

Commitment To The Local Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the significance of the breaking of bread as a symbol of commitment within the Christian community. It delves into the importance of actively contributing to the body of Christ, drawing parallels between physical body commitment and commitment to the local church. The speaker challenges listeners to assess their level of involvement and selflessness, highlighting the need for genuine commitment and service to the church as a reflection of one's faith and gratitude.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:16, Mark 14:3, 2 Samuel 24:24, Matthew 16:24, Romans 12:4

Topics: "Commitment to the Church", "Service in the Christian Community"

Description

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Transcript

I want to explain to you why the breaking of bread is a symbol of commitment. Many people, you see the fundamental problem with Christians, I'll tell you, is they don't read the Bible carefully. If people read the Bible carefully, we would all be of one mind.

Because the Bible is very clear about many things. Let me show you. 1 Corinthians 10, it speaks about the breaking of bread.

Verse 1 Corinthians 10, verse 15. I speak as to wise men and women. Isn't that right? Aren't all of you wise men and women? I'm sure you think you are.

Well, here it is. Judge what I say. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 16.

The cup of blessing which we bless, isn't it a fellowship in the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, a sharing in the body of Christ. So, there is one bread and we who are many are one body. Of course, when the number becomes more in number, physically we have to have more than one piece of bread, but basically it's one bread and we who are many are one body.

We all partake of that one bread. So when we say we partake of the one bread, it's not referring to the believers in China or Argentina or somewhere or Russia. No, no, no, no.

They are not partaking of the bread here. We are partaking of this bread and thereby saying we are one body. Body is a word we all understand.

You don't have to be educated to know what a body is. Every part of this body is committed to this body. There is no part of this body that is not interested in this body.

No part of your body. Every part of your body is committed to your body. And it's like that when we break bread together.

We are saying we are committed to this fellowship. Now the reason why we open it to outsiders who are visiting us, say, OK, you can take part because we assume that you don't live here and by the fact that you come here, it proves to us that if you were living here, you would be committed to us. We assume that.

So you are welcome. But those who are living in Bangalore, if they are not committed to this church, that's fine. Maybe they are committed to another church.

I said fine, then you be honest and break bread there. Because you are committed to that church. Why tell a lie? I mean, if your finger is part of your body, it's not part of mine, you'd be loyal to your body, not mine.

My finger is loyal to my body. It's very important to understand this commitment. A lot of people have no understanding of it.

And I believe that's one reason for lack of spiritual progress also. There are many people who say they are part of the body, but they don't do anything. It's like a paralyzed hand, you know.

If you've got a paralyzed hand, think of a paralyzed hand, it gets all the benefits of the body, but it doesn't do anything. It doesn't help the body in any way. The body has to sort of carry it around, feed it, give everything to it, make sure the blood goes into it, but it does nothing for the body, paralyzed hand.

And what the problem is, that then the left hand has to double the work, because this paralyzed hand is doing nothing. So, when we break bread, it's one thing to think of the body of Christ. There are two items which are called body of Christ.

One is the physical body of Jesus, which is the body of Christ who died on the cross. And the other is this body of Christ, which is the local body of Christ. And when we break bread, I'm saying, Lord, I am a part of that body of Christ which you died on the cross for my sins.

I testify to it in the breaking of bread. And I'm also testifying that I'm a part of this body which you have now built around here. This is the double meaning of breaking of bread.

And it's very meaningful. So, if you are a part of this body, as you claim to be, as you will be claiming to be now when you break bread, one very good question to ask yourself is this, what have I done for this body? That's an answer you have to give to God. What have you done for this body? Besides coming to the meeting, you say, I come to the meeting.

That is to receive. It's like if the paralyzed hand, you ask paralyzed hand, what are you doing for the body? Well, I'm getting nourishment all the time. Every day I get nourishment.

I'm happy to keep on receiving nourishment. I didn't ask that. I said, what are you doing? No, I'm keeping on receiving.

There are many paralyzed members. That's what I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters. Would you like to have a paralyzed member in your body, your physical body? Would you like a paralyzed hand or a paralyzed left side of your face or leg? You would not want even a little finger to be paralyzed.

How much we love our physical bodies that we don't want a little finger to be paralyzed. And yet, you yourself could be a paralyzed member of CFC. That you receive, you know, this paralyzed hand gets all the nourishment.

And supposing this paralyzed hand gets injured, it can't do anything. It hangs there, got a cut. The rest of the body, the other left hand goes and does.

That also I've seen. People who do absolutely nothing for the church, when they have a problem, they come running to the church and say, please do something for me. There is one word in the English language for it.

It's called selfishness. Selfishness with a capital S-E-L-F. That was the poison that Satan injected into Adam in Eden.

