

Unity by Design – The Lord’s Supper part 2 10/6/2019

Jesus’ teaching style was as a great blend of **theoretical** and **tactile** (touch). Jesus taught them about God’s love for all people and then demonstrated it by reaching out and touching and healing lepers, by applying mud to a blind man’s eyes while healing him, by writing something in the ground with his finger while saving a woman’s wife, by sharing a cup with a Samaritan woman. And in the Upper Room, just a few hours before he was arrested he used the power of touch to teach them about servant leadership while washing their feet and he left them an ongoing way to remember him through the drinking of the wine and eating of the bread.

Barbara Brown Taylor captures this well. She wrote: “*With all the conceptual truths in the universe at his disposal, [Jesus] did not give them something to think about together when he was gone. Instead, he gave them concrete things to do—specific ways of being together in their bodies—that would go on teaching them what they needed to know when he was no longer around to teach them himself . . . ‘Do this,’ he said—not believe this but do this—‘in remembrance of me.’*” **From “An Altar in the World”**

Last week we began looking at the power of partaking of communion and the deeper meaning behind it in that culture. We equated the act of **baptism with marriage** and committing yourself to an intimate relationship with someone else and the partaking of the **Lord’s Supper** with your **anniversary** of that event, when you reflect back on that marriage. Now, Jesus didn’t tell us how often to partake of the Lord’s Supper, but we know that the early church shared in it at least weekly and perhaps more often.

Acts 20:7 (NIV) ***On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.***

One of the things that J.J. talked about last week, and I’d like to springboard off of that, is that participation in the Lord’s Supper is much more than just each of us **individually** reflecting on Christ’s death and the significance. The sharing of the Lord’s Supper is meant to be a **unifying act** of individuals within the church focusing on Jesus together. And by each of us focusing on Jesus, we become unified.

As we consider the unifying effect of the Lord’s Supper think of the dynamics that existed in that Upper Room the night Jesus initiated the Lord’s Supper. You had the 12 apostles and possibly some more people. Within that set of 12 you had:

- 3 sets of brothers (and if you had any brothers or sisters growing up you’re well aware of how you can argue).
- one of the sets of brothers was nicknamed the **Sons of Thunder** (likely not peace loving, quiet timid brothers).
- You had **Peter**, the impulsive outspoken one
- You had **Matthew the tax collector**, who would have been seen as a traitor, because he made his living by working for the enemy, the Romans.
- Sitting at that same table you had **Simon the Zealot** who was aligned with a right wing semi-terrorist organization. Their zealotness stemmed from their deep seated desire to get rid of the Romans, by any means possible – maybe even killing them or anyone who worked with or for them.
- And then you’ve got **Judas Iscariot** who was plotting to betray Jesus and on that evening his identity was revealed when he participated in the Lord’s Supper by dipping his bread in the shared cup with Jesus. In that culture, to share a meal with someone implied acceptance of that person and to dip your bread in the same cup of someone else conveyed that on an even deeper level. I imagine, as Jesus dipped his bread into the cup with Judas, he looked deeply into his eyes and showed him God’s love – even to his betrayer.

Talk about a disjointed group of men. And yet, it's within this group that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as a regular time of gathering together to unite themselves with Jesus.

There's something powerful and unifying about sharing a meal together. And we're going to look further into that in the upcoming weeks. But this morning I want to continue the thoughts that were shared last week about the unity we are supposed to have around this table. And I want to use primarily Paul's instructions in the letter known as **1 Corinthians**. This letter was written about 20 years after Jesus died on the cross for our sins, rose from the grave and ascended into heaven. And so this letter gives us a glimpse into the life of a 1st century church. And wow, did they ever have problems.

- In the very first chapter Paul begins to address the **divisions** that existed among them. People were becoming **prideful and boastful** based on who baptized them.
- There was also a **church member who was sleeping with his step-mom**, and apparently everyone knew about it, yet were using it as a reason to boast about their own relationship with God. Thinking, I might sin, but at least I'm not as bad as that guy.
- There were **lawsuits being filed** in court between church members
- There were ongoing arguments over whether a person can eat food which has been sacrificed to idols.
- There were several sources of disruptions during the worship services.
- There was an issue of pride, over the various spiritual gifts God had given various members
- There was disunity even within the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. And it's Paul's directives regarding this source of division that I'd like to center my thoughts this morning.

With our remaining time this morning, I'd like to dive deeper into the significance of the Lord's Supper basing my thoughts on what Paul instructs this 1st century church to do and hopefully it will give us a deeper understanding of what we should be doing when we partake each Sunday.

Observance of the Lord's Supper:

1. We look back (remember)

Just like in the observance of the Passover, we remember that Jesus set us free from slavery to our sins.

1 Corinthians 11:24-25 (NIV) *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.**"*

The annual observance of the Passover meal was to remember how God miraculously rescued his people from slavery in the land of Egypt., as we partake of the Lord's Supper we remember how God miraculously rescued us from our sins, that kept us from having a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

2. We look inward

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 (NIV) *So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to **examine themselves** before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.*

1 Corinthians 11:29-32 (NIV) *For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ (the body could either be Jesus' body or the body of believers) eat and drink judgment on themselves. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. 32 Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.*

3. We look around

a. Appreciating our unity with other believers

1 Corinthians 10:17 (NIV) *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.*

Ephesians 2:15-16 (NIV) *His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

Galatians 3:26-28 (NIV) *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

b. Declaring Christ's death to unbelievers

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV) *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

4. We look forward

To a future banquet with Jesus.

Luke 22:15-18 (NIV) *And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."*

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

One of the challenges for us, in our observance of the Lord's Supper, is to appreciate and foster the unity God has given us within the body of Christ. Look around, we're very different from each other in all sorts of ways. And yet, we're all bound together through our mutual love for Jesus Christ. And in the future when we all sit around God's great banqueting table, we know that there will be people from all over the world gathered together. The differences will be way more evident then they are right now. And yet, there will be a richness in that diversity and we will all love it.

Next week I want to focus on the aspect of looking forward.

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Baptism is like a _____

The Lord’s Supper is like an _____

Unity among diversity. The diversity of Jesus’ disciples:

How are we at Knollwood different from each other?

What unites us?

Observance of the Lord’s Supper:

1. We look _____ (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)
2. We look _____ (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
3. We look _____
 - a. Appreciating our _____ with other believers
1 Corinthians 10:17 (NIV) *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.*
 - b. Declaring Christ’s death to _____
4. We look _____ (Luke 22:15-18)

How has the Lord’s Supper brought you closer to other believers?

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