

Till He Come

A sermon by Larry Kirkpatrick

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We are gathered here today to eat together; to take communion. We proclaim that Jesus died for a purpose, that He opened the door of eternity for us and for our families. Today's Bible passage is one we have come to often; it is central to our observance of our Lord's Supper. Let us, then, carefully consider its meaning this day.

This section of Scripture is organized as follows:

11:17-22 Factions in the church, some excluded

11:23-26 Jesus gives bread and blood for and to all

11:27-32 God's purpose in chastening us

11:33, 34 Eat with one another

Let us review them in their turn.

Factions in the Church

Paul points out that there are factions in the Corinthian church. That is, there are separate groups. The church is divided between some who teach one thing and some another. So much so, that when they come together to eat the Lord's Supper, they eat separately. Some bring their food and eat it alone. When others come, there is none left for them. Some are excluding others.

Paul tells the truth; when they come together in that way, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. Since they are separated, by definition, not fellowshiping together, they are only meeting under the same roof. They may call it the Lord's Supper, but whatever it is in name it is not unless it is in reality.

Look at what Paul says in verse 19. When there are factions in a church, it clarifies who are genuine Christians and who, false. The Bible contains many incidents and warnings

concerning those who create factions. Their motivations are associated with competition, pride, boredom, impulses of the flesh, and the desire to control (Acts 8:18, 19; 15:24; 20:28-31; Romans 16:17, 18; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4; 11:12-20; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:4, 5; 4:17; 5:12, 19-21; 6:12, 13; Ephesians 4:14; 5:6, 11; Philippians 1:15; 3:2, 18, 19; Colossians 2:8, 18-23; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-14; 1 Timothy 1:3, 4; 4:1-7; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:16-19; 3:1-9, 13; 4:3, 4; Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11; Hebrews 13:9; James 4:1-4; 1 Peter 5:2; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 2:18, 19; 4:1; 2 John 7; 3 John 9, 10; Jude 1-25; Revelation 2:2, 6, 9, 14, 15, 20; 3:9, 17; 12:17; 21:8, 27; 22:11, 15).

(Now Mentone is a bit different. We are a church with two sections: English and Spanish language. So we usually meet in separate spaces in the same building. This is not because of factions, but language. But here we are together today, English and Spanish language believers alike, to share communion. Still, we ought to guard against any development of factionalism.)

How very easily we come together into one church for a few hours together. But are we here with the same purpose? Are there some who would prefer to gather disciples after themselves? Who are in this because of psychological satisfactions that church offers more than because they are following the bloodstained path to the cross of Jesus?

Jesus' Gift to All

The core verses, which we always read at communion, point out that Jesus gave His body for all. Jesus gave His blood for all. Salvation was wrought for all who would partake, all who would become joined to Christ in His church.

Jesus' body is broken for us. It stands especially for the offering of Jesus at the cross. Just as the lamb was slain in the courtyard of the sanctuary, Jesus dies on Calvary's tree.

Remember that at the Fall the creation itself was broken. The connection between man and earth is very intimate. Human sin introduced sin into a deathless environment. Because of sin the roses grew thorns, creatures became predator and prey. Suddenly, nature was tinged red in tooth and claw. Where it had told a pure story about its Maker, it now carried not only the message of His existence but also of sin and death.

When Jesus goes to the cross, He wears a crown of thorns. He is redeeming, buying back, earth from the curse. As the creation was distorted, broken, so the Creator coming to reclaim it is broken. He is not broken at random, or for the flowers, or to bring back more beautiful sunsets. Rather, Jesus said, “This is My body, which is broken for you” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

Then there is the blood. The Bible makes it clear that the blood is the life, (Genesis 9:1-7; Leviticus 17:10-14) and that blood represents life. Hence, in Genesis, after the flood, when God made the concession of meat-eating, the command came pointedly not to eat blood.

