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Great Words of the Faith Remember... (The Lord's Supper)

Yesterday we observed the 18th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Every year there is a loud call to REMEMBER the 2997 civilians and 411 firemen, police officers, and other first responders who lost their lives that day. We mourned the loss of all, but we particularly admire and remember those who died rushing into those buildings to save others while everyone else was fleeing.

This can be a powerful reminder for us as followers of Christ to remember the One who came to save us from certain destruction. Jesus entered this earth to suffer and die in order to rescue us from death and judgement. As the anniversary of 9/11 is a time to remember that awful day in our nation's history, Jesus left us a powerful event to help us remember what He did for us on the cross.

Jesus has given us as His followers a very special event to help us remember and celebrate what He did for us when he suffered and died on the cross. Even as we remember the tragic events of 9/11, let us take a few minutes to remember, consider, and celebrate what Christ did for us.

On the night before Jesus was to be crucified, He shared a last meal with His closest disciples. At that meal He took some wine and some bread and shared it with His friends. In doing so He instituted a new observance for them – and for us to follow known as “the Lord’s Supper”.

Various denominations and church traditions differ significantly as to their understanding of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. For the purpose of our study, and in light of our marking the important day in our nation’s history, let us simply consider the clear statement found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 that it is to be observed as a “remembrance” or commemoration of what Jesus did for us when He suffered and died on the cross.

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁵In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink

the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

When we read the whole section of Paul’s letter, we find the church in Corinth evidently celebrated the Lord’s Supper as part of a larger fellowship meal. They had allowed that meal to become an occasion of selfishness, division, favoritism, and even drunkenness. Paul taught them how wrong this was and in verses 23-25 he reminds of them of the real meaning of the Lord’s Supper and how important and serious it is. In doing so, he leaves us a great statement for us to consider as we remember Christ’s suffering and death for us. As a matter of fact, many churches often use this very passage as they observe the Lord’s Supper in their services. These verses point us to several things we should remember about what Christ has done for us.

Background

The meal that Jesus and His disciples shared began as an observance of the Passover. This was a meal shared by the people of Israel to commemorate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In the original event (Exodus 12) a lamb was killed and eaten, and its blood was applied to the doorposts and lintel of their homes. In so doing, they were delivered from the death of every firstborn child. The people celebrated this meal as a remembrance of how God had delivered them from Egypt. This was the pivotal event in the history of the people of Israel, and God gave them the vivid observance of the Passover as reminder of what He had done for them. We now see that this observance also pointed forward to the death of the

“Lamb of God”, Jesus Christ (John 1:29, 36) that delivered us from the penalty of sin.

The suffering and death of Christ is now the pivotal event of God’s people. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted a vivid reminder of all He did for us when he suffered and died on cross.

Remember...

The Lord’s Supper is a time of remembrance of all that Christ has done for us in His suffering and death. As Christ broke the bread and served the wine, He said **“Do this in remembrance of Me”**. So, as we observe the Lord’s Supper, or simply consider it in our study today, what is it about the Lord and His death we are to remember?

Remember How Sinful We Are.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 11:28 that a believer should **“examine himself”** as he participates in the Lord’s Supper. Even the briefest pause for honest self-examination will remind us of how sinful we really are. We remember we have all sinned and fallen far short of God’s perfect holiness (Romans 3:23). We recognize that our sin is against a Holy God and His justice demands a punishment. How bad is our sin? It is so bad that God’s Son had to suffer and die in order for it to be forgiven!

Remember God the Son Took On a Human Body.

Jesus took bread and said, **“This is My body”**. He took the cup and said, **“This is the new covenant in My blood”**. Perhaps we are quick to overlook it but stop and think about how amazing it is that God the Son took on human flesh and bone and blood so that He could suffer and die for us. His body could feel the pain of the whip, the nails, and the crown of thorns. His blood could be spilled out as He suffered and died upon the cross. He humbled Himself to made in the likeness of man so that He could be obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7-8)

Remember Christ Died in Our Place

Jesus said, **“This is My body which is for you...”** In the Matthew account, He shares, **“This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”**. As we participate in or contemplate the Lord’s Supper, we should remember that Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross was **FOR US!** He died **IN OUR PLACE!** As sinners each one of us is guilty before God and therefore under His wrath and judgment for the just punishment for our sin. Yet Jesus took God’s entire wrath and all the punishment for our sin upon Himself as He died on the cross. Peter reminds how Christ **“Died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God...”** (1 Peter 3:18).

Remember We Truly Partake of Christ Through faith

Some of Jesus’ most challenging teaching is found in John 6:22-71. There He speaks of truth which is indeed closely related to the Lord’s Supper. He talks of how in order to have eternal life, people must “eat my flesh” and “drink my blood”. This was hard for His listeners to grasp, and it can be hard to us to understand as well. What we must realize is that a theme found in John 6 is that of **Belief** and **Unbelief**. (See John 6:29; 40; 47; 63-64). We receive what Christ has done for us through faith and belief in Him and what He has done for us.

Remember Christ is Coming Back

As Jesus shares the Last Supper, He reminded His friends that He is one day coming back and they would celebrate and fellowship with Him ***in person!*** In our passage, Paul says as we observe we **“Proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes...”** In Matthew 26:29 Jesus told the disciples, **“I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”** Perhaps an often-overlooked aspect of the Lord’s Supper is that we observe it remembering that one day we as believers will one day celebrate together with our Savior!

Proclaim...

Paul says as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup in observance of the Lord’s Supper, we do so **“Proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes”**. The observance of the Lord’s Supper we are remembering and proclaiming to ourselves all that Christ has done for us. J.C. Ryle sums it up well:

“By receiving the Lord’s Supper, we publicly declare our sense of guilt, and need of a Savior--our trust in Jesus, and our love to Him--our desire to live upon Him, and our hope to live with Him. Using it in this spirit, we shall find our repentance deepened, our faith increased, our hope brightened, and our love enlarged--our besetting sins weakened, and our graces strengthened. It will draw us nearer to Christ.”

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12:00 PM McManus Conference Room

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