

Text: 1 Cor 11: 17-34

I. Introduction

A. God's original plan.

1. From the dawn of creation to this very moment was that humankind would be in a right and loving relationship with God and with one another (illustrated by the creation narrative & creation of Eve).
2. God continually pursues a loving & personal relationship with each of us. John 3:16 - God's ultimate expression of love for us.
3. We are disciples when we show love in the fellowship
 - a. John 13:35 (NIV), "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
 - b. 1 John 3:14 (NIV), "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers."
4. The effectiveness of our testimony is directly related to how we treat one another in the body of Christ.

B. The Plan Has Broken Down

1. We read the Church Covenant every first Sunday with two critical passages on how we are to treat one another:
 - a. "... to walk together in Christian love"; and
 - b. "... to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger"
2. When we look around in our fellowship there are ruptured relationships and frayed fellowships.
 - a. Men: competitive spirit and ego get in the way.
 - b. Ladies: fashion, mood swings and cliques alienate folks.
3. But we are not alone in this break down:

- a. Adam & Eve broke down in Genesis 3
- b. The disciples broke down over who would betray Jesus and who would be the greatest (Luke 22: 23-24)
- c. In our text today we see a breakdown in the Corinthian fellowship. Paul takes them to task in v. 17-22
 - (1) Divisions among the congregation
 - (2) Trying to show one another up as "spiritual"
 - (3) An abuse of the Love Feast (some go hungry while other get drunk).
 - (4) A wrong motivation for coming: social rather than spiritual.

C. Relevant Question

1. As we come before the Lord's table today, how can healing come so we can be more effective or better disciples?
2. The world is not going to join mess. There is enough of that already outside the church.
3. We destroy the spirit of new members by in-fighting.
 - a. Matt 18:6 (NIV), "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

II. Self-Examination (v. 28)

- A. Socrates said, "An unexamined life is not worth living."
- B. If we are to be the people that God is calling us to be corporately, we first must look at ourselves individually.
- C. It is very difficult for us to take a look in the mirror and make corrections to me, myself and I. Jesus asks this question:

1. Matthew 7:3 (NIV), ““Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”
- D. Many times we can point out the faults and failings in other people but overlook our own shortcomings. And why do we do that? Because we **feel better** about ourselves when we see other’s failings but that doesn’t make us better.
 1. Gal 6:3-4 (NIV), “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,”
- E. The standard for comparison is the Lord Jesus Christ. When you compare your life to the Master’s, you can easily see where adjustments need to be made.
 1. How did Jesus handle the devil? Matt 4, “It is written . . .”
 2. How did Jesus handle time? John 9:4, “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”
- F. Self-examination is an on-going process in the Christian life. Illustration: My bowling. I have to examine: where I start, the steps I take, arm movement, bending over, ball weight, lane conditions.
- G. Our text tells us to examine yourself and keep your “. . . fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith . . .” (Heb 12: 2, NIV)

III. Recognize The Body Of Christ (v. 29)

- A. Paul tells the Corinthians that they need to realize what is going on at the table. We need to recognize two things as we come to the table today (1) The body of the Lord Jesus Christ in the elements; and (2) the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ in the church.
- B. The Body Of Christ In The Elements

1. When we come to the Lord’s Supper, we are coming to a memorial service.
2. Bread: represents the body of the Lord Jesus. Christ dwelt among us in the flesh. John 1:14, “The word became flesh . . .”
3. Cup: symbolizes his shed blood. New Covenant. New relationship with the Father.
- C. The Body Of Christ In You & Me (The Church)
 1. There are division, strife and confusion in the church sometimes because we don’t realize who we are.
 - a. Would you really gossip about and backbite Jesus? (Sermon on the mount)
 - b. Would you tell Him one thing to his face on Sunday and then do something completely different on Monday? (Judas)
 - c. Would you be lazy and let Jesus do all the work while you just soak up the benefits? (John 6 feedings)
 2. You and I are the body of Christ and we need to recognize that in one another.
 - a. We do that when we are kind and loving to another. Heb 10:24 (NIV), “. . . let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”
 - b. Be slow to take offense and get angry. James 1:19 (NIV), “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”
 - c. Let’s forgive one another when we’ve been wronged. Matt 18:21-22 (NIV), “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”
 - d. We are active in the on-going ministry of the church beyond just soaking up the benefits on Sunday or in a crisis.
- D. 1 Cor 12:13 (NIV), “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one

body . . .” Recognize the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Judge Yourself Before God Steps In (v. 31-32)

