

- ***READ Matthew 26:26-29*** Many of us would probably have to admit that this upcoming Thursday marks one of our favorite days of the year! Family, food, and football will be the main orders of the day, and I'm sure that many of us are already making preparations to contribute our part to the grand feasts that await us on that day. Some of us might even be making game plans for how we can fit even more food on our plates than last year. The truth of the matter is that nearly all of us love to eat, and few things beat being able to gather around a table that is covered with delicious food and enjoy that time spent with family and friends.
- There is just something about food, family, and friends that just sounds right. I know that I certainly enjoy being able to get together with many of my spiritual family of this church and enjoy a good meal as often as can be done. Eating good food and enjoying the fellowship that we have together through our faith in and love for Christ...it is just really hard to beat such combination. Those types of meals are the ones that really ought to mean the most to us, and we might even feel as if we don't get to do such things as often as we'd like with the busy schedules that each of us have.
- However, I am thankful that there is at least one meal or feast that we do get to share each and every week, and it is the feast that we just observed together...the Lord's Supper. While we might consider the Lord's Supper to be a feast like we are going to partake in this upcoming Thursday for Thanksgiving because we aren't exactly taking on a smorgasbord of food or doing so in a social setting, the reality is that this meal we are eating together is a divinely instituted feast that ought to really mean something to us. The grand meals that we enjoy together aren't often done mindlessly. The conversation and fellowship fill us with all sorts of good feelings, and that shouldn't be any different when we gather to observe the Lord's Supper.
- And yet the reality is that it can be so easy for us to allow the weekly observance to become nothing but a habit that we go through the motions of without any emotion whatsoever, but we must be sure that our minds are prepared and fully engaged in what we are doing when we eat of the bread and drink of the cup. This morning, we will use our time of study to consider what we are doing when we eat of this Feast, and what type of emotions we can expect to feel if we are doing so in the way that God expects for us to do so.

I. When we eat The Feast we are:

A. remembering Jesus

1. Each of the three synoptic Gospel accounts mention Jesus's words concerning the bread representing His body and the cup of the fruit of the vine representing His blood.
(Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-19) Yet, it is only in Luke's account of Jesus teaching His disciples concerning this important lesson and practice that we see Jesus saying that this was to be done *"in remembrance of Me."* **(Luke 22:19)**
2. Paul does a good job of incorporating all of the different aspects of Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper into one section of text in **I Corinthians 11:23-26**. In this text, we can find Paul echoing the same thought that can be found in Luke's Gospel where Jesus says that this meal was to be eaten with Jesus in mind. Both Jesus and Paul seem to be putting a great deal of emphasis in getting the original hearers and the readers to know about this important aspect of the observance, but what exactly about Jesus should we be remembering when we are eating of the Lord's Supper?
 - a) We should be remembering that Jesus gave up everything in coming to earth. He did not come for His own benefit, but He came to earth with us in mind. **Philippians 2:3-5** clearly teaches us that we were Jesus's motivation for coming to earth. He was thinking about us first in being willing to give up heaven for broken earth. He remembered us, and we must remember Him.

- b) Additionally, we should remember what Jesus was willing to overcome in order to do what He did while He was on the earth. He was willing to put aside any selfish sinful desires that would've caused Him to no longer be the perfect Lamb of God without spot or blemish given for us. (**I Peter 1:19**) We might get caught up in thinking that Jesus wouldn't have been truly tempted as the Son of God, but **Hebrews 4:15** expressly states that Jesus *"tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."* When we think upon our own struggles with sin then it should become abundantly obvious to us just how much strength it took for Jesus to truly be sinless, and that is something we should remember as we partake.
- c) Lastly in this short list, we should willfully remember the pain and agony that Jesus went through as He died for our sins. It wasn't as if He was kept in a nice and cozy cell awaiting an execution that would be carried out nearly painlessly by lethal injection. No, our Lord's life was taken from Him in arguably the most excruciatingly painful way possible by being hung on a cross. This isn't even to mention the torture that He endured before going to the cross. He was slapped, beaten, flogged, scourged, and had a crown made out of thorns crushed down upon His head. He was also humiliated and mocked by those who carried out such torture. And then it was after all of this that He had nails driven through His hands and feet that attached Him to a cross where He would eventually die from stress, anguish, and an inability to breathe. When we are eating the bread and drinking the cup, we are eating these emblems to remember that Jesus's body was broken and His blood was shed for us.

