

Taking the Lord's Table Seriously

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of sincerity and examining oneself before participating in the Lord's table to avoid a lukewarm church and judgment from God.

Duration: 31:50

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:24

Topics: "Communion", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of approaching the breaking of bread with sincerity and understanding, following the example set by Jesus. It highlights the need for self-examination, repentance, and a genuine desire to follow Christ, even in moments of weakness and failure. The message stresses the significance of remembering Jesus' sacrifice and the new covenant in His blood, urging believers to walk in the light and seek to be more like Christ each day.

Transcript

We can never do anything better than Jesus did it. Some people wonder why we give some warnings before the breaking of bread as to who can take part, who is invited to the Lord's table and who is not. Are we being very exclusive, restricting? Let's look at Jesus who instituted the breaking of bread because we are only following what he did and commanded.

He said, every time you do this, remember me. He said, what do I remember of him? I'll tell you what I remember. He did not stand outside and tell the multitude, hey fellas, I'm going to be breaking bread in that room, any of you want to come, come and join me.

He never said it. When he was eating the fish and the bread, he said, yeah, all of you come, take whatever you want. But when it came to the breaking of bread, he invited only those who were his disciples.

Didn't that look very exclusive? Only calling twelve people and sitting with them. Why not let everybody come in and join in because Jesus is there. That is where you see the stupidity, I say stupidity and foolishness of many Christians today who think we can do it better than Jesus.

We are more large hearted than Jesus was. We just call everybody and that's why you have this third rate compromising Christendom today which has no standards. You mix, you have a pot of boiling water and you add ice cold water into it, what happens? There is no air.

That is how a church becomes lukewarm. The church in Laodicea, the Lord said, I wish you were hot. If you are not hot, I wish you were cold.

But you are lukewarm and I spit you out of my mouth. So the only way to preserve the church is to do it the way Jesus did it. That's why when we come to the Lord's table, we don't examine people's hearts, we can't look into people's hearts.

Well, but we want to make it clear to people. Listen, do you want to follow Jesus Christ to the best of your knowledge and ability? We are not asking whether you are perfect. You look around that table that first night when Jesus sat with his 12 people.

One was a crook. He was there too. And he broke bread.

He should have judged himself, but he pretended to be a disciple. And we can have somebody like that also, who pretends to be a disciple but is actually a Judas Iscariot, who is only interested in money and what he can get, what benefit he can get out of Christianity. There could be people like that sitting here today.

Well, God will judge them. We are not here to judge them. But there will be very few in number.

And then there are others who are not crooks. Absolutely sincere. All the other 11 were absolutely sincere, but very weak.

Peter, he was going to deny the Lord that same night. But he broke bread. Didn't Jesus know he is going to deny me tonight? Shall I allow him to break bread or not? What about if you are going to deny the Lord tomorrow? And the Lord knows it.

You know what he will see? He will see, are you sincere? If you are sincere, the proof will be that even if you do something wrong tomorrow, you will feel convicted about it immediately. Just like Peter, as soon as the cock crew, he saw Jesus looking at him. And when you deny the Lord or you do something wrong, you will feel in your spirit, the Lord is looking at me.

And you know what you will do? Tomorrow, when you do something wrong? You will do exactly what Peter did. You will go to some room by yourself and weep, not weep, weep bitterly. It means sobbing and crying.

Oh Lord, I'm sorry, I lost my temper again. Oh Lord, I'm sorry, I lusted after that woman again. Not just, oh Lord, sorry, I slipped up Lord.

I hope it's okay. Not like that. That's not how Peter smiled and said, sorry Lord, sorry I let you down.

There are people who confess sin like that. They will remain like that until they die before they finally go to hell. But there are others like Peter, who broke bread, denied the Lord that night and went out and wept bitterly.

And what is the result? After seven weeks, he became the leading apostle on the day of Pentecost. Can God do that? Why not? When a person is sincere, even if he slips up, God can restore a man to be an apostle. So we're not gathering a bunch of perfect people at the breaking of bread.

