

Sermon #1,261: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 (Historic Epistle)  
4-13-17, Maundy Thursday, 38<sup>th</sup> Day of Lent, Bethany-Princeton MN  
(Hymns: #329:1-6, "Your Heart O God," 327, 295:1.5; comm. 40, 316-317, 48)

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

**The Text, 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 (v. 23).** <sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you ... Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Help us to believe that Your words in the Lord's Supper are the truth, that we may receive the full benefit of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen.

In the name of Jesus, who instituted His Supper to :

Just a few verses before this, St. Paul calls it "*the Lord's Supper.*" Did you know that's where we get this name for the Sacrament? Here where the Bible calls it the Lord's Supper. The Lord, as in Jesus. It's His Supper.

Now St. Paul says that the Words of Institution, the words of Jesus, are what "**I received from the Lord ... which I also delivered to you.**" So Paul, who was not in the Upper Room that night with the apostles and as a Pharisee spent some years as an enemy of the Christian church, after his conversion received direct communication from the Lord Jesus Himself, and this included these very words, "**This is My body ...**" etc.

So this is the Lord's Supper, in that it comes from the Lord Jesus and it belongs to Him. When He says, "**Take, eat; this is My body,**" and "**This is ... My blood ... Drink it,**" He is inviting you to His Supper. It is the Lord's, but He invites you to have it too. It is His Supper but He is giving it to you, for you to share in it and enjoy His blessings.

Do you ever think how wonderful this is? But like many wonderful gifts, this too can be misused. The Giver can be forgotten, especially when He is not seen or is hidden in some way, like Jesus is in His Supper. I read in the newspaper this week a sad story: A woman had invited her daughter and son-in-law to live with her in a time of financial difficulty, they were still with her and their children had grown up in her home, but now they were asking her to move out, sell the house to them at half price, and if she didn't do this then she would be kept from seeing her grandchildren! Such cruel, heartless thanklessness! But that is what happens with the Lord's Supper too. In fact, it's the reason for St. Paul's words here.

Hear what he says to these Christians in Corinth: *“You come together not for the better but for the worse. For when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you ... Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.”* (1Co 11:18ff).

There were divisions among them, meaning they didn’t believe the same things, yet came to partake in the Lord’s Supper together. They treated the Supper like it wasn’t the Lord’s, but theirs to do as they pleased. They forgot Jesus when they came. They acted like He wasn’t there. Through St. Paul God judges their eating to be *“not the Lord’s Supper.”*

This still happens. Sometimes people think they should still be admitted to the Lord’s Supper even if they (or their grown children) attend churches that believe and teach differently than the one where they want to commune. Or people are engaging in sinful actions, and aren’t sorry for the sins or aren’t willing to leave the sinful activity – yet still expect to be at the Lord’s Supper next to those who don’t act in unrepentance.

We have to judge this the way St. Paul did: it would be *“to not eat the Lord’s Supper.”* It changes the Lord’s Supper in this way: a person who is admitted improperly to the Lord’s Supper does eat and drink Jesus’ true body and blood – as Judas Iscariot did – but as St. Paul says here, **“eats and drinks judgment to himself”** (also like Judas, who ate and drank in the Lord’s Supper while planning to sin); and rather than being made innocent in God’s eyes by receiving the remission of sins in the Lord’s Supper, the person is **“guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”** The Lord’s Supper doesn’t make them better but they only get worse.

Are we thinking of others and their sins? We have to think of our own. Don’t we get embarrassed by closed communion and how restricted we are by the emphasis on pure doctrine and having agreement in all teachings of God’s Word? How much easier would it be for the church to grow if it weren’t this way, we think! How much more comfortable we’d be with our friends in the world. Our sinful flesh wants permission to sin -- to do as we please and pretend God is OK with it (and with us).

To come to the Lord’s Supper in this spirit is forgetting the Lord Jesus when you come. It is disrespecting Him, acting as if He is not there. We turn into something that belongs to us to do with as we please, not as if it

is His Supper. It is imposing conditions on Him, like that cruel thankless family. It is misusing His gift, turning His gift into something He owes.

This teaching about the Lord's Supper comes in the midst of such awful stuff and bad behavior! But isn't that the way it is? Any teaching the Lord is going to give us has to come in the midst of awful stuff and bad behavior. We are sinners who live in sewage. We are corrupted by our surroundings. We don't know how to enjoy gifts. Like Peter we don't sit contentedly to be served by Him, we say "*Don't You wash me!*", we want to do all the work to make our life good, not seeing it'll never pass muster, we'll never be clean by our doing, we'll never find peace that way.

The Lord Jesus loves you. "**I received [this] from the Lord,**" Paul says. From Him. With instructions to "**deliver it to you.**" Isn't that love? He knows what we are like and still He institutes His Supper and gives His words to the apostles to be delivered to such sinners as we are.

This is Jesus forgiving you when you are embarrassed by what His Word requires. This is Jesus not forgetting you when you forget Him. This is Jesus not turning away from your tears but embracing you. This is Jesus not giving up on you when you've gone the way of compromise with the world. He doesn't reject you. He comes to you. He wants His Supper to come to you. He wants Himself (in His body and blood) brought to you.

He wants His body to be one with you, so that your body of sin can be made pure by His flesh. This is why He has given His words, "**Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you,**" to be spoken over the bread and to be delivered and spoken to you as an invitation.

He wants His blood to wash you clean of the sins you've done, and to wash you clean from the sins others have done to you. So He has given His words, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood ... drink it,**" to be spoken over the wine and to be delivered to you as an invitation.

In His Supper Jesus comes to you. He is not worried about how you will handle it. It does not depend on you. He will do the work in you. He welcomes you with open arms. It is not only the Lord's Supper. It is the Supper of Him who makes Himself your Lord and you His child.

Here He forgives, cleanses, heals, and purifies you. Here He cares for you. Here He gives you the gift of faith, the gift of love, the gift of joy. Here He nourishes you, fills you, and gives you everything you need. Here He gives you the ability to forgive and to love. Here He forms you, reforms you, builds and creates and makes you as He wants you to be.

Here He makes you one with Him, and He is one with you. Here He makes His Church one, He builds and makes His Church, and we as His Church are truly together, truly one, truly as we should be, not by what we do but only as we kneel together and contentedly receive from Him of His bounty of goodness, kindness, forgiveness and love. We let Him do what He will with us. Thus we are truly made one with Him, our Lord, who loves us, and thus we are one with each other, truly together, truly a church, His Church. Amen!