Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Heart of Worship
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32
Code: 80-269

As we come to the Lord's Table this morning, it is appropriate I think for us to concentrate all of our thoughts on this very wonderful opportunity that is before us. With that in mind I want to draw your attention to a familiar portion of Scripture this morning that speaks directly to the issue of the Lord's Table.

Open your Bible, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Through the years we come to the Lord's Table frequently, as you know, and very often the message does not directly relate to the Table of the Lord but perhaps only indirectly as we work our way through various books of Scripture. But occasionally it is helpful for us to stop, go back, and look again at the reality of what this Table really is about.

The language of 1 Corinthians chapter 11 presents for us an unmistakable understanding of this wonderful opportunity for worship. If you'll look at verse 23, I just want to begin reading there, "For I received from the Lord that which I also deliver to you that the Lord Jesus in a night in which he was betrayed took bread," and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, "This is My body which is 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 this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason, many among you are weak and sick, and in numbers sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly we should not be judged, but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Let's stop right there. There's a verse in the middle of that text, verse 30, which reminds us that the Lord's Table can be a dangerous experience. Paul says, "For this reason many among you are weak and sick and in numbers sleep." What reason? "A failure to rightly judge the body," verse 29, "Failure to examine one's self," verse 28, "Partaking in an unworthy manner,"
verse 27. The Lord treats this with such seriousness that the Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, "This is a dangerous place to come."

Because of how you approach this table some of you are weak and some of you are sick, and some of you are dead, that's what sleep means. The serious chastening and discipline of the Lord which is referred to in verse 32. "When we are judged with regard to this Table, we are disciplined by the Lord." It's not a matter of being condemned along with the world to hell, it's not a matter of eternal judgment, but it is a matter of discipline by the Lord. It can be a dangerous place to come.

We learn in Acts chapter 5, that the time of the offering can be a dangerous time too, and Sapphira lied in an act of hypocrisy, in their giving, and they were slain by God in front of whole church and their bodies taken out and buried on that very Lord's Day. I think we like to think of the church as a place of ease, and a place of peace, and a place of comfort, place of safety, a haven. But the church can be a very, very dangerous place; people die in churches. People become weakened, ill, because of conduct inside or within the Assembly of God's people.

If it's that serious, so serious that the discipline of the Lord falls to the maximum degree, which would be death, where the Lord literally takes the life of one of His disobedient children, because of the way in which they treat the Lord's Table. If it's that serious then it behooves us to understand how to come, lest we bring upon ourselves such weakness, such sickness or such death.

The highest duty that a Christian has is to worship; I think we all understand that. The reason we know that is because when you look at heaven and you see what's going on there, it's basically worship. You're looking at the angels and they're worshipping. You're looking at the redeemed saints and they're worshipping, and you're looking at the future and the book of Revelation and when all of us are gathered together into the presence of the Lord, ultimately we'll all be in His presence worshipping forever and ever. The great privilege, the great joy, the great duty of heaven is going to be worship, eternal worship.

The Father says to Jesus in John 4, "Seeks true worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth." Paul says, "If you're a Christian you are one who worships in the spirit of God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and having no confidence in the flesh." Worship then is our greatest calling. Now that then begs the question what is worship? We hear a lot about worship today, the word is thrown around all the over place, but if I were to ask you to define worship, what would you say? It's very, very easy to define; it's very, very simple to define. Worship is acknowledging and thanking God for all He is and all He does, that's worship.

Acknowledging and thanking God for all He is and all He does, that is the body of worship. That is what constitutes worship. It is a recitation of God's attributes, characteristics, God's nature and a recitation of God's acts. What He has done, is doing, and has promised to do and a responding or corresponding attitude of gratitude. It is then exalting God for who He is and what He has done and expressing thanks, especially as those truths about His nature and His work relate to us.

Whether by songs, or hymns, or choruses, whether in the mind by meditation, or in words expressed to God in a prayer or expressed to others in praise, whether in an appropriate and obedient, immediately obedient response to the truth of the Word of God. Whatever the form of mode might be, all of those are ways in which we can acknowledge and thank God for who He is and what He has done.

The body of worship then takes many forms, many forms. I've been, as you well know, all over the world and around the world many, many times and I have seen many different forms of worship. The body of worship can take many forms. Always, it is to rise from the heart, so in that sense it is as personal as an individual believer. It then rising out of the heart comes through the mind and the vocabulary of every individual believer, and comes through the experience and the historical record of the wonderful work of God in an individual life and so there is an individuality to worship.