B. proclaiming the Lord's death

1. Paul's admonition to the Corinthians as they observed the Lord's Supper not only focused around remembering what Jesus had done for them, but there was also a focus that was to be given on them proclaiming something in their observance. *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."* (**I Corinthians 11:26**) They were to observe the Lord's death not only with a backward focus but also with a forward focus and proclamation. Not only are we doing this to remember what Jesus did, but we are also doing this to make a statement.
2. The question must then be asked, *"what type of statement are we making?"* I think the proper answer to that question must have something to do with His death since Paul specifically mentions that we are to *"proclaim the Lord's death."* Therefore, what we are proclaiming or the statement we are making as we partake of the emblems must center around the Lord's death, and we might even narrow that down further by identifying those things that took place with our Savior's death on the cross. There are two things that Paul again states in **I Corinthians 6:23-26** that tell us exactly what took place through Jesus's sacrifice.
 - a) The first thing that took place in Jesus's death was the opportunity for our sins to be truly forgiven. Notice that in each of the three Gospel accounts where Jesus is establishing this observance that there is some language that is speaking to the forgiveness of sins that was going to be made available through Jesus's death on the cross. These teachings only further establish that Jesus's perfect blood being shed was the centerpiece of the forgiveness of man's sins against God. (**Hebrews 9:14,15; 10:11,12**)
 - (1) *"This is my blood...which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."* (**Matthew 26:28**)
 - (2) *"This is My blood...which is poured out for many."* (**Mark 14:24**)
 - (3) *"This cup which is poured out for you..."* (**Luke 22:20**)
 - b) Additionally, we must take note that both Jesus and Paul also give attention towards the new covenant that Jesus was able to establish through His death on the cross. (**Hebrews 9:15**) Each of the Synoptic Gospel accounts include Jesus referring to His blood or the cup as being associated with the coming new covenant. Therefore, when we are observing the

Lord's Supper we are proclaiming that we are a part of this new covenant that Jesus died to establish. We are proclaiming that we are a part of that better or more excellent covenant that is established through faith in Jesus Christ. (**Hebrews 8**) We are proclaiming that there is no longer male or female, slave or freeman, Jew or Greek. (**Galatians 3:23-29**) We are proclaiming that all people who trust in Jesus can be in fellowship with Him through faith and obedience. We are proclaiming that Jesus willingly giving Himself on the cross has made all of this possible. Without Jesus establishing this covenant through His death such a proclamation couldn't be made by us.

3. These thoughts are clearly seen as being keyed in upon in the Biblical text as being thoughts that our minds ought to dwell upon as we partake. However, we recognize that all of this is a lot to consider in the relatively short period of time that we focus on the Lord's Supper during our worship. But I think this is also one reason why it is a good practice by us for the Lord's Supper officiator to take a few moments to focus our minds in on the different aspects of what we have considered up to this point. The reality is that our weekly observances shouldn't look the exact same every single week because there are so many different points and considerations that can be focused on from week to week. This also means that the emotions that we feel should probably vary from week to week. Proper observances of this feast that we eat together should lead us to strong emotions when we consider what Jesus has done for us. Therefore, we are going to spend the last little while of our study considering the emotions that are so very appropriate to feel as we partake of this memorial meal.

II. When we eat The Feast we should feel emotions of:

A. sadness

1. If we were to take a survey of the congregation and ask what emotion is most often associated with our observances of the Lord's Supper, I would feel pretty confident that sadness would come back as the #1 answer. This, in my mind, makes much sense when we consider why it is that we are even doing what we are doing together.
2. The fact that we are memorializing the death of a person in and of itself is a sad ordeal. Death is a sad subject to consider all by itself. And yet when we add in why it was that this death was necessary...then the sadness truly becomes real. When we consider that it was our fault that Jesus had to come then we are hit with guilt and the sadness that follows. It was because of our sins and rebellion against God that Jesus had to come. When we consider that we had made ourselves enemies towards God through our sins then we are hit with feelings of deep sadness and remorse. (**Romans 5:6-11**)
3. As the song *"How Deep The Father's Love"* so powerfully states, *"Behold the Man upon a cross... my sin upon His shoulders...Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers...It was my sin that held Him there...until it was accomplished...His dying breath has brought me life...I know that it is finished."* When we honestly consider that the perfect and sinless Son of God came to die so that we might not have to...then how can we but be filled with some sadness. However, that sadness should give way to another emotion when we consider what we gain from Jesus's sacrifice.