We're seeking to gather those who sincerely want to follow Jesus. And the mark of that sincerity is that if they slip up somewhere, they'll feel the Lord looking at them. Not looking at them and saying, hey, what have you done? But, that was bad.

But I love you still. And that'll make you weep bitterly. So to me, that is the test.

Paul said, I'm not yet perfect. Towards the end of his life, he once lost his temper. The high priest in the court.

But he immediately, like Peter, repented. To me, that is the mark. It's like a cat and a pig.

A pig falls into the muck and remains there. A cat may also fall into the muck, but it'll jump out immediately. If it stays in the muck, it's not a cat.

Even if it's dressed like one. It's a pig. So that's the way you can find out whether you're really a disciple of Jesus or not.

Not what you sing here, but when you fall into sin tomorrow. Are you like the pig wallowing in the mire, enjoying that pornography, continuing with that anger? Or like the cat, jump out. Hey, I don't like this.

This is not me. Of course, you're dirty. The cat's dirty.

It licks itself clean. It'll immediately go to the Lord and confess your sin. That is the difference.

In that picture, you have a difference between the unbeliever who falls into sin and the believer who falls into sin. And all the others sitting around with Peter also, they were also not perfect. In Gethsemane, they all ran for their lives.

Jesus said that. You'll all leave me. He knew that.

But he still broke bread with them. You break bread with someone who's going to forsake the Lord tonight? It was sincerity. They were sincere.

They were not strong because they didn't have the Holy Spirit's power. Once they got the Holy Spirit's power, then they were bold. Say, you can kill me if you like.

But you can't kill Christ. So Jesus understood that that these disciples, they let me down because they don't have the Holy Spirit's power. They deny me because they are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

The day of Pentecost has not yet come. They'll all run away because they don't have, they're not filled with the Holy Spirit. And I realize also that there are people in our church who are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

Some of you sitting here, probably many of you sitting here. I hope you will seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that you can overcome. So that you don't forever live as a baby.

Say, Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I want to be an overcomer. I believe all those 11 people, not Judas.

He was a crook. I believe the reason why Judas betrayed the Lord was, here's my theory. Judas thought when he saw Jesus doing these miracles and soldiers came to catch Jesus and they couldn't catch him, it says in John 7, because they said, oh, never man spake like this man.

And he heard about how once they tried to throw Jesus down from the cliff and they couldn't kill him, he just walked out. He said, wow, I'd like to follow this man because he will one day be the president of Israel, the king of Israel. He will come out and if I'm close enough to him, I'm the cleverest of the 12 here, I will be the prime minister.

But, when he saw Jesus had no interest in being king, you read in John 6, when they tried to make him a king, he ran away. Then he said, this doesn't seem to be working out the way I want it. And in his anger, he went and stabbed Jesus in the back, betrayed him for money.

And of course, that was the last step. You know, when you do a small wrong thing, maybe a very small, slight deviation from straight one degree to the right, gradually it becomes more and more and more and more. Judas Iscariot, coming into the bag, he thought, yeah, I can take a little bit for myself.

Another day, a little more. Because so many people were giving lots and lots of thousands to Jesus and he could take a little bit and nobody even knew because there was so much money in the bag, nobody knew something was missing. If there were only two or three rupees there, they would have discovered it.

He took and took and little by little by little, one day that love of money destroyed him. So, you can slip up in some small area. You say, oh, it's a small area.

I'll take it from the straight. Okay. You watch where you are one year from now.

You'll be way away from the place you should have been. That's what you can learn from Judas Iscariot. And then finally, you'll go 180 degrees and betray Jesus Christ also one day.

But it all started with a one degree deviation. So maybe there could be a Judas Iscariot sitting here as well. Or a Miss Judas Iscariot.

Or a Mrs. Judas Iscariot. I don't know. Jesus says, okay.

