

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Unity at the Table

We have been considering the heart of the gospel this Easter season. This evening as we approach the Lord's table we consider Paul's teaching on the observance in which we are about to participate. It is a somber thing to reflect that we are proclaiming the Lord's death, a precious thing to be sure, but a serious and earnest thing. We are called to reflect on that which we are about to undertake...

The death of the Lord is the heart of the table, AND the heart of the gospel. Paul gives us some things to consider as we prepare to remember.

I. **UNITY IS ESSENTIAL**

- vv 17-19

a. A lack of unity is destructive to the whole

b. Not all were involved in the divisions... "in part I believe it"

i. Be on your guard for any who would divide you against one another

ii. Be aware that all churches are a mixed multitude.... There should be saved men and women, seekers, brand new attendees, lost people who may not be there for the best reasons... be careful of the trend to quickly and rashly approve of all who simply talk a good game.

c. The problems do at least have the positive effect of showing out who are genuine believers and who are not.

II. GIVING PREFERENCE

Give full consideration and preference to others instead of taking your place at the head...

a. Allow me to interject a truth here, this applies to the whole of church life. NO ONE is so important that they should ever demand or expect any kind of reverence from anyone else. Note that this is a different matter than instructing that some (other than yourself) do, in fact, deserve honor...

b. Failure to yield defiles the whole...

i. The observance

ii. The testimony of it

iii. The life of the body as a whole

c. This is consistent with what Jesus did after the supper ...

John 13.1-17

d. It is consistent with the whole tenor of scripture about humility and service

e. It is consistent with the fact that NONE of us deserve anything but hell

f. It is consistent with the fact that the world sees and does things exactly the opposite...

III. PROCLAIMING HIS DEATH

Which brings us back full circle to what we are proclaiming...

a. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ who died in our place.

b. The greatest and first-born sacrificing himself for the most wretched of the earth

c. The horror of the fact and the reality of His willingness to do it should never be far from our minds and hearts.

i. How many of our worst sins are rooted in the idea that we deserve something better than we got.

ii. How many of our darkest moments stem from that root?

c. And the worst part of the story is found in the betrayal of Jesus by Judas... who deemed himself as deserving better than he got and determined that he would do whatever it took to get what he thought he deserved...

IV. MINDLESS PARTICIPATION

This is why Paul gives us the warning about drinking and eating without discerning the Lord's body.

a. To partake of Christ without seeing Him is the worst kind of betrayal

b. To willingly rob Him of the glory and honor He deserves so that you might have it is the basest of actions

c. There are real consequences for those who insist on using the things of God to satisfy their own selfish cravings...

V. SEEING CHRIST

What is it to discern the Lord's body and blood?

a. Understand the truth about who you are and who He is... that you would NEVER have found Him had He not been seeking you

b. Understand that life and death are out of your hands, that God is the One who holds our days in His hand, and that He is the ONLY one who has ever defeated death.

c. Understand that Jesus died for YOUR sin, NOT His own, for He had none.

d. Understand that while nothing we do here is magic, there is something powerful and unique in this ordinance... that the taking in, the visceral truth of feeding on Christ is a life changing thing and that we should never take it lightly!!

VI. PRACTICUM

a. If you have anything to confess, do it

b. If you have any relationships that are broken, heal them

c. If you have any problem with anyone in the body, repent and restore

d. If you have any doubt as to participating in this remembrance, rectify it before we continue