B. appreciation

1. It was His wounds and His death that have paid my ransom, and for that we ought to be a people who are overwhelmingly appreciative and thankful for God's grace that allowed for such a salvation to be made possible through His love for us. Yes, we might be filled with a sadness for Jesus's death, but we don't have to spend every single Sunday feeling sad because we only focus on what Jesus did. We ought to also spend time focusing our minds on what His actions mean for us. We should consider the results of His actions.

2. When we consider that through Jesus's sacrifice we now have hope for the future then how could we at times have feelings other than that of pure appreciation and thankfulness. I am convinced that Paul is able to tell the disciples in **I Thessalonians 5:18** to "*in everything give thanks*" because at all times, no matter what they were going through, they could lean back upon the fact that they were a saved people because of what Jesus had done for them. When we observe the Lord's Supper, it is absolutely appropriate for us to feel a deep sense of appreciation and thanksgiving for what was done for us, and those feelings of thanksgiving might even and maybe even ought to lead to feelings of an emotion that we might not think of being all that normal as we gather around and partake of this feast.

C. joy

1. I hope that what we are seeing in these considerations is a natural progression of the different emotions that are all very appropriate when we come together to remember our Lord Jesus and proclaim the good news of His death for the salvation of our souls. Again, I think we sometimes get so focused in on the sadness of the death that we don't allow ourselves opportunities to focus on the results of Jesus's actions, and when we do so we are robbing ourselves of a tremendous opportunity to be filled with such overwhelming joy.
2. We We must remember that through Jesus's death and our obedience to the Gospel that we have now been adopted as children of God. Paul's words in **Galatians 4:4-7** ought to fill us with such joy knowing that while we were at one time slaves to Satan and destined for eternal torment and punishment in hell...we are now through Jesus's death and our faithfulness sons and daughters of God! In being sons and daughters we are now heirs of that eternal reward that awaits for all of the people of God who look forward to that better land of promise that awaits in heaven. I don't know about you, but I so long to be rid of this imperfect body and life and to embrace an eternal body and home with God! When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are proclaiming that this is our future, and that should fill us with such amazing joy. And yet when we put together all of these emotions we have considered this morning, we are left with one final emotion that ought to go with us as we move forward.

D. resolve

1. One of the problems that seems to have been present within in the church and disciples in Corinth is that they were treating the Lord's Supper as if it was just a common meal. Paul is very blunt and says that if one is hungry then they could eat in their house where that would be much more appropriate. (**I Corinthians 11:34**) This further says to me that if the Lord's Supper feast is more than a common meal then it would make sense for all of our considerations up to this point to be present in this holy meal. Regular meals don't usually fill us with these emotions, and I would further argue that regular meals don't leave us resolved and motivated to live a certain way as does the Lord's Supper.
2. Notice that the partaking of the Lord's Supper is to be done with an examination of one's self also being done. I have come to the conclusion that the underlying point of Paul's inspired words of **I Corinthians 11:27-30** centers around the fact that these people were failing to give proper spiritual examination because they were treating this meal as only a purely physical meal. They weren't coming to this meal and being made sad, appreciative, or joyous through their consideration of Jesus's death. They were simply coming together to fill their bellies with food. For this reason they were not leaving properly motivated to live a certain way and this led to them coming week after week and not being properly equipped within their spirits to appropriately considering the Lord's death in this meal.

3. This ought to present a strong lesson for us to remember that Jesus's death serves as a motivation for us to live as a forgiven and changed people. The remembrance of Jesus's death on the first day of every new week ought to motivate us to not allow **Hebrews 6:4-6** to be true of us. Our remembering Jesus's death on the cross is to keep us from crucifying Him again through our failure to honor Him in the way that we live our lives throughout the week leading up to our next observance. We must allow this feast commemorating Jesus's death to motivate us to be resolved against sin moving forward.

Every single disciple who has been a disciple for any length of time has more than likely struggled with making sure that our weekly observance of the Lord's Supper doesn't become monotonous and done without feeling or meaning. Sadly, some have taken these struggles and have decided to observe the Lord's Supper in a lesser frequency, but that isn't the correct course of action. Instead, we ought to inwardly examine ourselves and make sure that we are fully aware of what it is that we are doing when we eat of this bread and drink of the cup that represents our Lord's body and blood given for us. If we will commit to truly understanding the meaning of what we are doing then a weekly observance will only ever benefit us in moving forward in our faiths. May God bless us and strengthen us to examine ourselves and our actions rightly as we gather together week after week to feast and remember our Lord and proclaim His death until He comes again.