When we sing a hymn, although we may be singing the same words, that hymn may be interpreted in our lives in the personal way in which God has wrought grace on our behalf, through the unique way in which we were brought to faith in Christ through the circumstances which we have enjoyed in seeing that grace unfold in His sanctifying work.

So the body of worship is diverse; it is personal, it is individual, and it is corporate, and it is everything in between. However, I don't want to talk about the body of worship I want to talk about the heart of worship. When you go inside this diverse body that takes many forms there is a heart of worship that is singular, it is prescribed, it is carefully prescribed, it is defined and it is limited.

The heart of worship has boundaries, the heart of worship is restricted, and the heart of the worship is the Lord's Table and we are told exactly how to do it. We are told exactly what it means, what it expresses, what is symbolizes, what it memorializes and what it proclaims, and what it gives testimony too and we are told exactly how to do it, so that the heart of worship is tightly bound and narrowly defined, and is in fact, the sweetest and most joyous and purest form of our worship, for it focuses on the greatest reality in all of redempted history that saving work of Jesus on the cross.

The heart of Old Testament worship, there was a body of Old Testament worship that was diverse, but the heart of Old Testament worship was the celebration every year of one great event. What was it? Passover, Passover because that is when the people of Israel remembered God as a Redeemer. God as a Redeemer by blood; God as a Redeemer through a substitute sacrifice; God as a Redeemer through a lamb that was slain, many lambs that were slain; God as a Redeemer from the Kingdom of Egypt which was part of the kingdom of darkness therefore a Redeemer from evil, from the domain of darkness, from Satan's kingdom; God as a Redeemer who destroys the enemy and brings His people into the promised land of Canaan.

The Passover was very carefully prescribed. Patricia and I are reading through the Old Testament together and we're right there in our reading this particular time in the book of Exodus, reading about the Passover and what was required in the celebration of the Passover, the prescriptions are down to the way the food was prepared, everything was prescribed. This was the heart of worship and there is in the Old Testament then this very clearly defined, narrowly, bounded expression of worship that looks directly at and defines clearly the meaning of redemption as most singularly demonstrated in the Old Testament.

Now, in the New Testament, Passover has been set aside. In fact, at the Last Supper, as we call it, on that Thursday night when Jesus gathered with the Apostles to celebrate the Passover, the Galileans celebrated it on Thursday, the Judeans on Friday, as He gathered with his Galilean Apostles and they celebrated the Passover, Jesus celebrated it really for the last time because He transformed it into the Lord's Table and it became the new memorial, the new symbol of redemption.

The real redemption which the blood sacrifice of the Passover only pictured, and so when we talk about the Lord's Table, we're getting to the heart of worship, that is why we don't do this once a year, the early church did it every day. Acts chapter 2, verses 42 and 46, "They were doing it everyday, everyday of the week, everyday of the month, they were so focused on the glory of the cross and the wonder of redemption, and than the church began to do it every week," and now as you know, it becomes very often every month and I'm sad to tell you that while every month alone may not be enough and we try to add more then that in a year there are many churches from which it has disappeared all together, but it is the heart of Christian worship.

It concerns me that we have proliferated contemporary Christian worship with a lot of praise choruses, most of which never mention the cross, most of which are recitations of Old Testament Scriptures. They are true in themselves but they leave out the most important reality of our worship and that is the focus on the glory of the cross to which everything in the Old Testament points, and on which all promises of the Old Testament turn.

So never are we more centered in worship then when we acknowledge the cross. Never are we more centered in to the cross then when we come to the Lord's Table. So this is not just an addendum this is the heart of our worship.

You say, well why don't we do it all the time? Why don't we do it more? Well we struggle with the reality of the fact that if you do it all the time then it loses something of its significance. Somewhere between an annual Passover and a daily Lord's Table is a reasonable approach to this so that it maintains its freshness, and that it's fixed in our minds even in those weeks we don't it. The memories, the fresh memories of having done it are still vivid for us.

The Apostle Paul in verse 23 says, "I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, this comes from the Lord." It is very reasonable to assume in fact that 1 Corinthians was written before any of the Gospels. In that case, this could be the first instruction given on the Lord's Table, even before Matthew, Mark and Luke gave theirs.