He'll give you the bread and the wine. You don't mean what that means. I want to die with Jesus.

You just take it. But the Bible says you'll be drinking damnation to yourself, eating and drinking judgment to yourself. It's better not to touch it.

So to save people from being destroyed, that's why we warn people. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians in chapter 11. Where the breaking of bread is described very clearly.

It says here, 1 Corinthians 11, 24. Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread and said this is my body for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Remembrance of me to me is the language of the bridegroom telling the bride, darling, I'm going to go away. I have to go away to a foreign country. But I'm engaged to you.

I'm committed to you. I tell you I'm going to come back. I will not marry anybody else.

I'm going to marry you. Wait for me. Be faithful to me.

Remember me. And I'll give you a little symbol to remember me regularly. But remember me.

I'm your bridegroom. Don't be drawn away by this rather handsome fellow with its wealth and its pleasures. Steer clear of him.

He's the dangerous guy who will try to win you away from me. Remember me. Be loyal to me.

Be true to me. That's what we are doing in the breaking of bread. A little symbol the Lord gave us to remember him.

Lord, I'm your bride. I'll be loyal to you. I will not be unfaithful to you.

If I slip up, bring me back. Lord, it is true that handsome guy called the world, when he looks at me and invites me, I am all sometimes tempted to go with him. I'll tell you honestly, Lord, because he's so attractive and he's so persuasive.

And he draws me with money and pleasure and other things. I have to admit I'm attracted, but Lord, I'm going to resist it. I'm sorry for the times in the past but I'm determined.

I'm breaking bread in 2015 with a greater seriousness. I'm going to remember you. And when that guy comes along and tries to attract me, I'm going to remember you.

Remember my engagement to you. I'm waiting for my wedding day. Remember me.

The same way he took the cup, said this cup is the new covenant in my blood. I have shed my blood to win you. I didn't win you with money or with miracles like Israel was redeemed out of Egypt by miracles.

That didn't cost God anything. What did it cost God to split the Red Sea or to send frogs or blood into that land? Nothing. But when it was the blood of Jesus, it cost him everything to redeem us.

And this is called the new covenant. I've signed with my blood. You know, it's like when you make an agreement with somebody.

Okay, I make an agreement. I'm engaged to you. I will marry you.

And Jesus says, okay, I'm going to cut myself, dip my pen in my blood. I'm going to sign it with blood. This agreement.

It's not ink. With my blood, I've signed it. I'll marry you.

As you seek my kingdom, I'll provide all your earthly needs as long as I'm away. I will never let you down. I will always hear your prayer signed with my blood.

What are you going to sign with? Ink? Words? Or say, Lord, I also will sign with my blood. That means I'm willing to die to myself. That's what it means to sign with my blood.

Agreed. I'm going to be loyal to you. Don't go back on it.

That's how I seek to live every day. Lord Jesus, you're the beloved of my heart. Nothing in this world will attract me away from you.

I wake up every morning thinking of my beloved Lord. I'm waiting for him to come. And I say, Lord, there are many things in the world that attract me also, even though I'm 75.

But it gets easier. As time goes on, it gets easier and easier. Easier to overcome sin.

Easier to hate sin. There's only one thing that will make you hate sin. That's the love of Jesus.

Some of you think you love Jesus a lot. Ask yourself whether you hate sin. Then you'll know how much you love Jesus.

If you hate the sin in your body, that's the proof of your love for Jesus Christ. It can come out of your eyes, ears which you listen, tongue, hands, thoughts. If you hate it, say, Lord, I'm proving my love for you now.

Not in words. My Jesus, I love thee. I know thou art mine.

For thee, all the pleasures of sin, I resign. But in the moment of temptation is when I prove my love for Jesus. Adam and Eve could prove their love for God not on the Sabbath day when they were with him, but the next day when they went into the garden and they had the choice, God or this which I love.

That's the day their love for God was tested. And your love for God is going to be tested by your love whether you love sin or whether you love Jesus Christ. You can't love both.

