

Christ Died for Evil People

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of remembering Jesus and his love for sinners, and calls us to follow his example of humility and sacrifice.

Duration: 20:35

Scripture: John 15:13

Topics: "The Cross", "Christian Love"

Description

This sermon focuses on the significance of partaking in the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice, emphasizing the call to love and forgive others as Jesus did. It highlights the depth of Jesus' love for sinners, challenging listeners to reflect on their attitudes towards those who mistreat them and to strive for humility and grace in their spiritual growth.

Transcript

So we want to look at 1 Corinthians in chapter 11 as we break bread today. 1 Corinthians 11, it's amazing what Paul says that he didn't hear this from the other disciples. What happened at the Last Supper? He says, I received from the Lord, verse 23, 1 Corinthians 11 23, I received from the Lord that which I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night which he was betrayed, took bread.

Paul was not there and when he had given thanks, he broke it saying, this is my body which is for you, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. 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 the bread, drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So we look back to the Lord's death and we look forward to until he comes.

And here we are in between. But the phrase that came to me, which he repeated twice, do this in remembrance of me, more than understanding the significance of partaking of the bread that I want to share in the Lord's dying or even the new covenant in his blood, is this phrase, do this in remembrance of me. Again, the cup, do this in remembrance of me.

So as we eat the bread and drink the cup, it's not some great theological truth that we have to understand. But very simply to remember Jesus who said, greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his

life for his friends. You know, sometimes we can get so taken up with understanding deep theological truths that we forget the simple truth that Jesus died for those who killed him.

And he forgave those who killed him. And it is our sins that nailed him to the cross. It was not the nails, it was our sins.

He said, remember me. That means we must think of Jesus, particularly his death on the cross. That he was willing to give his life for those who hated him.

He was willing to give his life for those who despised him. He said, remember that. I gave my life, the Lord says, for those who did not receive me, did not accept me, hated me, called me the devil.

I gave my life so that they could be forgiven. It's amazing, I tell you, we will, whenever we, when we finally go to heaven, I hope all of you will be there, and you see Jesus face to face, immediately, I believe this, the thing that will amaze you and strike you with wonder is how much he loved you. And the first thought that I know will come in my mind is, Lord, I never knew you love me so much.

I never knew the depth of your love for those who hated you, those who took your words lightly, those who were casual about their Christian life. How much you continue to love, despite all the corrections and everything we hear in the church, we continue in a certain way, keep on doing the same things, and the Lord continues to love us. So, do this in remembrance of me.

In what way? In this way, that when I partake of it, I'm saying, Lord, I want to have the same attitude to others who treat me in the way they treated you. Do you get that? When I break bread today and drink the cup, I'm not just admiring it. You know the difference between admiring and partaking? Admiring is, oh Lord, what a wonderful love you had, that you loved those who hated you, and died for those who called you the devil.

That's admiring. Such people should look at the bread and say, oh that's great, pass it to the next person, don't touch it, because you're only admiring. When the cup comes, you just admire it and don't drink of it, because you're only admiring.

But if you're partaking, taking the bread, eating it, drinking the cup, then you're saying, Lord, I don't want to just admire how you loved sinful people, how you forgave those who called you the devil. You're saying, Lord, I want to do the same. That's the meaning of do this in remembrance of me.

Never once did Jesus say, admire me. The world is full of admirers of Jesus Christ. Mahatma Gandhi admired Jesus Christ.

Many Christians admire Jesus Christ. He never, never, never asked anybody to admire him. Nowhere do we find Jesus asking for that.

He's not like these, you know, people have cricketing heroes. Young people sometimes put a big picture of some batsman or bowler. That is their hero.

Jesus never wanted to be a hero, someone we just admire. You know, I can never play cricket like him, but wow, he's a great cricketer or a great singer. I can never sing like him, but he's a great singer.

It's not that. Lord, you've called me to remember you, to follow you, to treat others the way you treated people who killed you. It's amazing.

