

THE POWER OF COMMUNION

John 6:53-58, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

November 6, 2022

I'm sure everyone here this morning and those viewing on-line have their own unique experience with the meaning and significance of Communion, and the practice of Communion within their tradition. I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church, and we celebrated Communion every Sunday and the requirement to receive the sacrament of Communion was that you had to first confession your sins before the priest on Saturday nights and then say your penance for you sins (a particular number of Our Father's and Hail Mary's). At the morning mass a wafer was placed on our tongue by the priest, and we never were allowed to touch the wafer or drink the wine because during the mass they became the actual body and blood of our Lord, and every leftover wafer had to be eaten and every drop of wine drunk so as not to defile the body and blood of Christ. Most of the protestant traditions that I have been involved with celebrate Communion once a month as a remembrance of Christ's suffering and death on the cross and hold to the tradition of using bread and grape juice which are usually served by the elders.

Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians was dealing with problems within the church in Corinth and one of those issues was that the Corinthians had forgotten why they gathered together for this sacred meal. Tragically, their abuse and misuse of Communion was causing division and disunity within the church, so Paul needs to remind them about the importance and purpose of the Lord's Supper. Today, we as well can easily abuse and misuse God's gift to us and also need to be reminded about the importance and purpose of Communion. Whenever the body of believers partake together in the Lord's Table – the focus of Communion is to be placed upon Christ, as the body of believers look back at what Christ has done and also look forward to His return. As believers wait in anticipation for Christ's return, this meal is to be a time of joyful celebration not only because our sins are forgiven, but also that we are unified together as one big family IN CHRIST – the body of Christ from every tribe, nation, and tongue. So, to come to the Communion table in an unworthy manner means to come in a spirit of disunity and division, and that's why every believer needs to first examine themselves to determine if they are holding something against another believer that could cause disunity in the body, and if there is division then they are to make things right before coming to the Lord's Table. And then, not only division between us and

others, but separation from God because of sin. So, we also come reconciled to our heavenly Father, by confessing and repenting of our sins!

In **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**, Paul writes: ***“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes”*** (NKJV). In the midst of His betrayal by Judas and His impending arrest and death, Jesus gathered His disciples around Him for the Passover meal – giving them and all future believers a way to remember the New Covenant that was about to be made on the cross as Christ’s blood is shed for the remission of all sin – past, present, and future sin. This morning I want us to look at this wonderful gift that our Lord has given to the church not only as a way of remembrance, but also as a useful tool in our spiritual toolbox!

The words, *“Do this in remembrance of Me,”* are well known to all of us, as it is carved into the front of Communion tables in many churches. Remembrance or remembering is vital for our walk as Christians – it keeps us aligned with the reality of who we are IN CHRIST, and it is our witness and testimony to others of what God has done in our lives and in our church. And our first responsibility of remembrance is to our immediate family, as Moses tells the Israelites who have seen the mighty works of God, who brought them out of slavery in Egypt, ***“Teach them to your children, talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and get up”*** (Deuteronomy 11:19). For this reason, ***“So that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth”*** (Deuteronomy 11:21). Remembering what God has done in your life never loses its power over others. Pastor Bill Johnson says, *“The power of testimony never depreciates. Whenever you revisit the story of God’s faithfulness or His divine disruption in your life, you are revisiting a place of divine encounter.”* A testimony increases and builds the faith in the room, helping us to be thankful and appreciate what Jesus did for us 2000 years ago!

So, *“What does Jesus want us to remember every time we partake in this sacrament?”* Of course, it’s to remember His body that was beaten and broken for

us, and His blood that was shed, but there's much more. When Jesus led His disciples through Communion during that Passover meal, He was demonstrating and modeling a prophetic act that believers were to continue long after He had returned to Heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father and continue this prophetic act until He returns. At the Lord's Table, Jesus was giving us a way to align ourselves with Heaven, bringing the reality of Heaven down to this earth. In that way, taking the bread and the cup allows us make declarations over ourselves and others as we claim the promises of God, in particular **Isaiah 53:5**, "*He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*" And this promise is confirmed in **1 Peter 2:24**, "*He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.*" Christ's blood paid the price to get us to Heaven, but His wounds and stripes were actually a payment for our pain, suffering and sickness while on this earth as we wait our eternal home!

Every time we take Communion, we intercede for ourselves and for others as we claim God's promises over ourselves and over others. Jesus died not only for our sins, but also for anything that threatens to steal, kill, or destroy the abundant and victorious life we have in Him. Jesus Christ died so that we could not only be free of sin and death, but free from sickness and sorrow as well. When we take Communion and declare total health over our bodies, we are aligning ourselves up with what the body of Christ did for us, as we declare and believe what the Bible says, "*by His stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5). His body suffered so that our bodies wouldn't have to suffer. When we take the bread, we are testifying that Christ is the Healer. Declaring our God as the Healer – it's not something that He chooses to do or not do – it's who He is!

