

The Lord is Eager For Our Fellowship

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of self-examination before partaking in the breaking of bread, reflecting on the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins. It encourages a deep reflection on sin, repentance, and a serious approach to communion. The message highlights the desire of Jesus for fellowship with believers and the need for a fervent love relationship with Him. It also underscores the idea that facing trials and problems in life is essential for spiritual growth and the ability to empathize with others.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:28, Luke 22:15, Matthew 6:33, John 14:15, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 4:12, 2 Corinthians 1:3, James 1:2, Philippians 3:10, Romans 8:17

Topics: "Self-Examination", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

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Transcript

When we come to the breaking of bread, for myself anyway, the passage that comes most to me is not let a man examine himself and so let him take part. That is very important. We read in 1 Corinthians 11 that at least when we should be examining ourselves every day, judging ourselves every day, and those who are wholeheartedly walking with the Lord will judge themselves every single day of their life without judging others.

But not everyone is so wholehearted and so they need a reminder. And that's why it says in 1 Corinthians 11, before you break bread, let a man or a woman examine himself and see what am I doing here. Here is a symbol of the cross on which Jesus died, forsaken by the Father, facing, experiencing hell for three hours.

For what? For your sin and my sin. So what is going to be my attitude to sin when I break bread? And remember that not just the nails and the crown of thorns. I used to think of that more when I was a little boy.

But now whenever I think of the cross, I don't, I'll tell you honestly, I don't think of the nails at all. I don't think of the crown of thorns. I don't think of the whipping.

I don't think of those things are a drop in the bucket. I think of what he really suffered, hell. Millions of years of hell in three hours on the cross.

For what? For my sin. For the way I treat other people. For the way I treat my wife.

For the way I am careless in my words or actions or thoughts or attitudes to others. That's why he suffered. And I say, Lord, that's what I want to remember when I come to the breaking of bread.

I don't, for many years in the early days, I took breaking of bread lightly. But for many, many years now, it's been a very serious thing for me for the last 30-40 years. And so the verse that comes to me most at such times is Luke 22.

The words of Jesus where he said in Luke 22 15, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Passover was the Jewish feast where they celebrated how the angel of death passed over all the houses which had put the blood of the lamb in Egypt outside the door. That's how the word Passover came.

The angel of death came and they saw the blood and the angel passed over. And like that in the Israelite homes, the firstborn son did not die. And the Lord said, every year you must celebrate this.

So for us also, punishment has passed over. And we remember that when we come to the Lord's table. But for the Israelites, it was nothing.

It was just a lamb that was killed, that blood put. But for us, it was the Son of God who experienced hell for three hours. Concentrated hell for three hours.

And I always say that's for my sin. So that's why I want to take sin seriously. And that is what I'm testifying to in the breaking of bread.

Lord, here is my testimony that I take sin seriously. And if any of you have not done that, I urge you start from today to take your sin seriously. So the word I have in mind is Luke 22 15, where Jesus said, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

That means that longing Jesus had for fellowship. I think of Jesus speaking to me, I've earnestly desired to. This is a symbol of fellowship.

It says in 1 Corinthians 10, the bread we break is a fellowship in the body of Christ. The blood we drink, the cup we drink is a fellowship in the blood of Christ. It's fellowship that Jesus desires.

I've earnestly desired to have this fellowship with you. You know many married people after a few years they get bored with each other. The earnest desire that the husband had for fellowship with his wife in the beginning is gone.

The earnest desire that my wife had for fellowship with her husband is gone. That's a sad thing when that happens in the Christian life. Every day Jesus says to us, I have earnestly desired to fellowship with you.

I hope you'll remember that not only in the breaking of bread, but every day when we wake up in the morning to remember that today Jesus earnestly desires fellowship with me. It doesn't mean I have to read the Bible the whole day. It does mean I must be in fellowship with Jesus the whole day.

And if you have to rush to work without reading the Bible, okay, that can happen sometimes. But try and meditate on something in the Bible while you're going to work. When I was at, when I was working I always used to carry a pocket small New Testament with me in my pocket.

Nowadays it's much easier. You have it on your phone. You can have a Bible on your phone.

So even if you rush to work one day while you're traveling, I used to read the Bible in the bus stand and the train and the bus. It's so easy now when you have it on the phone. There's absolutely no excuse now for saying I was in a hurry.

I didn't have time to read the scripture today. You have it on your phone. It's with you all the time and anywhere.

You can sit in the toilet and read it. You can sit in a car when you're traveling or don't read it when you're driving a scooter but otherwise and don't read it if you're driving the car. If you're sitting in a car somebody else is driving.

But I mean it, you know, there's so much time we have spare. If you have two, three minutes in your place of work, a break, turn to the Bible in your phone. Say, Lord, you desire fellowship with me.

I desire fellowship with you too. Think of a lover standing there saying I want to fellowship with you. Dear brothers and sisters, take it seriously.

Let's break bread meaningfully today. Really meaningfully. And if we can make that a pattern in our lives that every day the Lord is saying I earnestly desire to fellowship with you.

And I say, Lord, give me also a little desire as you have. We should be the ones rushing to him and saying, Lord, I want to have fellowship with you. But he's the one who comes.

It's very humbling when you read that. And I pray that we will never take the desire of the Lord for granted as if it's something cheap or light. Very precious.