I don't think, not I don't think, I know we can never reach that height. I mean, think of somebody. Can you think of somebody who really hates you? I'm sure all of you can.

Think of the person who hates you the most. Maybe your mother-in-law or someone. I want to ask you, are you willing to die for her? You're going to testify right now as you take the breath that you're willing to die for your mother-in-law, for her sins.

It's really a high standard, I tell you, to die for someone who hates you. Maybe your boss in your office who hates the sight of you and always creates problems for you. Or maybe a neighbor who's always causing problems for you.

Or some relative who cheated you of your rightful property. Or some of you from non-Christian homes, you were put out of your home because you accepted Christ and you suffered. Imagine those people who treated you really badly.

Think of someone who really treated you badly and to feel such compassion for that person that you are willing to die for that person. I'm sure you'd be willing to die for your own son or daughter. That's understood.

I think even non-Christians will do that. But for someone who hates you and doesn't like the sight of you and speaks evil about you all the time and creating problems for you, to be willing to die for that person, to save that person from calamity. You know there was a group of people in England called the Quakers.

I mean there are Quakers today also, but like every denomination they are spiritually dead today. But when they started, it was started by a man called George Fox. I think it was in the 17th century, 1600s.

And they were called Quakers because when they prayed they would tremble in the presence of God. It's called quaking. That's why everybody called them Quakers.

And they used to preach the gospel and they would go to Muslim countries and all types of places and very zealous witnesses for Christ. George Fox is a man, he says, I will never take off my hat even for the king. I only take it off for God.

They harassed the Quakers. They were really God-fearing people. I mean today there are Quakers, but they're nowhere like them.

They're also called the Society of Friends. But I remember hearing a story about them that many of them because of their standing for Christ were imprisoned and they would be put in a prison. And another Quaker who was not imprisoned would ask for permission to go after that guy's been there one or two weeks.

He says, let him go. I'll take his place and go to the jail in presence of them. Now that is a wonderful thing.

But the reason why he wanted to take that person's place is even more wonderful. It's not just to help his brother because he was concerned that that brother of his, if he dies in the jail, the jailer, that wicked jailer would be answerable to God for his death. To save the wicked jailer from being answerable to God for his brother's death, he said, I'll take his place so that he doesn't die in jail.

It's amazing. I heard that and I said, wow, where is my love for sinners compared to that? These people's love for sinners, they didn't want that jailer to have somebody else's blood on their hands. Were they

willing to take his place? Really amazing.

I tell you, a lot of us when we speak about love, including me, very little we understand of the love of God. We're so taken up with doctrine and you know, you can even be taken up with the doctrine of victory over sin. You know what victory over sin really is? I'll tell you.

To love God with all your heart, to love your fellow believers exactly like Jesus loved you, and to love your non-Christian neighbors as you love yourself. That is victory over sin. Otherwise I can say, oh, I've got victory over anger and I stopped sexually lusting.

It's like the small little things. If it does not grow into something positive, because sometimes we can think of victory as a negative thing. I don't do this.

I don't gamble. I don't drink. I don't smoke.

And you can add a few more don'ts to that. I don't lust. I don't get angry.

What about the positive side, which is to love our fellow believers as Jesus loved us? It means you look around and say, I've really got victory when I can love all my brothers here as Jesus loved me. Till then, I'm pursuing after victory. When I can look at others and say, I want to love them as I love myself, then I've got victory.

Till then, I have to humble myself and say, Lord, I'm still pressing on to perfection. But it's so easy to get proud. And I really believe, please forgive me for being so straight and direct, but I really believe that some of you or a number of you are not growing spiritually.

Even some of you who've been here a long time, you're not growing spiritually as you should. Paul told Timothy, who was the finest young man of his time, in 1 Timothy, he said, your progress should be evident to everybody. Have you read that verse? 1 Timothy and chapter 4. Now remember, Timothy was the finest Christian next to Paul at that time.

Paul himself gives that certificate through the Holy Spirit. I have nobody like him. And to him he says, verse 15, take pains with these things.

