

The Main Meal
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
September 4, 2011

I watched a news piece one morning this past week. The story was about ways to prevent and treat heart disease. The report stated eating the right food can reverse the diseased condition of the heart. They shared the story of a woman who had a heart attack and was told she needed to have by-pass surgery; but she refused. Instead she began to be diligent and eat only food that was good for her heart and body. Her health improved. She went from a physical condition to where she could barely walk because her heart was so bad to being able to skip rope at a fast pace. An x-ray was shown of another man's heart before and after he had made significant changes to his diet. Before changing his eating patterns, an x-ray showed how the openings in one of his key arteries was barely open. However after a period of time of adjusting his eating habits, x-rays revealed without medicines or surgery, the artery in his heart opened back up to a more normal, healthy standard. The report concluded that eating the right food can reverse diseased hearts and make them stronger.

Whether you are a young Christian or old, the Lord's Supper or Communion is the main meal we need to keep our spiritual hearts and souls healthy. So today we'll look at the reasons why **Observing the Lord's Supper is our main meal for living.**

Reading 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Observing the Lord's Supper helps us to experience the sacrificial character of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Observing the Lord's Supper helps us to experience the sacrificial character of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The words I read are from the Apostle Paul. As he taught the church about

what communion means, Paul reminded them when Jesus had the first communion meal, Paul said, – “on the night he was **betrayed...**” v.23 You may be thinking, yeah we know the story. Jesus was rejected and even his own disciples ran out on him. But listen again to Paul’s reminder. He said to the Christians who were worshipping together, **Jesus started the Lord’s Supper, he shared this meal on the night when he was betrayed!**

What did you do the last time you sensed a major betrayal was about to hit your life?

What did you do when the:

boyfriend or girlfriend was about to dump you?

the co-worker or club member was about to let you down?

Did you feel in the mood to cook for them, take them out to dinner, make one last effort to reach out. When sensing betrayal most of us go into a defensive mode, we get ready to protect ourselves and defend ourselves, maybe even revenge.

John 14:9 reminds us Jesus once told his disciples, “whoever has seen me has seen the father.” Jesus is the image of God. We know God because of who Jesus was and is and that Jesus was sent from God, God’s only son. What did the son do on the night he was betrayed. Jesus offered a meal. His offering revealed the character of God that doesn’t run from us even when we run from him. It reveals the character of God that can look at the things we hate about ourselves and keep secret; but God still reaches out with loves just the same.

The church Paul was writing to about the Lord’s Supper needed to be reminded about how Jesus shared this meal on the night he was betrayed.

- There were Christians who weren’t living like they knew they should be living. They were betraying the integrity of Christ.
- There were clicks and divisions among the leaders in the church and members. They were betraying the prayer of Jesus from John’s gospel chapter 17 that his followers be one.

- There were members taking other members to court and yet these were Christians with gifts and potential.

Spiritually speaking they believed in Jesus; **but they were letting the wrong things block the flow of God's power and will to their heart as Christians and as a church.** So Paul reminds them the way to open the flow of the Holy Spirit is to not neglect sharing a meal so we remember that all of us have betrayed God and all of us need God's love to help us find real living now and eternal life to come.

Paul taught the church to receive the grace only Jesus Christ can give.

Paul reminded them on that night Jesus was betrayed, he took the loaf of bread and said – “**take, eat,** this my body and after the meal with the cup of wine he said **take and drink** this is my blood... vs. 23 &25. Jesus didn't give them money, he didn't give them a secret to when the world would end, he gave his self, he gave body and blood given for them. But the key word here is “take.” **To take means to receive!** The disciples had the freedom if they wanted to reject the gift. But if they accepted, the bread and a sip of wine were the means of taking in God's gift or grace.