In the case of murder, the blood of the murderer was to be shed as well. The reason given is not a health reason: it is because man is made in God’s image. That is, man is not to murder, because that is a behavior unlike God. He is not to take life at random, and when he does take animal life in order to eat, as much as possible, he is to remove the blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:23; 1 Samuel 14:34). He is to remind himself constantly that he is above the beasts, that he is made in God’s image, that he is a moral creature, that God makes moral demands upon him because of what he, mankind, is.

In this light, Jesus’ blood represents what? Thirty-three years of living without murdering, and more, without hating in His heart another creature made in God’s image (Matthew 5:22). Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:6-8).

Eating and Drinking Unworthily

God chastens us because we are His children (Hebrews 12:4-11). Just as small children, we must learn to treat each other as family. God desires that His church will represent the very attitudes of heaven. He chastens because of what we are to become. The primary purpose is not punishment, but growth.

The church is placed here as God's witness, but it never witnesses in the abstract; its witness is always concretized in the lives of its members.

But rarely do we discuss the text here about eating and drinking unworthily, eating and drinking condemnation to ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:29). Perhaps the best clue to understanding the intended meaning, is the repeated emphasis on when we come together (1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34). In light of these verses, in the 29th we see the central problem for those who eat and drink unworthily: they do not discern the Lord's body.

Some of us know of the extended doctrinal controversies that arose at the time of the Protestant Reformation concerning the right interpretation of the Lord's Supper. Some understood that the bread and wine were transmuted into the actual body and blood of Jesus; others held intermediate views, and some said the service was wholly symbolical.

Yes, the bread represents Jesus' body. Yes, the wine, the pure, unfermented juice of the grape, represents Jesus' life. But this whole passage is couched in the issue of how the Corinthians behave when they come together as a body. The problems in Corinth were not about the bread and the wine. These, very clearly, are symbols. Were it not for the Roman Catholic background of the Eucharist, it is doubtful this would even have come up.

No, the “body of Christ” that the Corinthians are having difficulty discerning is not the bread and wine; it is the presence of Christ in their own fellow church members. When they exclude members of their own congregation, they are behaving in an unchristlike way. Those who eat and drink unworthily are those who disdain other members of the church. They are those who provoke and press home factionalism.

Come Together and Share

In that light then, we return to verse 26:

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.

When we come together for the purpose of partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and when we do legitimately commune together, then we are witnesses, living signs, demonstrating that Jesus died to change His people now, to bring them into harmony with one another now. Then we are Christlike in this respect and thus we are signs pointing to the sky. We are radar. You don’t build a radar unless there is something to track with it. We are living indicators that there are a people, occupying until Jesus comes, laboring on His behalf, watching and waiting, looking for our Lord who will appear to us a second time without sin and unto salvation.

We are to share one with another, the wealthier with the poorer. We are not to build up divisions amongst ourselves; factions are to fade away, not propagate. We are to endure, nay, even appreciate the company of one another. We are to be living manifestations of God’s community. As He exists in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons yet one, we are to exist in community, distinct persons yet one. His kingdom is made real in each of us. The footprint of His kingdom on earth is precisely where we are standing.

And so we can see in verses 33 and 34 a call to close fellowship. Don't eat alone. Wait for each other. Don't out run the body; labor for each other; don't give up on each other; wait for them. Join in the intimate fellowship that a meal stands for in the Middle East. Seek fellowship, communion, unity, family.

That is the light in which we are to eat in symbol the body, drink in illustration the blood, and live the full color reality of His church come together in worship of Him. Brothers and sisters, this is our calling. Today, if we genuinely partake, we point to the sky.

Biographical Note: Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick is a convert to the Adventist faith. Since 1994 he has served in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He holds degrees from Southern Adventist University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. His work has included research assistant for the Ellen G. White Estate, pioneering Adventist internet ministry, involvement in GYC, and presenter at the 50th Anniversary *Questions on Doctrine* Conference. He is author of the books *Real Grace for Real People* and *Cleanse and Close*. For many years his sermons and papers have been published on the internet. Larry and wife Pamela have served churches in Nevada, Utah, and California. The Kirkpatricks presently serve at the [Mentone church](#) near Loma Linda, California.