

1 Corinthians 11:23-29 (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. 27 Therefore, 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 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

46-11-04-A Closer Look at Holy Communion

Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, the Eucharist
1 Cor. 11:23-29

A closer look at Communion helps make the ritual a personal reality.

INTRODUCTION:

–Read the Text: 1 Cor 11:23-29, 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.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Therefore, 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. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

–[Robin Williams died on August 11th, 2014. *News* of his suicide spread around the world quickly, leaving us with *questions*, because he left *nothing to explain why he took his life.*] Jesus gave His life 2000 years ago. *News* of His *crucifixion* spread more slowly, but *more effectively*, because He answered many questions by *leaving something to explain what His death meant*.

The Church celebrates this ongoing ritual, given by Christ Himself to explain His death—it has various names: *Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, the Eucharist*. Because frequently observed, it can become so routine that we fail to see its reality. [When live models are show-cased as department store mannequins, they can remain so still that, from a distance, it’s not easy to distinguish imitation from reality.] **HOM.idea.**

–In today’s **text** we’re going to take a closer look at Holy Communion. Actually, it will be a look in 5 directions.... *The first is....*

I. An UPWARD look– v.24, *when he had given thanks...*

- A. *Gratitude* is the Trinity’s attitude [**3 mutually grateful eternal Beings**]
- B. *Our own thanksgiving* expresses our dependence on God. [**quote:** “*Poor atheist on Thanksgiving Day ... all dressed up and no one to thank!*”]
- C. The Eucharist [which means “*thanksgiving*”] reminds Christians of their identity as a “*grateful people*” (*children of a Grateful God*).

TRANS: We *begin* with this vertical view—an *upward, thankful look*—so we can have a proper horizontal view, which first requires...

II. A **BACKWARD** look— v. 24 & 25, ...in remembrance of me [spoken twice]

- A. Life is *empty* without past memories; *so is Christian faith* [James Ashbrook in *Journal of Pastoral Care*, wrote: “Meaningfulness depends upon memory. Without autobiographical remembering there is a loss of personal identity—no sense of self or perception of continuity. This is the basis for the biblical commands to remember. Without memory we lose our ability to make centered decisions, to take initiative, and to have a sense of coherence.”]
- B. The Lord’s Table reminds us of eternal realities from which our daily problems, pressures and pitfalls faced in life may *distract us*.

TRANS: [At work, I keep a family photo on back of my name badge to remind me why I’m there: *to provide for my loved ones*.] Jesus left a divine picture on this Table, reminding us *why we’re here* and how His sacrifice provided us the blessing of eternal life. *Another direction in our horizontal view* is...

III. An **OUTWARD** look— v. 26, *you proclaim the Lord’s death...*

- A. The Lord’s Table defines the Church’s mission of *evangelism*.
- B. Christ’s Cross brought the Church into existence, and the Church remains in existence to proclaim that Cross to a lost world.
- C. Satan hates this Holy Meal! It broadcasts “good news” to all who are bound up by sin— Rom 1:16a, I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...

TRANS: This sacred meal reminds us of our sacred duty to tell others about Christ’s death. *Another horizontal view from this Table* is...

IV. A **FORWARD** look— v. 26, “...until he comes”

- A. The Christian year begins and ends with the Advent season. (From Christ’s 1st Coming, we move *forward* toward His 2nd Coming, regularly celebrating the Lord’s Table “until he comes.”)
- B. If we get entangled in temporary, worldly trivialities, His Table calls us back to a sober view of reality [My mom’s favorite quote: “Only one life—’twill soon be passed—only what’s done for Christ will last!”]

TRANS: This Table turns our look *upward* in thanksgiving, *backward* in remembrance, *outward* in evangelism, and *forward* in anticipation of Christ’s return. **FINALLY**, *it brings all these directions together into...*

V. An **INWARD** look— v. 27-29, *A man ought to examine himself...*

- A. Theological truths may be *rigidly held* and *eloquently argued*, but they must be meaningfully practiced to be of *any personal value*.
- B. Communion cannot be *taken lightly*. It can’t be treated as *a mere routine*. Approaching this Holy Meal is a solemn act, because— **v.27**, *...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*.
- C. Because Christ, in His fleshly body, took our judgment on the Cross, our inward look of self-examining preparation at this Table is the closest we ever need to get to God’s judgment (but we must make sure we do it— **v.29**, *For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself*).

CONCLUSION:

—What occurs *inwardly*, as we come and partake of Holy Communion, depends on how *open our eyes* are, how *clearly we see*.

—*The world* has much to feed us that is *spiritually unhealthy*. This Meal changes us by changing our diet. When we feed on worldly things, we remain *hungry, still empty inside*. In John 6:53-55, Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.”

—(**Serve a simple HOLY COMMUNION**):

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Son as a sacrifice for our sins. We come to You, trusting not in ourselves, but only in Your grace and in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask your blessing on this Meal. You redeemed us by what this Table represents. Therefore, we consecrate ourselves again to You, asking You to consecrate this bread and cup, so that we may feed upon the body and blood of Him *Who, on the night of His betrayal, took bread; and when He had given thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples...* (distribute the cup)

Jesus said, “**Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me.**”

Likewise after supper He took the cup; and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them... (distribute the bread)

Jesus said, “**Drink from it, all of you; for this is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**”

Let us pray the prayer our Lord taught us (**the Lord’s Prayer** in unison).