it, I'll destroy myself. Because Jesus never took money from people who were poorer than him.

Never. He gave. So that is the principle on which we work.

That we don't try to get benefit from the church for ourselves. It's very important to know that. Even our birthday celebrations like the one we had recently.

CFC did not spend one rupee on that birthday celebration. Or any of our birthday celebrations. My wife and I have always been very careful about that.

CFC will not spend one rupee on it. So, that is the principle of giving and not receiving. And the elders here have been a great example.

And all the elders in CFC are great examples there. Of not seeking to receive, but wanting to give and help and spend time with you to counsel you. Do you know how much time an elder has to spend to counsel you? And you're not the only person.

There are many people who come to the elders for counsel. Time which they could have spent with their family. How many hours they have given up? Time which they could have spent with their family to serve you.

I appreciate that. That is the spirit of leadership in this church. So when we're talking about giving, we're not talking about money alone.

Giving time is more important than sometimes than giving money. Think of someone who could like to spend time with his family. And he gives up that time because you come to him for some counseling.

He's glad to serve you. That is the spirit that we want everybody to have in the church. Because Jesus said in Acts 20 verse 35.

Words that we must all remember when we break bread. Acts 20 verse 35. Paul said, In everything I showed you, that by working hard in this manner, you must help the weak.

And remember the words of the Lord Jesus. That he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. What is he talking about? Verse 33.

I did not desire anybody's money. I did not desire anybody to give me clothes. You know that I took care of my own needs myself.

And Paul not only took care of his needs. He took care of the needs of Timothy and his co-workers as well. They were exemplary.

And he said, why did I do this? I've been with you for three years. Verse 31. Three years he worked to support himself.

While preaching. He said, as a preacher I have the right to be supported by you. But I didn't use that right.

And because of the words of Jesus that I never forget. Verse 35. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Is there a blessing in receiving? Yes. For example, you are receiving God's word now. There is a blessing in that.

But do you know there is a greater blessing if you give God's word to somebody? You don't have to be a preacher. You can give God's word when you speak on the cell phone. You can give God's word when you write an email.

One sentence. Brother, here is a verse from scripture. I hope it will bless you.

That's giving God's word. There is a greater blessing in giving than in receiving. Many of us have received God's blessing through receiving.

Let's go into giving. And that is one of the things we testify in the breaking of bread. Jesus gave himself on the cross.

For others. Now I am taking part in the breaking of bread to show that I want to give myself. For the church and for others.

That's why in this church we don't emphasize giving money. Even though money is needed. Those who earn enough and are happy to give, give joyfully without asking anybody.

But we say we have to give ourselves to the church and to the Lord. That's what God wants. God is not a beggar.

And he is not poor. Two things. He is not a beggar and he is not poor.

So he is not asking for money. He is asking for ourselves. I tell you what God wants.

Your body and your mind. Which has been polluted with dirty sexual thoughts and bitter thoughts and critical thoughts and judgmental thoughts. He wants that mind.

Will you give it to him? He wants your body which has been used for so many sinful purposes. The tongue that is used to shout in anger and speak evil. God says give me that tongue.

I don't want your money. I have plenty of money. God says give me your tongue.

Very few people in the world give their tongue to Jesus. So Jesus gave himself. He kept himself pure for 33 years when he hung on the cross.

He never spoke one word of accusation or criticism. He rebuked people. That is okay.

That is a holy thing to do. But he was not a back biter and a gossiper. And so when you come to the Lord and take part of the Lord's table and say Lord I want to give myself to you just like you gave yourself for me on the cross.

That's the best way to break bread. And not only to you, I want to give myself to this church. You say but everybody here is not committed.

Okay, Judas Iscariot was not committed. That's okay. Do you know that Jesus washed the feet of Judas Iscariot also? Isn't that amazing? It's okay.

So we are happy to serve the crooks. We are happy to serve those who cheat us. Fine.

We leave their judgment with God. What did Jesus do to Judas Iscariot? He called him friend. And we call people friends who are crooks.

We know they are crooks but we love them. Because we leave their judgment to God. But you should not be one of those crooks.

You should not be one of that 8% who are crooks. You must be one of the whole hearted as you break bread. That's why we judge ourselves and we don't judge others.

Judge yourself rightly. I believe we can have a wonderful breaking of bread today. A meaningful breaking of bread.

Every one of us. If you think of the two arms of the cross. My vertical relationship with Jesus Christ.

My horizontal relationship with everybody here. Think of those two as we break bread today. And say Lord I want it to be right between you and me.

I want it from my side to be right with everybody here. Even if they won't smile at me or don't look at me. That's none of my business.

God is never going to ask you. Why did so and so have a wrong attitude towards you? Never. He will only ask you.

Why did you have a wrong attitude towards that person? So think of judging yourself. And don't waste your time judging other people. Let's come to the breaking of bread in a new way in 2018.

That it will be a beginning of a new type of walk with God. Breaking of bread reminds us once a month about our walk with God. Amen.

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