Paul says, "It comes directly from the Lord. The Lord telling him before even the Gospels were written what happened on that night. The Lord delivered to Paul the word that He Himself, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, 'this is My body which is 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."

Paul says, "This is from the Lord directly," and of course it is included in the Gospels as well because it is the heart of worship. It was on that Thursday night Passover; as I said there was a Friday Passover celebration for the Judeans living in the south. Around Jerusalem there was a Thursday celebration of the Passover for the Galileans and this was such a Thursday. The next day would be the day that of course Jesus was taken and crucified on the Friday to rise again on Sunday.

It was on that occasion of the Passover that Jesus instituted this new memorial. Now I just want to mention two things to you by way of broad points. One, the purpose of the Lord's Supper, the purpose of the Lord's Supper. It's clear in the verses that I read you that the purpose is verse 24, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Verse 25, "As often as you drink it," and there is no particular schedule given for how often but "As often as you drink it in remembrance of Me."

First it is then a remembrance. It is a memorial. It establishes exactly what the Passover established. The Passover itself was a memorial. Israel had, as you remember, been in Egypt for 430 years when the exodus finally occurred. The heat had been turned up on their life by the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, who didn't have any gratitude for the Jew that had come down there and basically saved their nation from famine and given great leadership, and the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph cared little for the prosperous Jews who were living in Goshen. They, as far as he was concerned, were nothing more then a force of slaves and you remember how hard he made the work for them. They sought to be delivered, God raised up Moses, God led them out through a series of plagues, He finally broke the resistance of Pharaoh and Pharaoh determined to let them go after the death of the first born. They were protected from the plagues, as you remember they didn't touch the areas of Goshen where these probably two million Jews lived and flourished and they were protected from the Angel of Death by the sacrifice of the Passover lamb and the blood spattered across the top of the door and down the sides.

God was their Redeemer. God, by virtue of blood on their house, blood covering them through a substitutionary sacrifice passed by in death and rather then being their judge became their Redeemer and brought them powerfully and miraculously out of the land of Egypt and toward the land of Canaan, the promised land, the land promised originally to Abraham.

The Passover feast was instituted at the time of the exodus as a memorial to God's redeeming love, God's redeeming grace, and God's redeeming power and the very central importance of a substitute blood sacrifice. The Passover was a wonderful memorial. It involved a number of elements. The presiding person in the Passover pronounced a blessing called the Kedush on the first cup of wine which was always red. This is how it all sort of began and than the cup of wine was drunk by Him and the others present and it was followed by the eating of bitter herbs dipped in Carrasethwhich was a kind of fruit sauce.

Then came the explanation of the Passover, of the event and of the feast itself, than came the feast. The food was brought in; the Passover lamb that had been slaughtered was to be eaten as a reminder of the sacrifice necessary for Israel to escape judgment. Then the bitter herbs were eaten because they reminded the people that life in Egypt was very, very bitter and God had delivered them from a bitter existence, and than the bread that was eaten was unleavened as an indication of the fact that they left in a hurry. The bread being unleavened, not even time to rise symbolizes the haste with which Israel was redeemed. After this, after the meal that had one cup and the meal they sung the first part of the Hallel, Psalm 113 and 114, "Then came the second cup and after the second cup the leader taking unleavened bread and blessing God broke that bread, distributed that bread, and that was followed by a third cup."

Later on there was a fourth cup; I think it was at the time of that third cup and the breaking of bread that Jesus said, "From now on you're not going to look back to unleavened bread in Egypt. You're not going to look back to the Passover meal in Egypt; you're going to look to the cross. This bread is going to be My body which is given for you. This cup is going to be My blood, the blood of the new covenant shed for you."

So the purpose was established, remembrance, remembrance. "This is My body which is for you. This cup is the new covenant in My blood." Roman Catholicism has come up with a doctrine called transubstantiation in which they say that the priest by some prescribed words turns the cup into the actual blood of Jesus and turns the bread into the actual flesh of Jesus so that you are eating the real Jesus and drinking the blood of the real Jesus.

