

The Right Way to Break Bread Together

by Zac Poonen

This sermon focuses on the significance of the Lord's table, emphasizing Jesus' love for imperfect disciples and the call for unity among believers. It highlights the importance of self-examination before partaking in communion, urging individuals to judge themselves rightly and cultivate a spirit of love and humility towards others. The message stresses the need to refrain from judging fellow believers, seek unity in the body of Christ, and avoid repaying evil with evil, instead choosing kindness and prayer.

Scripture: John 13:1, John 17:22, 1 Corinthians 10:17, 1 Corinthians 11:26, 1 Corinthians 11:28, 1 Corinthians 11:29, 1 Corinthians 11:31, James 4:12, 1 Peter 3:8

Topics: "Communion", "Unity in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

So when we come to the Lodge table, we can think of how Jesus instituted it for the first time. It was the Passover night when the Jews were celebrating their deliverance from Egypt. But this is just not a replacement of the Passover, it was something completely different.

And in John 13, it's introduced like this, before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come, he would depart out of this world. And take these words seriously, what follows, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. That is the introduction to the breaking of bread.

He looked around at those 12 disciples, 11 of them. They were so imperfect. They were often arguing among themselves, who's the greatest? Very, very imperfectly, despite having been with Jesus for three and a half years.

They were imperfect, competing with each other. Somebody wanting to sit on the left hand and right hand of Jesus. These were not perfect people who pursued holiness or humility or love, but they had a heart that wanted to please God.

And despite all their failures, Jesus looked at them and loved them until the end. He looked at imperfect people. I believe most of us are far better than those disciples were that night.

But they were sincere, proving, proved by the fact that they had given up their professions to follow Jesus. But I find this phrase is so relevant. Relevant.

And, you know, in this, he prayed during the, after the breaking of bread, he prayed like this in John 17. I pray that verse 22, 17, 22, this is after the breaking of bread. I pray that the last part, that there may be one just as we are one.

So these are the two statements, you know, one is before the breaking of bread, having loved his own, which are in the world, he loved them unto the end. And his prayer was that there may be one as we are one, and that is the meaning of that one loaf being broken. So it's good for us to examine ourselves when we come to the Lord's table.

That is not just an empty ritual, say, oh, I'm born again, so I can take part. That's not enough. Have I at least tried to love the folks around me? In an imperfect church like NCCF, every church is imperfect.

Like those imperfect disciples and sought to love until the end. And seeking to do my part to fulfill the Lord's desire that he wants us all to be one. How one as he and the Father are one.

That's quite a standard, that they may be one just as Father, you and I are one. That's an amazing standard. And that is what we are testifying to when we break one bread and take part in it.

In 1 Corinthians in chapter 10, it says in verse 17, there is one bread and we who are many are one body. That's the meaning of that, because we all partake of that one bread. So we don't want to be like those disciples competing for the left hand and the right hand.

There's one good thing I see in them. It says when Jesus said to them that in John 13, he said, one of you is going to betray me. They didn't look around and say, it must be that guy.

They said, Lord, is it I? It's a very good question to ask when we come to the Lord's table. If the Lord were to sit here and say, one of you is going to betray me. Jesus is here.

Two or three are gathered together in my name. He's in our midst. And if he says that somebody who's here is going to betray me, who would I respond saying, Lord, is it I? Or would I say, I know who that could be.

Must be either this guy or that guy or the other one. Because we must be honest. We have opinions about the different ones in our church.

Sometimes those are not good opinions. And so if the Lord says, one of you is going to betray me, we got a list of who those people could be. The Bible says in relation to the breaking of bread, another verse, 1 Corinthians 11.

It's again talking about the Lord's table. 1 Corinthians 11, 26, as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. And then it says, if you eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner, to paraphrase, you'll be guilty as guilty as those who crucified Christ, guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

So if I take part in the cup in an unworthy manner, it says here, it's just like me crucifying Christ on the cross. And so what should we do? Verse 28, a man must examine himself and nobody else. Just like those disciples said, Lord, is it I? It's a very good question to ask ourselves when we come to the Lord's table.

