

I Corinthians 11:17-34
Body Bread
Maundy Thursday April 13th, 2017

OUR Father....

OUR daily bread.... please give us...

OUR sins,.....please forgive US as WE forgive others.

THE PRAYER, the Lord's Prayer is always in the plural. We are always connected when we take Holy Communion. We are connected with those in the room with us. We are connected with other Christians around the world, especially, on this night when we remember Jesus' betrayal, the night of the first Holy Communion.

And we are connected with those outside the church those hungry of body and of soul.

And the call, the urgent call of these verses is to examine our relationships, to recognize our broken relationships, in order to repent, reconcile and have new life. As verse 28 says, "**Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**" Tonight we will do this in the context of our relationships with each other and the world.

The situation that prompted Paul to write these verses would be odd to our thinking. The situation was that of a church potluck where you were out of luck... if you didn't bring your own meal.

In the early church in the town of Corinth when they shared in The Lord's Supper it was an entire meal. It was an entire meal *if* you had enough money to bring your own food and drink. The full concept of sharing at a church potluck hadn't quite caught on for the rich were not sharing with the poor who showed for the Lord's Supper without any food or drink.

The rich were to the point of bringing so much food and drink they got drunk at worship. No little tiny cups of non-alcoholic wine back then.

They brought huge goblets of wine and over imbibed and to add insult to injury, the injury of hungry poor, they would not share.

Their actions humiliated the poor. The very symbolic act of fellowship, community and communion was being participated in in such a way as to create division. It was being participated in such a way as to disrespect others gathered there.

So Paul takes them back to the beginning. Paul takes them back to “the night when Jesus was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body given for you.’” Paul took them back to the Upper Room, the first Maundy Thursday and reminded them why it was called Maundy Thursday.

It was, and is called Maundy Thursday, because that was the night of Jesus’ “New Commandment”, which in Latin is “**Mandatum Novum,**” that was later slurred to simply **Maundy**. And what is the New Commandment? It is simply to **love one another as Christ has loved us.**

Paul reminded them they weren’t loving one another like Jesus did if they ate and drank like gluttons in the presence of those who were hungry and called it the “Lord’s Supper.” In essence they weren’t discerning the body, recognizing those who gathered with them as part of their family, part of the Body of Christ.

Now for Paul, “Discerning the body” was serious business. Verse 29 reads, “**For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.**”

What Paul was holding them accountable to was the idea that everyone there for Holy Communion was part of the Body of Christ. To disrespect anyone there was to disrespect the very body of Christ, the body that died for their sins and whose resurrection granted their forgiveness and eternal life.

In the next chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul goes into an detailed argument of the importance of every member of the Body of Christ, every believer and then in Chapter 13, the love chapter, that love and

respect for one another are the bottom line for believers in Jesus Christ, the members of the body.

As the communion ritual says “**Just as there is one loaf, we who are many are one.**” That is “Body Bread” made up of individual grains of wheat, or barley, or more. Body Bread made with the sweetness of sugar, or honey, mixed with the water of life, raised with pungent smelling yeast. All mixed together, and when raw looks like a mess, but when baked with the power and heat of the Holy Spirit produces a product which is the Body of Christ here on earth: **Body Bread.**

The question that is asked tonight is do you “discern the body”? Do you see Christ in your neighbor gathered here? Do you treat them with respect in what you say and how you treat them? Do you feed them with fellowship, the fellowship of the faith?

When I was Youth Pastor I had a thing called “Our Dream”. These were rules for how we ran our youth program. My favorite one and the one I actually had to explain the most was, “**It doesn’t matter what we do, but how we treat each other does matter.**” The point being the youth activity could be roller skating, a mission trip, a lock-in, a movie, or a meal. The activity didn’t matter; but how we treated each other while engaged in that activity did. That mattered the most.

It is a good rule, like the Golden Rule, based on the New Commandment that we love one another. I have noticed as I have grown older and worked with people of all ages that people are people.

We all want to be loved and respected and treated well. When I left 24 years of doing youth and children’s ministry to be a head pastor I remember looking out over a congregation and realizing and remarking that I had just been appointed to a larger older youth group.