We have spent the last three weeks looking at spiritual warfare, and we need to also look at Communion as a weapon of war. This meal is not only an act of remembrance and celebrating what Jesus has done on the cross, but also another military tool of battle we can use against the enemy. Whenever we take the bread and the cup we are in a spiritual battle. Whenever we take the bread and the cup we remind ourselves the devil has been defeated, and the blood of Jesus is the legal transaction that has guaranteed victory. Communion has an effect on the realm of darkness, we are reminding the devil of his failure – that he is the ultimate loser who is destined for destruction. In fact, the cross of Jesus was so thorough in its victory over sin, death, and the devil that everything you will ever need throughout

all eternity was purchased at that one event, nothing more needs to be done.
Victory is assured!

There's power in the victorious blood of Jesus – and that power was not just for the salvation of our souls at Calvary, that power is for us right now as well. Paul tells us in **Romans 8:1-2**, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”* The blood of Jesus wiped out the power of sin and the resulting judgement and condemnation that leads to death – FOREVER. On Calvary God took back dominion over the earth and kicked out everything that was once ruled by darkness, and as heirs of Christ, as members of the family of God, we have that same authority through Jesus to come against the darkness and demonic forces around us. When we take Communion, we are not only aligning ourselves with our true identity as a son/daughter of God, but we are also reminding the devil that he lost, and his destination is the lake of fire. And whenever the body of Christ celebrates Communion, the devil has to watch us celebrate the resurrection power of Jesus. Because by His blood, we can be saved, healed, delivered and assured eternal life!

That's what the Apostle John writes about in his Gospel – in **chapter 6:25-58** that Jesus had already prepared His disciples for what would be required of them to obtain eternal life in His teaching on the bread of life. Jesus said to them, *“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day”* (John 6:53-54). After the feeding of the five thousand, the very next day the people came looking for Jesus once again, who had now traveled to the other side of the sea of Galilee. Those that were feed miraculously the previous day with the five loaves and two fish sought Jesus for more physical nourishment, but this time, Jesus was offering them not physical food but spiritual food, the food which endures to everlasting life. Jesus begins His teaching that day telling them *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me shall never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty”* (John 6:35). God's gift of physical bread and wine satisfies for only a few hours but feasting on Jesus will satisfy for all of eternity!

And when Jesus tells the crowd that He is the bread of life that came down from Heaven and unless they eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, they will have no part in Him, the crowd were highly offended, saying *“This Is a hard*

teaching. Who can accept it?” (John 6:60) Not only the crowd, but Jesus’ disciples were also bewildered, because Jesus’ words sounded like a weird form of cannibalism, but Jesus corrected them when He said, **“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life”** (John 6:63). Jesus came to give us life – real life, abundant life, a life that is fully satisfied with Christ and what He offers us – eternal life – everything else is only a chasing after the wind – it only satisfies for a short time and then you are hungry and empty once again. Here’s Jesus’ first introduction to Communion, and His disciples would not understand Jesus’ confusing words until after His death and resurrection, when the early church put Jesus’ teaching into practice as the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus’ instructions to the crowd that day was to have them rely on Him as the source of life, not on physical things which can never satisfy!

The Communion sacraments we take are much more than just a wafer or piece of bread and a small amount of wine or grape juice. They are the power of the living God! **“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them and said, ‘Take it; this is my body’”** (Mark 14:22). The bread Jesus broke that night was the unleavened bread of the Passover meal. Bread would have been foundational to the culture at that time. Bread was necessary for daily survival. Of the 44 nutrients and vitamins necessary for human life found in food, bread made from freshly ground whole grains has 40 of our daily required vitamins and nutrients. When Jesus told His followers, **“I am the bread of life,”** and when Jesus shared a meal with His disciples on that last Passover, He offered Himself to His disciples as life sustaining bread. And that promise still continues today, as Jesus continues to be present with us in the breaking of the bread, telling us as well, *“this is my body,”* as He offers us the chance to align ourselves with His broken body as well as His resurrected body. Jesus becomes our *“bread of life,”* that sustains us now and for all eternity, as we declare together along with all of His followers throughout the entire world that our survival depends on Jesus – He is our life, our hope and we depend on Him for our daily needs!

“Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God’” (Mark 14:23-24). This cup was the third cup of the Passover meal, the last cup consumed at the conclusion of the meal. In the lifting of the third cup, Jesus

established the Lord's Supper not only as a memorial to His sacrifice, but also as a promise of His kingdom to come, when He will return for His bride and drink again from the cup at the marriage supper of the Lamb in Heaven. The cup represents the blood of Christ, and to understand the power behind this, we need to go back and look at what Jesus meant by the word "*covenant.*" In **Genesis 15**, God cut a covenant with Abraham when God came down to earth and passed through the carcasses of a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove, and a pigeon as "*a smoking fire-pot and a blazing torch.*" This everlasting covenant required the shedding of the innocent blood of these animals and birds – there was a great cost in establishing that everlasting covenant – the shedding of blood. In the same way, Communion is the reminder that Jesus Himself gave to us the ultimate everlasting covenant that would not only enhance our life here while on this earth, but also give us eternal life, but it was very costly to God, the cost of life was required, every precious drop of the blood of Jesus had to be shed.