Think of yourself. It is that selfishness that causes problems between husbands and wives. Adam blamed his wife as soon as he got the poison.

And they produced a murderer of a son through their union. So what happens? When two people are selfish, you can even produce a son who is a murderer. It's all types of problems.

Jesus came to put the self to death on the cross. That's why he said, every day you must deny yourself and follow me. If you don't deny yourself, you cannot follow me.

And in that connection, it's a good question to ask ourselves. Supposing you were to write down on a piece of paper with two columns. Little homework.

On the left side, you write all that you and your children and your family have received from CFC from the day you joined. Which has protected you, preserved you, preserved your children, helped them to grow up. Instead of being wayward, helped them to grow up in a godly way, etc.

And on the right side, you write all that you did for CFC. And take it before the Lord. We don't want to see it.

Take it before the Lord. And say, Lord, am I a selfish person? Am I a paralyzed member? Receiving, receiving, receiving, receiving. And burdening other members of the body who have to do a lot more because I'm paralyzed.

I believe there are paralyzed members sitting right here. You say, I can't do this, I can't do that, I can't do anything. I agree.

There are many things we can't do. But there is something that everyone can do. There is a beautiful expression that is found in the scriptures concerning when the woman poured out the ointment at Jesus' feet.

Jesus expressed it like this, She has done what she could. That's a beautiful expression. Why are you rubbing her? She has done what she could.

Have you done what you could? God's not asking you to do what you cannot do. That woman couldn't preach. Please turn with me to Mark's Gospel.

And you read there in chapter 14. There was, when he was in Bethany, Mark 14, 3, a woman with an alabaster vial, Mark 14, verse 3, broke the vial and poured it over his head. And some were criticizing, why is this being wasted? It could have been sold and given to the poor.

Jesus said, leave her alone. She's done a good deed. And this is the expression I said in verse 8. Beautiful words.

Six words. She has done what she could. I hope the Lord will be able to say that about you when you stand before Jesus Christ one day.

He did what he could. She did what she could. She didn't lazily sit around saying, I can do nothing.

I don't believe God wants any paralyzed members in his body. When Jesus was on earth, imagine if some part of his body was paralyzed. It would have been so limited.

Every part of his body was healthy. And I believe the Lord Jesus Christ wants a healthy body on earth where every person does what they can do. He never asks us to do what we cannot do.

He's not going to ask you to preach if you can't preach. But every one of us, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, every one of you sitting here, there is something that you can do for this church from which you have received so much through the years. And even if you have not done anything till today, you've sat here for 20 years doing nothing, I want to encourage you to wake up and see what you can do.

One of the, what religious people will say is, I pray. It's a very spiritual thing to say because it doesn't cost you anything. When we think of doing what we could, remember the words of David in 2 Samuel 24, in verse 24.

2 Samuel 24, in verse 24. I will never offer to the Lord my God that which costs me nothing. I will not make an offering to God of that which costs me nothing.

2 Samuel 24, 24. I will not give to God that which costs me nothing. It's a very good question to ask ourselves.

Okay, you're going to do something for the Lord. Is it something that's going to cost you something? Or is it something that costs you nothing? The way we give determines our heart attitude to Christ. I can give you my testimony.

God gave me that verse when I was about 22 years old. Nearly 54 years ago. And what he said to me from that verse was, I was converted, just baptized the previous year.

And the Lord said to me, You must never give me that which costs you nothing. I made a decision that day, 54 years ago, that I will never, never, never, never, give to God that which costs me nothing. If I give something to God, he's a king.

You don't go and give a gift to a king of 10 rupees. Those who are doing nothing for the Lord are like people who give 10 rupees to God. I said, No, I'll never do that.

You're a great God. You're king of kings. If I give you something, it must be something that really costs me something.

It must cost me maybe inconvenience. It must maybe cost me some of my time. It may be I have to give up some of my sleep.

And, you know, to serve people, I have to give up some of my sleep. To study your scriptures, I have to give up some of my sleep. I have to give up some of my convenience and my own programs.

I have to give up some of my own plans for the day because 25 people want me to do something for them. Okay, I'll give up my own plans. But do you think you'll be the loser? At the end of that, so many people making demands on you, and church, this, that, and the other.

You will never be the loser. It's the lazy, paralyzed people who are the losers. I've seen through the years, God is never in debt to anybody.

I can tell you this, God has not been in debt to me. Far from it. He has rewarded me abundantly in my children and other things.

And I don't mean my children's education or financial standing or job. Those things mean nothing to me. That's garbage.

I'm talking about spiritually. God has rewarded me by doing something spiritually for my children. That's the only thing I wanted.