People are people. We need to belong and most of my ministry from when I started working with young adults at Catalina UMC to today has been to recruit and incorporate people into the body of Christ. I have found that evangelism is not just praying a prayer, but

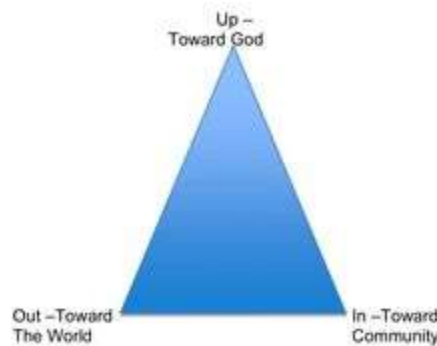
incorporating people into the Body of Christ where they can grow into the image of God in Jesus. Discipleship is the most important thing.

Now discerning the Body occurs not only within the church, but with those in the world. I must admit one of the most confusing things is that the Bible refers to “believers in Jesus Christ as the children of God.” It also refers to all human being as being “Children of God” for all human beings are made in the image of God.

The best way I can answer this tonight is that we as believers have a special relationship with God. We are eternally saved through our faith in Jesus Christ, but that relationship gives to us a greater burden of responsibility than it does privilege.

We can never fully rejoice in our salvation when there are the unsaved in this world. We can never take for granted our abundant bread and food when there are hungry people in the world. Jesus is found in those in need. Do you see, do you discern the Body of Christ in the hungry of the world?

As we gather here tonight we look up to God, in to our relationships with each other and out to the needs of the world.



At Vista we remember and discern the hungry through our Snak Pak ministry that not only recognizes Jesus in the hungry, but in the children in our local school. We spend \$4000 a year on hungry children.

We also monthly gather money and food for the Impact Community Foodbank. Our neighbors are hungry and we show that we care. Donations have been down for a few months for that ministry; so I lift it

up to you tonight for Christ calls us to discern his Body both within the Church and out in the world.

Now some have asked recently about my 2 questions, “What is God saying to you and what are you going to do?” The answer tonight is to discern Jesus in the hungry around you. Seek to feed them with physical food and invite them to the table of the Lord to feed their souls.

As Paul wrote, “**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he returns.**” The Sacrament of Holy Communion is a converting means of grace, which is why we as Methodists open the table to all who would come for we believe simple participation in it through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit will convert people.

Now at the first Lord’s Supper the betrayal was not only against Jesus, but against everyone gathered around that table. It was a betrayal of the Body. Judas betrayed them all. We betray others when we let them starve of body. We betray each other when we divide up into groups and criticize and judge each other. The only person we should judge is ourselves and our behavior, as verse 31 says, “**But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged.**”

But oh do we judge and criticize the Body of Christ and those who compose it! Who hasn’t judged and criticized a denomination, a local church, a bishop, a pastor? I know I have,... have you? We at one time have all betrayed what we are a part of, the Body of Christ. We have all failed to discern the Body in each other. We are all sinners in need of a Savior.

And so we come to tonight. On the night in which Jesus was betrayed and said, “**The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.**” We all think of Judas here, that Jesus was referring to Judas, but did you ever think about the fact that all that night dipped their bread into the same bowl of stew with Jesus?

And in fact, all betrayed him that night. Peter denied him 3 times, they all doubted, and they all ran away. All were guilty that night, all

dipped their bread into the bowl with Jesus. All are guilty who are gathered here tonight.

Our opening song tonight was **“Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast”** that about says it all. We are all sinners inviting each other to this Gospel feast. This sacrament is proclaiming Jesus’ death for our sins until he comes again.

So as you come tonight to receive,... admit your sinfulness, and receive God’s grace. That will be your examination of yourself. For we come admitting that we have betrayed Jesus as we’ve judged others. We’ve betrayed Jesus as we’ve disrespected others of the body in thought, word, or deed. We have betrayed Jesus in that we could have helped others with their physical or spiritual hunger and we turned our back.

Tonight, we will all admit our betrayal as we receive Holy Communion from a common bowl. You will be given a piece of bread as you come forward to dip into the bowl. That will be your admission of sin as you remember Jesus’ words, **“The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.”**

As you receive the elements together you will also receive the forgiveness for your sins for tonight we discern the body of Christ in each other, we discern the presence of Christ who came to save us, and not condemn us, and we will leave as reborn people to do his work and will in the world.

Let us examine our hearts and lives again.

Let us join now in the ritual of Holy Communion (Maunday Thursday ritual from Book of worship)