This is bizarre Paganism imported into quasi Christianity. When Jesus said this is My body which is for you, he wasn't saying this actually His flesh. The Jews mocked that idea back in the sixth chapter of John. Is He telling us to eat His body and drink His blood? Are we like cannibals? He's saying this represents and that should be clear from the second statement. "This cup is the new covenant,"

that cup wasn't the new covenant; the new covenant was given in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel. The new covenant was God's promise to take away sin, to forgive, take away the stony heart of the sinner and give him a heart of flesh, to plant the Spirit in him. The new covenant was the covenant of salvation, the covenant of forgiveness, the new covenant wasn't a cup but the cup symbolized the new covenant in the blood of Christ, and the bread symbolized the body of Jesus Christ.

Why are we to do that? Why are we to look at that symbolically? Because we are to constantly remember Him. Remembering Him not just as a good teacher, not just as a noble leader, not just as a lover of the down and out, not just as a man of great wisdom and religion, we are to remember Him as a sacrifice for sin. That's how we are to remember Jesus Christ.

So Jesus said, "This is My body which is for you." Let me talk about that for a minute, in the concept of that time, to say this is my body in Jewish thought is really to use a term representing the whole person, the whole man. The bread represents the incarnation. Jesus says, "I want you to take this bread and I want you to do this as often as you do it, and remember Me as the incarnate God man." The whole mystery of the incarnation is bound up in that.

Back in verse 16 of chapter 10, "Is not the bread which we break, a sharing in the body of Christ." It's reminding us that God became a man, reminding us of the glory of the incarnation. It is figurative, that bread is not His body and even as the Lutherans came up with a variation on trans-substantiation, con-substantiation, modifying it a little bit, modifying it a little bit they said well it's the spiritual body and the spiritual blood of Jesus. I don't know what the mysticism even means but it is not that either, it is simply a symbol. It is representative of the incarnation. It is to remind us that God became fully human for us. "This is My body which is for you."

This blood He sheds on the cross is symbolized for us, verse 25 says, "In the cup of the new covenant. This cup," he says, "Is the new covenant in My blood." Or as Matthew and Mark put it, "This is My blood of the new covenant." When there were covenants there was blood that's part of ancient covenanting. He made covenant, the covenant was ratified, and blessings were secured by a blood sacrifice.

That was true in all the covenants that people made with each other. They would kill an animal and each of them would be splattered with blood as if to say if I break my covenant may I die? For blood being sprinkled on the covenanting parties was symbolic of their vow to keep their promise. In Exodus chapter 24, "When the people had received the law from God through Moses they said, 'we'll obey you, we'll keep the whole law,'" and the priests brought out these pans, shallow saucer type pans, filled them with blood, sloshed the altar which represented God and than sloshed the people so that they were covered with blood. Again, signifying what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:2, "That you obey Christ being sprinkled by His blood." When you come to Christ you say I submit to You, You are my Savior, I acknowledge you as the Lord, I promise to follow You and I accept being splattered with

blood as it were to prove to You the seriousness of my commitment.

So Jesus says, "The blood is the sign of the new diafacade, the new covenant. When you take that cup and you drink it, you are remembering the covenant in My blood, that I died for your sins and you vowed to follow and obey Me." Why? Very clearly the purpose do this in remembrance of Me as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me. It's a memorial.

But there's another element to it, verse 26, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." It is a memorial but it is also an evangel. It is a remembrance but it is also a proclamation. "As often as you do it you will proclaim."

Strong word, *Kataggello*, you will preach, you will make known, you will teach the Gospel. It's really sad to think about the fact that churches today eliminate the Lord's Table because they are afraid that unbelievers can't relate to it. They push it off into some side room or some other occasion then a public service when the Scripture says, "There is no more direct manifestation of the wonder of the Gospel then what is symbolized in this table." You want to know what we believe in this church, you want to know what Christians believe. We believe in the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. We believe that He came into the world as God in human flesh, we believe He shed his blood on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, a sacrifice which satisfied the justice of God, paid the penalty in full, and by faith in Him, His death is counted to our benefit.

That's the Gospel, and so he says in verse 26, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Keep doing it; keep doing it, keep doing it until He arrives, until He comes." It's actually eschatological; we just keep doing it until He comes.

This then is the heart of our worship. It is the most defined component of our worship and the clearest proclamation of the Gospel of Redemption. Every time Jewish people celebrate the Passover they proclaim to those who watch them their God is a Redeemer. Every time we celebrate the Lord's Table we proclaim our God is a Redeemer and He redeemed us through the incarnate Christ who died in our place.

