

The Lord's Supper & Our Worship

I Corinthians 11:17-34

Pastor Michael Lynn / West Hampden Baptist Church

April 2, 2023 a.m.

Introduction: This morning, as part of our service, we will be observing communion. My text for this morning is I Corinthians 11:17-34. I have previously outlined this portion of Scripture as follows: (1) the misuse of the Lord's Supper (:17-22); (2) the meaning of the Lord's Supper (:23-26); & (3) the manner of the Lord's Supper (:23-34). Such a time as this calls for proper instruction, inward inspection, & thankful meditation. Today I would like to prepare us for this observance by considering this Lord's Table as a part of our worship. Note with me here the mandate, the message, & the meaning of communion.

I. The mandate for communion (or what is our command?)

A. The **instruction**:

1. By the Lord Jesus > Matthew 26:26-30.
2. By the Apostle Paul > I Corinthians 11:23-34.

B. The **interpretation**:

1. It is not necessary for salvation (cf. baptism), yet it is not optional to the believer.
2. It is our duty to participate; to neglect it is disobedience.

C. The **implication**:

1. "*For as often*" is not defined here. Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly? Yearly?
2. The church in the Book of Acts apparently observed it weekly; see Acts 2:42 & 20:7.

II. The message of communion (or what is our communication?)

A. The **sermon**:

1. "*Shew*" – to proclaim or to declare. Ryrie calls it "an acted sermon."
2. It is not a *reenacting* of the sacrifice of Christ; rather, it is a *recounting* of the gospel of Christ (cf. I Cor. 15:3-4).

B. The **symbols**:

1. The bread > representing Christ's body.
 - a. His incarnation (virgin birth, see Matthew 1:18-25 & John 1:14).
 - b. His humiliation (see Philippians 2:5-8).
 - c. His substitution (see I Peter 3:18).
 - d. His crucifixion (see Colossians 2:14).
2. The juice (cup) > representing Christ's blood.
 - a. Speaks of propitiation – appeased God's wrath (see Romans 3:24-26 & I John 2:1-2).
 - b. Speaks of purification – cleansed our sin (see Revelation 1:5 & cf. I John 1:9).

Summary: "The bread & wine (juice) give us something to see, to feel, to taste as aids to jog our minds into thinking about Christ. The communion service is a time for thinking. It is quite a sermon. Look & worship" (Barrett).

III. The meaning of communion (or what is our contemplation?)

A. Communion ought to produce our worship, praise, & thanksgiving:

1. It affirms Christ's love for me (I John 4:19).
2. It affirms Christ's blessings for me (a foretaste of heaven).
3. It affirms Christ's forgiveness of my sins (I Peter 2:24).

B. Communion ought to picture our unity & fellowship in the Body of Christ.

1. Both baptism & the Lord's Supper are ordinances given to the local church & are intended for public, not private, worship.
2. "*Not discerning the Lord's body*" – Christ's physical body or the Body of Christ? Both?

a. See I Corinthians 11:24-25 & 27.

b. Compare I Corinthians 10:17, "*one body.*"

c. "*Not discerning*" – "It means not taking thought for our brothers & sisters when we come to the Lord's Supper, at which we ought to reflect His character (Grudem).

Summary: "The problem at Corinth was not a failure to understand that the bread & cup represented the body & blood of the Lord. They certainly knew that. The problem rather was their selfish, inconsiderate conduct toward each other while they were at the Lord's Table. They were not understanding or 'discerning' the true nature of the church as one body... not understanding the unity & interdependence of people in the church, which is the body of Christ" (Grudem).

3. "*Unworthily*" – in an unworthy manner (with unconfessed sin).

Conclusion: The elements of communion are simply aids to worship; therefore, they must be accompanied by faith. "It is faith that looks beyond the sign & the symbol to the reality signified. Failing to see the reality renders the signs without significance & potentially reduces them to idols." I Corinthians 11:29 speaks of eating & drinking without faith. "Thoughtless & faithless participation is not only without spiritual profit; it is spiritually dangerous as well" (Barrett). Having taken time for proper instruction, there needs to be a time of prayerful examination (11:28). Do you have the assurance of your salvation? Are you willing to acknowledge any sin that hinders your fellowship with the Lord or with His people? Consider the exhortation given by our Lord in Matthew 5:23-26. Do you need to confess some sin that has affected your relationship to Christ or someone else? After such prayerful examination, there can now be a time of thankful meditation as we reflect upon the pain that Christ suffered, the price that He paid, & the purchase that He made. Our observance of communion is a time of retrospection (looking back), introspection (looking within), circumspection (looking around), & anticipation (looking up). Let's prepare our hearts now for this observance.