

In Remembrance of Me

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV)

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Being blunt with you: it sucks that we are having a Maundy Thursday worship service without the Lord's Supper. Because of our circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic, I considered canceling this service. I mean, this is supposed to be the night when we celebrate tasting that the Lord is good with the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper. We're supposed to be shoulder to shoulder enjoying this unity that is the Church, the body of Christ, without fear of giving someone else a deadly disease. This supper, his Supper, takes away our sins and strengthens our faith, which we need right now. Jesus even says, "Do this in remembrance of me." But tonight, we are not partaking in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

God, are you punishing us? Are you taking away the forgiveness of sins? What we have done wrong? We've prayed that this virus would go away. Why are you doing this?

God certainly has used plagues and diseases in various times and in various places throughout history to turn people from their hardened hearts to him. So, we self-reflect. That's what we do when it comes to hard times. We ask ourselves, "What did I do to deserve this?" We force ourselves to remember all our bad actions. Is God mad with me because I have not been faithful enough to him? Is he taking away all the normality to my life to chasten me, correct me? Am I not allowed to take the Lord's Supper tonight because I have been taking it for granted, thinking it would just always be there when I wanted it? After receiving it week to week, year after year, is God taking it away because I didn't cherish it, that I just came to expect it on demand as if God owed it to me? Has the Lord's Supper just been one of those church-y things that I do without really thinking about it? Maybe there were times when I chose not to take it, but now I have no choice. God has taken it away from me.

I remember my sins. I know that I have not always appreciated the Lord's Supper. I know that I have taken it for granted in my life. I'm not the perfect, pious Christian. I remember that I don't deserve your Supper.

Tonight, we remember. We remember that we are sinners in need of a Savior. We remember that we should be punished for our sins, that God should have no mercy, no grace, no tolerance for our sin. But there is much more than that to remember tonight.

Remember that our God is a God of means. What does that mean? It means that God most often works through things rather than without them. Instead of coming and appearing to each of us personally, he spoke through people and recorded it and faithfully preserved it and has had it translated into so many languages that we all can know God. He has sinful, deficient, frail people who get sick like you and me go out and share God and what he has done for people instead of him doing it himself. To wash away our sins forever, he told us to use water with his Word – not special holy water but just plain simple water, water from the tap. He told us to take ordinary bread and wine and eat and drink his covenant of blood which is all on him to forgive our sins and remember our wickedness no more. The bread and the wine don't have the power to forgive sins. The eating and drinking motions don't make your sins go away. Through his promise, his words, God works through these means to forgive us. He is a God who often hides through things that the world would deem unimportant to give us the most important things in life.

Tonight, remember what the Lord's Supper is all about. Jesus gathered his 12 disciples into the upper room and celebrated the Passover – the 1400th anniversary or so of God's deliverance from their Egyptian slavery and from death by the blood of the lamb. Then he did something different and new. As Paul told the Corinthian Christians, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (verses 23-25) When Jesus gave them his Supper, he told his disciples to do this in remembrance of him, that "whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (verse 26) The reason that the Lord's Supper takes away our sins, strengthens our faith, and gives us eternal life in heaven with God is because Jesus actually gave his body and his blood the next day in payment for our sins. Jesus' blood literally shed for you makes you right with God. His body given into death pays the penalty of all the sins we remember and even

those we don't. The Lord's Supper does not take the place of what Jesus did, of the giving of his body on the cross and the shedding of his blood there, but it is a means through which God gives you what he won for us and for all people.

Tonight remember the connection that we have as this body of Christ, the Church. The Lord's Supper is an expression of unity between Christ and all who believe in him as their Savior from sin, all who believe that he is their perfect substitute. You have and enjoy this connection as soon as you are brought to faith. While we can't meet together physically, we are still connected spiritually. The Church is not bound by local congregational membership or affiliation. It is only connected by faith in Jesus Christ as the one and only true God and everything he has done to make you forgiven and filled with Christ's perfection. Yes, the Lord's Supper is an expression of this unity, but an expression of it, not the giver of it. It is only God who creates that connection between all of us.

Remember that this connection spans continents and time. So, when we think of the communion of the body and blood of Christ, this includes our brothers and sisters in Christ of the Old Testament. Remember how many generations, how many billions of believers have come and gone without eating and drinking the Lord's Supper here on earth. Yet, they still knew that the blood of servant of the LORD would be shed for them, would cover God's law and so forgive all their wickedness. They did not eat and drink the Lord's Supper, but they trusted and hoped in the same Messiah, the same Christ, that we do. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, even John the Baptist – none of them ate and drank Jesus' body and blood in the way Peter, James, John, and all of us have. Yet, God gave them the same forgiveness by the same sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood that we have. He gave them the same perfection that Jesus lived for them as well as for us. He gave them the same gift of eternal life in heaven with him that we are heirs of. God was not punishing them by not allowing them to have the Lord's Supper during their life on earth. Instead, he gave them the full and free forgiveness that we all share right now, that all believers before us have shared, that all believers after us will share in. This is the Church, God's Church, the true Church, which spans from the beginning of time and will exist forever after this world ends. With or without the Lord's Supper, we are the same when it comes to our relationship with Christ, both Old Testament and New Testament believers.

There is another thing I want you to remember about the Lord's Supper tonight: you will get to eat and drink his Supper again. Probably you will get to do that here at Light of the Valley, but God gave us something greater to look forward to. Think of what Jesus said in our Gospel reading tonight: "I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:29) Jesus himself has not had his Supper in about 2,000 years, but he will drink it new with his brothers and sisters, with all believers, with the Church, with us, when we are with him in our Father's kingdom. The day is coming when we all will enjoy the wedding feast of the Lamb, as we partake in that great Lord's Supper with all believers of all time. I can't tell you tonight when exactly we will get to be back at church and communing together, but I can say with absolute certainty that we will one day all partake in the Lord's Supper with Jesus himself, with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, the Apostle Paul – all believers. That day of celebration and life around the Lord's Supper is coming, never to be withheld from us ever again.

Tonight is a night to remember. The Lord's Supper is all about remembering that Jesus actually gave his body and his blood on Good Friday to take away our sins and so has covered us with his perfection and given us a dwelling place with him in heaven. Remember that God is not punishing you by not being able to partake in his Supper tonight. No, he punished Jesus so that he would never carry his wrath out on you. Remember that you are still connected to Christ and all believers around the world and throughout time because God has worked through his means to do so, his Word, his promises, his Sacraments, his body, his blood. Remember that no matter what, we will eat and drink the Lord's Supper anew with Jesus himself in our Father's kingdom. Remember these things. Remember him. Amen.