That means really take this matter of verse 12, speech, conduct, love, faith, purity, being an example, reading the scriptures, verse 13, and not neglecting your spiritual gift. All these things from verse 12 onwards. Take these things seriously.

That means take pains means work on it till it becomes painful for you, working so hard like a student studying a subject, then your progress will become evident to other people who are far more immature than you. How can a fifth standard student see the progress of a PhD student? Can he do that? Can a fifth standard student feel, ah, that PhD student is making progress? In the Christian life it is possible that a young believer can see a mature saint. Boy, there's more grace on his life now than I saw a year ago.

They should be able to see that. Not more knowledge, not more gifts, not more preaching ability. All these things count for nothing.

I'll tell you one thing. You can never excel Satan in gifts, supernatural gifts, or in preaching ability. He'll beat you outright in all of them.

What he cannot beat you in is humility. What he cannot beat you in is a genuine anointing and revelation of God through the Holy Spirit. That he can't beat you.

But any other thing, external goodness, ah, the devil can beat you outright because he comes as an angel of light. Can you become like an angel of light? He can fool people. So external goodness, Bible knowledge, preaching ability, gifts of the Spirit, Satan's winner outright.

Don't even try to compete. But the areas where our progress is to become evident is humility and grace that people see there. He's not the same as he was last year.

I see a graciousness. And that'll come as we remember Jesus. And then the breaking of bread is a good time to do that, to remember him.

He gave his life for sinners. Greater love has no man than this, than a man lays down his life for his friends. It says in Romans in chapter 5, see the contrast he says in verse 7, Romans 5, 7. It says in the last part, for a good man there may be some people willing to die.

I think a lot of people here may be willing to die for a good man. But then he says, the man is not a good man but just a righteous man, very upright. You may not be so eager to die for him.

There's a difference between a good man and righteous man. There's a difference between goodness and righteousness. For a good man you may be willing to die.

He's such a good man. But a righteous man is very upright, he pays his taxes and he doesn't do anything wrong. Well, I'm not so keen on dying for him.

But then go one step further and think of dying for an evil man. That's absolutely unheard of. But God demonstrates his love for us, verse 8, that when we were evil, not good, not righteous, but evil.

See, not good, not righteous, but evil, he died for us. And the Lord says, remember me. So, when we come to the Lord's table, we are saying, Lord, I want to change my attitude today to some of the evil people around me.

Isn't that a good thing to take a decision today? I want to remember Jesus, who gave his life for evil people, so that, Lord, you please help me to change my attitude towards some of the evil people I know as I break bread. I want to read to you a hymn. You see the words on the screen.

It's an old hymn of Watchman Nee's, which we haven't sung here for a long time, but it's got very good words. I think of it often in my own life. The words are, Lord, let me love when people are unthankful.

It's easy to love when people are thankful. Let me serve thee and seek but thine own praise. And though I'm unknown, dear Lord, help me be faithful and let me suffer in the secret place.

Let me break bread to meet the needs of others. That means to serve others. And let me pour out wine to quench others thirst.

This is a lovely verse, which I often repeat to myself. Help me to make life easier for my brothers. Think all of us decided to pray that prayer.

Help me to make life easier for my wife, easier for my husband, easier for my brothers, easier for my sisters. To give up all and put the others first. Lord, I don't seek man's sympathy or pity.

The honor of this world I do not need. I'll gladly bear my loads and share them only with thee. And in each trial, I shall never retreat.

For Lord, when you walked alone in this dark world, it was thus you spent your days without any protest, patiently bearing suffering and discomfort so that you might give rest to the others. Lord, I don't know the number of my days here, but this I know, the way I must press on. So help me to be perfect, according to my light, O my Savior, ever rejoicing even when I'm treated wrong.

The blood of my self-life I offer to thee now. The crown of eternal life is my reward one day. Forsaking everything that's gained for me, I choose to suffer.

I'll walk the way of sacrifice, O Lord. Let's do that as we break bread today.

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