I believe one of the most important things we need to do is develop a love relationship with Jesus Christ. A fervent love relationship with Jesus Christ. And that's the thing that's kept me going for 60 years from the time I first came to know the Lord.

Not doctrine, not teaching, but a love relationship with Christ. It's the most important thing, brothers and sisters, and I hope that you will take it seriously. All of you young people, it's wonderful if you can start young to love Jesus.

I'll tell you something. As a by-product, he will take care of your problems. That is a by-product.

That's not what I love Jesus for. I love Jesus for He loves me. And I say, Lord, even if you never take care of my problems, I still love you.

But he does. That's the meaning of seek first the kingdom of God and all these other things will be added to you. We can paraphrase it in today's language.

All your problems will be solved, not in the way you want, but in a much better way than you think. I like that. All of us face problems.

One of the things I read in the Gospels is this. There was never a problem that Jesus could not solve. That's how I understand the miracles.

Whatever people came to him with, whatever it was, storm in the lake, not enough food for people, somebody blind, somebody dead, it doesn't matter what the problem was, there was never a time when Jesus said, oh, that's a tough one. Never. He always said, okay, solve it.

And I remember that story of that blind man who heard some commotion. He said, what's happening? They said, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. And he said, oh, Jesus of Nazareth, heal me.

And they told him, keep quiet. He's a busy man. No, he shouted even more.

And Jesus stopped and said, come here. What do you want? He solved his problem. And those are spiritual lessons because I'm not saying that Jesus heals every blind man or every layman.

He did that on earth as a sign to the nation of Israel that he was the Son of God. And when I say that, to me, they are a picture of spiritual problems that we face and practical problems we face in life. I believe Jesus is interested in very, very simple things like, Lord, I need a job.

That's the meaning of give us this day our daily bread. You know, he taught us to pray that daily bread. How can you get daily bread if you don't have a job? How can your children get daily bread if you don't earn a living? He's interested.

I praise God for a Father in heaven who's interested in down-to-earth things like that. And in that song we sing what he's done for Jesus, he'll do for you. One verse goes, when pain and sickness come to you and touch your loved ones too, God knows how you feel.

Isn't that good to know? God knows how you feel. And he has power to heal. As he cared for Jesus, he will care for you.

That's been a tremendous encouragement to me that as my father cared for Jesus, the eldest son, he will care for me. I've often said I treated all four of my sons equally. I can stand before God and say, I was never partial to any one of them.

None of my sons is my favorite. All are the same. What I did for my eldest son, I'll do for the others.

God is better than me. What he did for his eldest son, Jesus, he will do for you and me. Believe that.

I believe it and it's changed my life. I'm not saying I don't have problems, but they don't crush me. I stand on top of them.

They're under my feet. God allows us to face problems so that we can become strong. God allows us to face difficulties and trials because then we can help other people who are going through similar difficulties and trials.

Even small things. I remember many, many years ago, I've said this before, when I was in the middle of, I was not even married then, 1967. I was in the middle of a youth conference and I had to change the date of my ticket.

For some reason, I had to rush back and I prayed a simple prayer, Lord, in between the sessions, I have to go and stand and get my ticket. Please let the queue for the ticket in the railway station be short. In Jesus' name.

And I went there and the queue was so long, it was out onto the road. Yeah, I had to stand on the road and slowly came up to the front and bought my ticket and rushed back. And I said, Lord, what's this? I prayed that I'm here doing your work.

That's why I wanted to rush back quickly. Why didn't you make it short? The Lord said something to me that day, which is that 52 years ago, I've never forgotten. He said, if I make you escape all the problems that your fellow countrymen are facing, you'll never be able to preach to them.

If the gospel is something that makes you immune to the problems of humanity, you'll never be able to preach to them. You have to face them. That's why in those days, I have to travel in unreserved compartments and everything that other people face.

Is it sickness? Is it trial? Is it problems with children getting sick or children having to go to hospital or surgery? I faced it all. But then I have something to teach others. The only thing I had not faced till now was somebody burgling my house.

That also, God says, I have to complete your education before you leave this earth. And I said, that also I'll give you. I haven't finished my education.

I don't know what is the next thing in the syllabus. It's all part of the syllabus. And I don't want to miss one subject in the syllabus.

I want to get a complete education before I leave this earth. And that education will be through trial and temptation and difficulties. And in that, I experience.

And we are reminded of that when we break bread. Jesus went through all that. If he came only to die for our sins, God could have made him like Adam, full-grown man, comes one day, crucified the next day, resurrected and goes back to heaven.

Why did he have to live 33 years? If he had come as a full-grown man, as Adam, and just died on the cross, taking care of our sins, he could not have said, follow me. I've been tempted like you and I've overcome. He could not have said that.

He could have only said, your sins can be forgiven because I died for all your sins. Why did God send him as a little baby to grow up, facing all the trials that little children face, all the way they grow up, all the way to manhood, work hard and sweat and perspire, working as a carpenter. You know, I sometimes thought when Jesus was working as a carpenter, did he ever hit his thumb with the hammer? What do you think? I say yes.

People face that. He faced everything we face. And he overcame.

He didn't have to do it. But he did it for our sake, to be an example. So when I come to the breaking of bread, I remember it's not just the cross that he went through.

It was a body that was broken with the, in his own will, was broken in that body for 33 and a half years. And that's what I remember when I break bread today. And I say, Lord, I want my will to be broken as well.

So let's remember that as we go to the Lord's table.

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