

In Remembrance of Me

I Corinthians 11:23-26

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Introduction: Paul's words of institution of the Lord's Supper were actually the first account written down. Paul was writing before the Gospels had been written down. This passage is one of the finest examples of the extraordinary theology of Paul. As he writes his letters to the churches, he interprets the actions of our Lord.

Before we hear the text again, it is important that we understand the context. As Roy McCall mentioned last week, there were numerous letters from Paul to the church in Corinth, which was a wild city that would make our Las Vegas look tame. We don't have all of the letters he wrote to Corinth, but we are blessed to have what we do.

Earlier in the chapter, Paul praised the church for keeping the traditions alive, but now he comes to a place where he must correct them. Let me read the paragraph right before our reading:

I Corinthians 11:17-22

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

As Jack Hayford writes, "Paul had founded the Corinthian church and pastored it for eighteen months. He wrote this letter after he'd been gone about five and a half years, and his purpose in writing them was to deal with problems."

Hayford goes on to say, "I believe Paul had instructed them that this was a table of triumph, and they'd learned to come rejoicing. With the passing of time and the absence of his careful teaching, the rejoicing had become ridiculous. Paul writes them to set some things in order." [Jack Hayford, "What Jesus Wants Us to Remember," 2009 *Christianity Today International*.]

Now let us turn to our passage.

I Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank You for sending us the Holy Spirit who brings us Your gentle presence. As we remember the Lord's Supper guide us in our understanding and open us to the sacred in the ordinary. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Memories. We all have them. Good ones, bad ones, dramatic ones, happy ones, sad ones, and on and on. Much of how we see the world and ourselves is built on our memories.

Quickly: think about a family memory. Are you flooded with images or does one memory come to mind?

Think about someone you love. Do memories come? How about a vacation? What about the kitchen table in the home where you grew up? Are the memories vivid? Technicolor? Do you remember the scent of Thanksgiving? How about the Christmas tree?

As Edward Markquart writes:

Memories are alive, living, breathing, talking to us from the past. Memories give us history, identity, roots, belonging, the sense of our very selves.

Some memories are so painful, so very painful, just the thought of them makes us wince inside, and we can't get rid of them. They are just with us, part of us. There is a story told about an old man, age 85, down South sitting on his porch one summer evening, slowly rocking in his rocking chair, with his pipe, blowing circles into the motionless air. A young hyperactive salesman approaches him and shouts from the sidewalk, "Grandpa, I got a book for you here, that will help you remember everything from our whole life. It costs only five dollars." The old man sat there in silence, reflecting, not saying a word as he rocked, and finally, after what seemed like an eternity said, "Sonny, I'll give you a thousand dollars for the book that can help me to forget." Yes, all of us have memories that are so painful, we would like to forget them, but we cannot. Think of such memories for a fraction of a moment. They, too, are part of our history, identity, roots, belonging, the sense of our inner selves. [Edward Markquart, "In Remembrance of Me," **Sermons from Seattle.**]

Memories are important in our faith, too. Jesus didn't overwhelm His disciples with instructions on what to remember, but He made His teachings memorable. His stories and parables, His healing words and actions, His interpretations of the Bible, and His instructions on prayer all catch our attention.

So when on the night He was betrayed, He told His disciples to take the bread and the wine in remembrance of Him, we know this is important. But what does it mean? What do those words, "Do this in remembrance of Me," mean?

In the bread and the wine, He was giving us something to hold on to, a concrete sense of Him to strengthen us in our faith. Yes, He was on His way to the cross where he would take on the sin of the world, but this meal is a meal of triumph. He overcomes the cross and we believe He will come again. That is what we must remember: that He strengthens us and He will come again.

But there is more: You and I have spent almost seventeen years together worshiping, praying, learning, encouraging, loving each other. You and I are the church in this time and place. You and I are the body of Christ. That makes our time together holy. That makes our memories sacred. That makes our history a testament of our faith.

A little earlier, I asked to your bring to mind your memories about your life – loved ones, special events and holidays, happy memories and painful memories. Now I'd like to turn your attention to your memories of Geneva. I'm not sure anyone will be willing to speak up, but I'm going to encourage you to speak. We're going to group our memories around seasons, special days, and precious moments.

I will get us started: I have always loved our Advent celebrations. I loved it when we made fresh wreaths with greens from York flowers... What are your memories about seasonal traditions (Lent, summer, etc.)? (Advent wreath, children and youth plays, First Century village, etc.)

Special Days: Christmas Eve, Maundy Thursday, Easter? Christ the King, Homecoming, Pentecost? Concerts?

Tragic days like 911, mass shootings, the loss of loved ones.

Precious moments: Children's messages by Carl...Baptisms, new members... Singing "Silent Night" by candlelight on Christmas Eve...

Time together – ice cream socials, second Sunday potlucks, church in the park, funeral celebrations, weddings...

Here we have met our Savior in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the vine...and in each other. Amen