You may slip and fall, but you won't love it. And the proof of your hatred will be like the cat, you'll jump out immediately. Like Peter, you'll weep bitterly.

Have you ever wept bitterly over some sin you committed? I don't mean in the presence of others. Alone before the Lord, wept bitterly over that bad thought that I entertained for a few seconds. That dirty picture I looked at and enjoyed.

That unrighteous thing I did in the office, that financial transaction which was not righteous or I cheated somebody of money that should belong to him. I cheated him. Lord, I repent.

I'm going to set it right to the best of my ability. If you've gone and committed adultery with somebody, there's nothing you can do about it now. You can repent.

Go and ask that person forgiveness. Unless that person's already married, then forget it. But you can't do anything about it.

But there are certain other things we can do something about which proves that I've really repented. And which, if you do that, I'll tell you something, if you do that and you feel the pain each time you have to go and ask somebody for forgiveness, there's a pain and a humiliation. You do that nine or ten times this year, you'll overcome that.

But if you avoid that pain and that humbling, I tell you 2016 will see you in the same place you are today. Hate sin. New covenant in my blood.

Do it in remembrance of me. In both times, in remembrance of me. Remember me in the moment of temptation.

Remember me. So when you eat this bread, verse 26, and drink this cup, you're proclaiming the Lord's death. Not with words.

How am I proclaiming the Lord's death by an action? It's one thing to say, fellas, Christ died for my sins. That's with words. But here it says when I eat the bread and drink the cup, and I am crucified with Christ

also.

Here I show that. And so, if you eat the bread, verse 27, and drink the blood without thinking of what it means, in an unworthy manner, that doesn't mean being unworthy. Being unworthy, everybody's unworthy.

I'm unworthy, you're all unworthy. Nobody's worthy except Jesus. But in an unworthy manner means the way I'm doing it is unworthy.

That means I'm not remembering the death of the Lord. That's serious. If you eat the bread and the cup in an unworthy manner without understanding why Jesus died on the cross to save you from sin, then it says you are guilty, verse 27, of actually nailing Jesus to the cross.

Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord means you are guilty of shedding His blood like the Roman soldier who hammered the nail into His hands and blood came out. You're the one. I'll never forget a movie I saw, a Christian movie of a person who, how he became a Christian.

This young fellow, he, I think in a dream or something, he saw this picture of this man nailing the hand of Jesus to the cross. And then in the dream, he sees his own face there. He was the one.

He was not a Roman soldier. That brought him to Christ. And that's wonderful when you see that, that one nailing Jesus to the cross is me.

Like one of the songs we sing, do I hear my voice in the crowd which says crucify Him? One of these songs which says, I hear my voice Lord in that crowd that says crucify Him. Have you ever heard it? Have you heard your own voice? Or do you say, oh no, no, no. I never said crucify Him.

Every time you sin, you're saying crucify Him. He didn't have to be crucified if it is not for your sin. I hear my voice in that crowd saying crucify Him.

When do I hear it? When I sin lightly. Not when I accidentally slip and fall, but when I deliberately, I'm going to do that. I hear my voice, crucify Him.

I say Lord, I've said crucify Him enough times. I'm not going to say it. They are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

And that's why a man must examine himself. How can I examine you? I don't know what you're doing in your private life. I don't know what you did last week.

I don't know what you're going to do this week. I don't know what you're thinking right now. I don't know what you'll be thinking tomorrow.

I don't know what you thought of yesterday. So how can I examine you? You have to examine yourself. Your wife cannot examine you.

She doesn't know your filthy thoughts. Your husband cannot examine you. It's so true.

A man must examine himself. A woman must examine herself and then take part in the bread and drink the cup. But if you say, no, no, no, that's okay.

I'm not going to examine myself. I just like to sit here with this nice crowd of people in CFC and break bread. We try our best to prevent you from bringing judgment upon yourself because it says here, you eat and drink, verse 29, judgment to yourself.