Lord, is it I? And examine himself, and so doing, eat the bread and drink the cup. But if I don't drink like that, I mean, if I don't eat and drink like that, but judge others, then it says here, I'm drinking judgment to myself. For this reason, many are sick and weak.

That's an interesting statement there, that some sickness is due to a wrong attitude towards somebody else in the body of Christ. That's the meaning there, that you come to the Lord's table, and you pretend that you are one with everybody, breaking the same bread. But it's not really true, it can lead to sickness.

It's amazing, it says that some people die. I don't know whether we take those words seriously. Through the years, I've learned to take every word of God seriously, and that's what's made a difference in my life.

And so, verse 31, if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged in the way mentioned in verse 30. God will not judge us, there's only one condition, for God not to judge us. We judge ourselves rightly.

And I've taken that verse for many years to apply to the final judgment when we stand before the Lord in the last day as well. I don't want to be judged in that day, I'll tell you honestly. When the Lord goes through the record of my life, in the final day, when I stand before him, I want him to say, it's all clear, there's nothing for you to be judged in.

Can you imagine how wonderful it'll be if you and I could hear that, and the answer is here. If we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged even in the final day. And that's why I have taught for many years that we must judge ourselves daily.

It doesn't make us miserable. It'll free us from condemnation, it'll free us from judging others. We keep the standards, we stand up for what is right, and I know in CFC through 50 years, we have proclaimed standards that a lot of people call us legalistic, and a lot of people say we're judging everybody else, we're not.

We wish the best for everybody. We proclaim those standards when we judge ourselves first. Lord, am I living? And I've tried to do that.

God is my witness that I've tried my best to live a life where I judge myself daily. And it's made my life extremely happy, free from condemnation, free from wanting to retaliate against people who criticize or speak evil. I mean, the Christian world is full of people who oppose us and have got a lot of things against us because we stand up for certain truths that expose their sin.

But we don't judge them. We judge ourselves. So, I want to read a, this is from the Living Bible, which I've got here, and I want to, it's a beautiful translation of 1 Peter chapter 3. You can turn to it in your Bibles, 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 8 and 9. It's a very beautiful paraphrase in the Living Bible.

And now, this word to all of you, and I hope all of us will take this personally. You all should be like one big, happy family. You hear that? You all should be like one big, happy family.

So, think of everyone here and see whether you're seeking from your part, judging yourself, doing your part to make this church one big, happy family. Full of sympathy towards each other. It's easy to be sympathetic towards someone who is sick or handicapped.

That's easy. Even a worldly person would do that. But there are other struggles that a lot of people in our midst face.

And we can be sympathetic towards someone who's going through financial struggles. But there are people going through spiritual struggles. Young people battling with many temptations.

We should be full of sympathy and not say, ah, that's because he's like this. That's why God is judging him. Be careful.

Do not judge. James 4 says, there is only one lawgiver, and therefore, there's only one judge. That's what he says in James 4. Because only one person has given the law, he's the only one qualified to be the judge.

We are not qualified to make laws for other people. We can read out what the laws God has given and explain them. But we're not asked to make laws for other people.

There's one lawgiver, James 4. You take time to read it. Therefore, he's the only one who's a judge. So when you judge somebody, you're saying, I made a law.

This guy's not kept the law, so I judge him. You got to be careful. Be one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.

I like that. Tender hearts means something's very sensitive, where we get hurt with a little touch. We react to it.

And something like the eye, anything touches the eye, we react. Tender hearts, a heart that immediately reacts when I have a wrong attitude towards someone. And humble minds.

Lord, I'm not qualified to judge. I'm not a lawgiver. Dear brothers and sisters, anytime you're tempted to judge someone, ask yourself, are you the lawgiver? James 4 says there is one lawgiver, therefore, there's only one judge.

And so don't repay evil for evil, verse 9. And don't snap back at those who say unkind things about you. The world is full of people who may say unkind things about you. Sometimes a believer may say something unkind about you.

Don't snap back. Snap back means an immediate reaction. Instead, pray that God will help them, because we ought to be kind to others.

And God will bless us for it. And when God blesses you, I'll tell you something. It will become evident to other people, even to those who oppose you.

They will see that the blessing of God is upon our lives. So let us follow those words we heard. Judge ourselves and take part.

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