Well that's the purpose of the Lord's Table just a few words about the preparation for the Lord's Table since this is where we started. Verse 27, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." I can't imagine a more serious comment then that when it comes to preparation. Therefore is key, therefore since this is as serious as it is both as a remembrance and a proclamation, since it is the heart and soul of our worship, since it is that which by the words of Jesus Himself most honors Him and His incarnation and His sacrifice for us, "Therefore whoever eats and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord."

What do you mean an unworthy manner? Treating it as some common thing, treating it with carelessness, irreverence, indifference, coming with unconfessed sin, with superficial attitudes, we're all unworthy sinners. That's not what we're walking about here. We're all unworthy sinners that's why we come to show our gratitude to the Lord for forgiveness. The unworthiness that he's talking about here is not our unworthiness as sinners; it is coming to participate in the Lord's Table in a shallow and superficial way.

However deep your conviction, however sad your heart, however grieved you are over your unworthiness, the more badly you feel about your sin the more worthy you really are, the more shallow your thoughts about your unworthiness the less in a worthy manner you come.

Then He makes this interesting statement, you who do that shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. The word *enochos*, used here means liable, you are literally liable. You can be indicted for being guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. You have treated the body and the blood of the Lord represented in the bread and the cup in such a manner as you have literally incurred real guilt before God.

But what does that mean? You know you struggle to find an illustration of this and here's a meager attempt at it. I've been watching from time to time, infrequently fortunately, the recent peace protests that are going in the media and it's - there are recurring sights that we've seen, sometimes in the past but not for a long time, not for many years and they're coming back.

Flag burning, flag trampling, flag stapling, other desecrations, disintegration of American flags; when people do that, whey they trample the flag of the United States of America they are insulting everything that flag stands for, that's what they're doing it for. They become guilty not of dishonoring the flag but they become guilty of dishonoring the nation, is that not right?

They are mocking the leaders. They're treating with disdain those who have fought in the past for our freedoms and those who continue to fight and work for our freedoms, those who give their lives in service to this nation, trampling the flag is a way of insulting the people it represents.

So it is in the Lord's Table to trample the symbols of Christ with the feet of indifference or the feet of pride or shallowness or selfishness or unrepentence is to bring dishonor and shame upon the Christ whom those symbols represent. You just need to think about that.

I dare say that there's probably not a handful of people in here who would even think of burning a flag, bring dishonor upon a nation who perhaps regularly bring dishonor upon the Lord by trampling the symbols that represent Him. Don't to do that. How do you avoid doing that? Verse 28, "Let a man examine himself, so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." Look inside, take a real look

at your heart and come in a worthy manner.

What does that worthy manner mean? I don't have any sin? No, I've confessed it all. I understand how sinful I am. I'm holding nothing back. I come to really worship, to really be thankful for the cross, and the Christ who gave his life there. Do it that way, examine yourself, then so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup, and if you don't do that, the one eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment, not cataprima, not damnation, but *prima*, chastening described in verse 32, "Is discipline from the Lord, not being condemned with the world but being disciplined.

If you don't do that you're going to have discipline. I'm telling you this is straightforward. If you eat and drink and bring this discipline on yourself it's because you do not judge the body rightly. What does the body mean? The body of Christ; you're not judging the body rightly, you're not judging what these symbols mean and the result is in verse 30, "For this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep," and I've said this through the years and it has to be true, there are people in the church who have all kinds of problems, can go right back in the mind of God. He knows we wouldn't necessarily know this because we can't read your heart of course, but it goes right back to the triviality in which they came to the Lord's Table.

Weak and sick and dead, how serious is it that you come to this table? Self examined in a worthy way, verse 31 says, "If we judge ourselves rightly we shouldn't be judged." If you make the right assessment of your heart and come in a worthy way, you're not going to receive the chastening of the Lord.

Paul then discharges his responsibility to prepare us for this table as I have to you this morning. Let's bow in prayer, Father we come now to the table, we ask that you would open up our hearts to that self examination, may the Spirit of God enlighten us as to what we need to understand. May we hold to know pet sin, clinging to nothing, no element of pride or self will, selfishness, indulgence, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. Lord may we ask that you cleanse it all, may we come as humble sinners, with no self righteousness and no inequity cherished so that we may not be chastened but blessed. We ask now that if there are some here who need to Christ they would come to the front to our prayer room, talk to the folks who will be waiting up here and find out how they can enter into new life. May be honor You not just in this service but in our lives, as a result of having been together this morning, in Christ's name Amen.

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