If you do it without taking it seriously, it's like saying, Lord, judge me, judge me. Don't bless me, judge me because I've taken this lightly today. Maybe you've done it lightly in 2014, but no more, my brother, no more.

Put an end to that, this treating the bread and the cup lightly. If you do that, you're eating and drinking judgment to yourself because you're not judging the body rightly. That means you're not judging the body of Jesus that was crucified for you and you're not judging this spiritual body of people with whom you're breaking bread, many of whom are sincere and you join the crowd in an insincere way.

Scary. Because if you do that, God may be merciful to you for a long time, but a day will come when you'll become physically weak, sick, and die before your time. Some sickness, I don't know what.

Verse 30. For this reason, you're quite a healthy person, but you played the fool at the breaking of bread. The doctor says, I can't explain this, how you suddenly became weak and sick.

The doctor checks you up, does a scan and all, there's nothing wrong, I'll tell you. You took part in the Lord's table without seriously understanding what it meant. The Holy Spirit says that for this reason, many, not one or two, I think one or two make a mistake, you Corinthian Christians, many among you, the Holy Spirit says you're sick and a number die.

But on the other hand, if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged by God. So I hope you understand why we try our best to warn you. Please make sure you're born again, that you're testified in water baptism, that you're finished with your old, ungodly life.

And that to your understanding, you're walking in the light. Not according to my light. I have more light than many of you.

You don't have to walk according to my light. I know certain things as sin, which you still don't consider as sin. That's okay.

It's like a fifth standard student saying to the kindergarten, I know more than you, but you won't get my questions in your examination. I know to be sin, but what you know to be sin, are you walking in that light? That's enough. If you walk in that light, then by the end of this year, you'll get more light on things that are sin in your life.

And progressively, you'll become more and more like Jesus. So it's a wonderful thing to break bread. For so many years in my Christian life, when the preachers never explained this to me so clearly like I'm explaining it to you today, they never explained it to me as I have done to you now.

So I remained in ignorance and I broke bread. And I believe those preachers were as guilty, more guilty than me, for letting me break bread without telling me the seriousness of it. But today I'm not guilty.

If you break bread, you're guilty without taking it seriously. Remember the words of Jesus as you break the bread and drink the cup. Do this in remembrance of me.

Do this message because the Lord invites people who are weak like Peter and many of the other apostles but who are sincere. Are you sincere? That is my only question. Are you sincere in your desire to give up all known sin in your life? Maybe I know hundred times more things as sin which you don't know yet.

Okay, at that level, all that you know to be sin, 55 years ago when I was born again, there were at least a thousand things which I did not know were sin which I know today. Minimum, one thousand. But then God didn't expect me to know all that then.

I was in the kindergarten. So what you know to be sin, are you sincere in your desire to give it up and say, Jesus, you died for me, Lord, for this sin, these sins that I know. I never want to do them.

And I'm breaking bread to show that I want to die with you and follow you. That's bow our heads in prayer. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to their flesh but according to the promptings and the leading of the Holy Spirit that dwells in them.

No condemnation. We take part with joy, not because we are perfect, but because we are sincerely seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, sincerely repenting of everything that we know to be sin, habits of gossiping, habits of backbiting, whatever it is, Lord, help me. I want to give it up.

I want to give it up to other people. Please help me. My arrogant pride in which I sometimes speak to others, please forgive me, Lord, help me to be a little more humble when I speak to others.

I really want to turn, Lord, I want this to be a new year for me in many ways, and I'm breaking bread saying I want to die with you to that way of sin, the way of Adam, and I want to follow you. I want my blood to be shed. We want to take part in this bread today in a new year, in a very meaningful way.

We want this for each of us to be the best year we have ever lived on this earth, the most Christ-like year we ever lived on this earth. Thank you. Lord Jesus, break it and give it to us from your own nail-pierced hand.

Amen.

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