That's the greatest reward he can give me. If the Lord tells me, I'll either make your children spiritual, or I'll make them earn 100,000 rupees a month or something like that, I say, Lord, make them spiritual. That's more important to me, any day.

So, a lot of people boast in other things. But God will not be in debt to you. If you honor him, say, Lord, I'll be committed to you, I'll be committed to your body, I'm willing to go through any inconvenience and sacrifice, because when I give to your church, I'm giving to you.

And I will never give to you that which is cheap, which costs me nothing. She did what she could. He did what he could.

So this is the meaning of commitment. Think of the body. Completely committed.

Every part of this is... You know, there are parts inside the body that are working all the time. Our kidneys and liver and heart and so many other organs are working all the time. They don't get any credit.

Nobody honors them. But they do it, do it, do it. And I tell you, there are a lot of brothers in this church like that.

I wish there were more. And those are the ones who are... I can guarantee God will reward them in some way, in them and their families and all in days to come, and even more in eternity. So I want to encourage you to ask yourself, take it seriously.

If you're really serious about what I'm saying, go home. Take a paper and draw one line on it. And on the left side, make a list of all that you've received from this church.

And on the right side, be honest. If you've done something for the church, say it. Some of you don't have to make that list because it's so obvious to everyone what you have done for the church.

But some of you others who've probably done close to zero for this church, even though you've been here so many years, you need to make a list for your own benefit. And look at it in the face and say, Lord, is this my condition after being so many years here? Have I always said there's nothing I can do except come to the meeting? And listen, is that all? Think if you worked in your office like that. I come to the office only to collect my salary, to get any benefits, to get my bonus, to take my leave, vacation on time.

Input into the office, very little. I can't do anything here. I'm not qualified.

You won't survive in any office. Why is it we are more committed to our earthly office to do this, and overtime and whatnot, to get promotion, to get overtime salary, to get a good report at the end of the year? But when it comes to the church, completely different attitude. People go to work when there are aches and pains in their body.

So many sicknesses in their body. They go to work, go to work, go to work, slog. It's not easy.

Rain, sunshine, they go. You know why? Money, money, money. Ask yourself another question.

If somebody asked you to do something for this church and promised to give you one thousand rupees for one day's work, would you do a little more? You mean you'd do something for money? That you wouldn't do? For God, freely? Then I have to ask you another question. Are you born again? Are you really born again? Or you just got a little whitewash of religion? I believe you can sit 30 years in this church and not be born again. I believe that.

Or you were once and you lost your salvation. Because, you know, where there's life, there's growth. If I take a stone and put it underground, and I take a seed and put it underground, and I come back after 10 years, the stone will be the same size.

I come back after 50 years, the stone will be the same size. But the tree we have produced, say it's a mango tree or something, or a coconut tree, we have blessed so many people. One's got life, the other's dead.

Where there's no growth, there's death. Where there's life, there's always growth, and trees that go to bless others. I'm just trying to challenge you, I'm not trying to condemn anybody, I just want to say that it's in your own interest I say that.

Think if you had a child at home, 15 years old, 20 years old girl, that sits around crossing her legs in the sitting room, making the mother slog and slog and slog away in the kitchen. Wouldn't you say she's a useless girl? That's all I'm saying. When other people are slogging, slogging, suppose you have a number of children and two or three are slogging, or one or two are slogging away in the house, and the others are just lazily sitting there, coming to eat and then going to sleep.

You'd say, what type of home is this? Only some of the children do all the work? It should not be like that in the church. I want to say to all of you in Jesus' name, every one of us can do something for the church. I

don't know what.

Ask God to show you what you can do. It could be practical, it could be some other way. God will show you.

And if you say, Lord, I offer myself, please help me to be committed to this church and no longer to tell lies at the breaking of bread, but to really mean what I say today, we who are many are one bread. I believe that. From your earliest age you can do that.

See, when I started serving, I didn't know how to preach. But I said, Lord, I can serve rice and sambar. I can't cook it.

Nobody will eat what I cook, but I can serve it. So I would always volunteer there to serve rice and sambar in the conferences and churches. I just go down the line and do that and do it all the time.

That's how I began serving the Lord. So there's always something we can do instead of sitting like Maharajas and Maharanis. Be a servant, be a servant.

Jesus was a servant. The more you seek to serve, and it's never too old. You're never too old to serve.

I'm still young enough to serve rice and sambar today. Nobody let me, that's the only problem. Otherwise I'd be glad to serve all of you even today.

I don't think there's anything undignified about that. I think it's very dignified. To serve others? Yeah, sure.

Let's have that spirit of Jesus, the spirit of a servant in the church. Let's give thanks for the bread.

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