Getting our spiritual hearts healthy is to keep coming back to our relationship to God which **starts and grows based on grace.** Our hearts and the heart of our church is strengthen as we know that we are only as a strong as we are able to take in and offer the grace and forgiveness of God. We may think what make us strong are common interest, common views, but what makes a church stronger is the power of God's grace flowing through us. Spiritual strength is taking in grace from God and grace shared one to another.

It doesn't matter what situation or relationship you want to

consider, ultimately what strengthen and keeps it all together is the gift of grace expressed in forgiveness.

- Husbands and wives are going to have their spats.
- Kids are going to not understand their parents and parents aren't always going to understand their kids even though we were all young once.
- We can try and be sensitive to people of different political and religious views, of race or class or culture but there is only so far being considerate and understanding and even agreeing will take us. **At some point the only thing that will really get lives passed the variety hurts we go through is forgiveness.**

Illustration: Grace Card:

Marlene and I watched a movie last weekend entitled Grace Card. The ending of the movie had people whose lives had intersected because of various traumas and injustice they committed against each other. What finally brought these people together in a relationship of peace and harmony was forgiveness. Acts of repayment or apology could only go so far but at some point the only thing that could heal the betrayal was to extend forgiveness and forgiveness be accepted; instead of avoided or rejected.

Paul was writing to a church that had so much actually blocking the flow of the spirit, the meal they all needed was where together they could experience receiving grace.

No matter what our disappointment, our anger toward others or some one else toward you; the ultimate way to allow the flow of faith, joy, and love is to receive and extend forgiveness. There will be some people who will never see God and life the way we want them to see it or they want us to see. There will be some relationships that are like two ships passing in the night and there just is never going to be a strong connection - the answer is grace. There are things done that cannot be undone and the only solution is grace. So, "take eat, and drink," reminds us of Christ presence

offering us to take in his grace.

Paul used the Lord's Supper to remind the church **Christianity is all about Jesus**; not about us.

Paul reminded them that as Jesus shared the meal, he said, **“Do this in remembrance of me...” vs.24-25**. Everything we live and do is centered in Jesus Christ. Sometimes we get off track and we make Christianity to be about a certain list of do's and don't. Sometimes we may even mean well but we make it into a certain look or image and we get real strict. Don't get me wrong there are biblical ethics of behavior and expectations for Christians. But when Jesus said do this in remembrance of him he was reminding his followers Christianity is about a relationship with God, with him, not a list of well intending set of rules, traditions or image.

Illustration: Pastor Kyle Idleman tells the story about a man named John who was dressed in blue jeans, walked into a bank to finalize a business transaction. The teller told him that the officer he needed to see wasn't in and he would have to come back the next day. John said that would be fine and asked the teller to validate his parking ticket so he would not have to pay for parking. The teller informed him that according to bank policy, she couldn't validate his parking ticket because technically speaking he had not completed a financial transaction. John asked for an exception to be made since he had come to the bank to do business but the appropriate officer wasn't available. The teller didn't budge. She said, I'm sorry, that's our policy. Rules are rules.

So John decided to make a business transaction. He decided to close his account. John's last name was Akers. He was the chairman of IBM, and the account he closed had a balance of one and a half million dollars. This qualified as a financial transaction, and the teller was then able to validate his parking ticket. (I Am Not A Fan, Kyle Idelman, p.79)

Pastor Idelman states, “The bank teller was right since no money had exchanged hands she wasn’t suppose to validate his ticket. But what is more important than rules is the person.” (Ibid)

The church Paul was writing to had many people at odds with each other because they wanted certain rules enforced or not; but they were ignoring the person. Most of all they were ignoring the living person and presence of Christ among them. Do this in remembrance of me means, we don’t want people just to come to church; we want them to connect to Christ.

We want people not to just know and quote the Bible; we want them to know the living God who inspired the Bible.

When Jesus gave us the words, do this in remembrance of me, he was saying all that we do needs to flow from him, and his character and will.

So lets pause for a word of prayer and prepare ourselves to take in Jesus Christ to unblock our hearts and soul so we receive his grace and live by his power.