Our blood is miraculous in all that it accomplishes for our bodies – it truly is the river of life that flows through our miles of arteries and veins. Blood has three main functions: to provide life, health, and protection. The red blood cells transport oxygen from the lungs to every cell of the body, as well as disperse nutrients and vitamins to the exact parts of the body where they are needed. The white blood cells, along with lymphocytes, help to build the body's entire immune system. Each cell within our blood has a critical job to do, helping the body to not only be strong, but also fight foreign invaders that cause sickness. The role of some cells is to remember an invasive organism that enters to cause sickness so that our immune system can respond quicker the next time it encounters that same foreign organism. Then there are other cells that keep the immune system under control so that it doesn't start attacking the good cells within our bodies. What a glorious army the Lord created within us, both sustaining and protecting our bodies with this complex combination of blood cells. So, it's no accident that blood plays such an important role in the Bible. There's life in the blood – without blood on one can live – when blood is shed death occurs!

Blood was a critical part of every covenant in the ancient world, and the shedding of blood was required in making a lifelong promise. Every known culture in ancient times, even those cultures that had no relationship with God, understood the value of the covenant and the importance of blood. Jesus Christ shed His blood to cut a New Covenant with His creation to bridge that divide of sin that put a great gulf between mankind and God when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. That

day at Calvary, Jesus fulfilled scripture, establishing the New Covenant that was prophesied by Jeremiah – ***“The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people’”*** (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

This New Covenant fulfilled the promises God made to Abraham, but this time, instead of coming to this earth as a fire-pot and blazing torch, God sent His Son in human flesh to walk among us, and instead of sacrificial animals divided into two and spilling their blood, God offered His one-and-only Son, the spotless Lamb, whose body would be beaten and wounded in the most inhumane way and His blood shed as the greatest sacrifice of all time – the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. The New Testament tell us that the church that Christ established has become Abraham’s descendants, ingrafted into the olive branch of God’s chosen people, Israel; thereby, heirs to God’s promise to Abraham according to **Galatians 3:26-29**, ***“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”***

That means, we the church, are the ones God was telling Abraham about thousands of years ago, the ones who would inherit the promises and blessings of the Lord. And after Jesus’ blood was spilled for the New Covenant, as children of God, we became not only heirs of Abraham, but co-heirs with Christ; thereby sharing in His inheritance. Paul writes to the Romans, ***“The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory”*** (Romans 8:16-17). When we take Communion, we are reminding ourselves of His sacrifice and how at times we may be called to suffer for the Gospel as our Lord did, but the good news is that when we are called to suffer for the Gospel, we will also share in His glory, all because the blood that was shed was a covenant promise for all of eternity. The blood of Jesus washes us white as snow, so we could enter into the presence of the Lord, without

condemnation, guilt or fear, because God now sees us through Jesus' righteousness!

In the Garden of Gethsemane – Jesus was the only one, besides the Father, who was aware of what He was about to go through. The intensity of that time of prayer, not only for His own physical death, but also the agony of being separated from His heavenly Father because of the sin of the world, and it was so painful that Jesus sweat drops of blood. Plus, that day Jesus carrying the added burden of the betrayal of one of His disciples, Judas, plus knowing that Peter would deny Him three times and the others would desert Him, added weight on His heart. Jesus, even though He knew that Peter would deny Him, and that His disciples would abandon Him, but He still sat down to a meal with them and shared Communion with them. So, here at the table Jesus provides the model for us in how to walk through pain and suffering. If Jesus can do that, then He's offering me a model for how to deal with my own hurts, betrayals, and heartaches. He's showing me what love can overcome, and when I meditate on all that Jesus experienced as I take Communion, I can remember that His blood is sufficient for anything I am going through!

Communion can't be taken lightly – because every time we partake in the body and blood of Jesus, we are preaching the Gospel – we are telling the world about the Lord's death. And, we're not only remembering what Christ has done for us on the cross, but we are also aligning ourselves with what happened three days later – the reality of the resurrection, because we are people of the resurrection. Telling the world that the One who is victorious over sin, death, and the devil lives, currently sitting at the right hand of the Father, and will return one day to reign and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. Every time we take Communion, then, we are reminding ourselves that we are Christians – little Christs – called to show others the goodness of God in how we handle situations in our workplaces and in our families, all because Christ has invaded every area of our lives and is Lord!

When we take Communion – it is our chance to celebrate with our brothers and sisters in Christ that Jesus has changed our lives, and that deserves a party, having a celebration with our friends. Yes, you can take Communion on your own in your home, but there's something special about taking Communion with your family, the body of Christ, as Communion is not only a vertical realignment of ourselves with Christ, but is also a horizontal realigning with others. When we take Communion together as the body of Christ, we get to stand alongside of others and

confess that Jesus took the burdens that we could never carry, and it was all because of His amazing grace. And experiencing that amazing grace of God towards us means that now we get to release that grace to others! We get to offer forgiveness to others because we were forgiven. So, Communion is a time of celebration, celebrating the New Covenant that has been made between God our Creator and ourselves, as well as the union we have with those around us. Jesus loves His church, and is coming back for a strong, healthy, and united Bride!