- A. When we think about judging, what comes to mind? Judge Judy? Judge Wapner? Judge Mathis?
- B. A judge presides over court proceedings that include:
 - 1. Charges are brought against the defendant by the prosecutor.
 - 2. Evidence is presented.
 - 3. Verdict is deliberated upon and rendered.
 - 4. Sentence is passed and implemented.
 - 5. In some cases, the guilty are rehabilitated and paroled.
- C. Paul tells us that we need to put our own lives through the judgement process to bring about some changes in our lives and behavior.
- D. By doing the self-examination that I mentioned earlier, we can see the imperfections in our own lives. But Paul says that we have to go one step further and see our sin the way God sees it.
- E. The problem today is that we know, many times, what we are doing is wrong but we are not willing to judge it and then correct it.
 - 1. We know that we are not supposed to take pens, pencils, paper, calculators and other “minor” things from the office but we do it anyway.
 - 2. We know that we are not suppose to drive over the speed limit but we do it anyway.
 - 3. We know that we are not suppose to use profanity or swear but we allow those words to flow from our lips anyway and we direct those hurtful words at church members, family members and friends.
 - 4. We know that we are to greet one another with a holy kiss (2 Cor

13:12) but we will walk all the way around the church to avoid talking to someone.

- 5. We know that we need to stay put once the service has started but we’ll get up anyway and distract everyone during the service because we can’t hold our water.
- F. We need to start seeing where we have gone astray, declare it to be wrong (that’s judging it) and then correcting our behavior.
 - 1. 1 John 1:9 (NIV), “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
- G. We can only declare it to be wrong when we have knowledge of the offense and that comes through . . .
 - 1. The Word of God
 - a. Psalms 119:11 (NIV), “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”
 - b. Psalms 119:108 (NIV), “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”
 - 2. The Holy Spirit - Spirit brings to our remembrance.
- H. If we judge ourselves, then God won’t have to step in. You don’t want God to have to step in. When God does the judging . . .
 - 1. People get thrown overboard on a ship and ride in the belly of a fish for three days like Jonah.
 - 2. People take 40 years to complete an 11 day trip to the promised land and whole generations die off. (Num 14:20-24)
 - 3. Liars will drop dead in the fellowship like Ananias and Sapphira when they misrepresented their giving.
- I. God doesn’t want to discipline us but He will because His holiness and justice call for it. At the time of our text, some were sick and weak and some were even called home to be with the Lord.

V. Celebration

- A. That’s why this table is so important in the life of the believer.
- B. At the table . . .
 - 1. We are reminded of the forgiveness that God offers to each of us.
 - 2. We are reminded of the power that God has given to us to be His children. “Would you be free from the burden of sin? There is power in the blood . . .”
 - 3. We are reminded of the kinship that we have as brothers and sisters in Christ. “What a fellowship, what a joy divine . . .”
 - 4. We are reminded of God’s grace poured out upon us for another 30 days on this side of the Jordan.
 - 5. We are reminded that we are just rehearsing for another table gathering in glory for Jesus told his disciples, “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matt 26:29, NIV)

VI. Conclusion

- A. God desires that we would be a loving body of Christ. Loving towards one another and also to an unfriendly world.
- B. You be here today and desire to eat at this table that has been prepared.
 - 1. This table is prepared just for those in the household of faith.
 - 2. Those who have examined themselves and realized their need for a Savior.
 - 3. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

- C. There must be preparation before there can be participation. The good news is that the invitation has been extended to all nations!

VII. Benediction

- A. Numbers 6:24-26, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

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