

“Reflect and Renew”

I Corinthians 11:23-29

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Communion Devotion

This morning our attention is drawn to the first biblical passage written to Christians about the Lord’s Supper. Paul penned these words to the Corinthian believers several years before the first gospel was written by Mark.

While there are many similarities with the three gospel readings that include details of the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion, there is a unique feature to Paul’s account. After outlining the procedure for taking the bread and cup as worshipers focused upon the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul wrote these words.

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.” (I Corinthians 11:27-29)

Why did Paul add this stern warning? First of all, it is obvious Paul took the Lord’s Supper seriously. For him, it was a time for personal reflection and renewal.

It was also the perfect opportunity for every believer to examine his or her life to see if it reflected the nature of God and honored Jesus. Humility, honesty and repentance would be required to do this.

It is no coincidence this admonition was not included in a letter to the Christians in Philippi or Thessalonica. Their churches were not as troubled as the one at Corinth, which could aptly be described as dysfunctional.

Paul was disturbed by the unchristian behavior of the believers in Corinth. Their values and priorities in no way resembled those of Jesus, and the way they treated one another was at times abysmal.

Confusion and chaos characterized the church, and everyone was nursing wounds and hurt feelings. This was no way to behave as individuals or conduct the affairs of the church. So, Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth to take advantage of their time together around the sacred table to remember the life and ministry of Jesus and to compare their lives to his.

“A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.”

There is no better time to evaluate our lives and make a commitment to change than around this table of remembrance, reflection and renewal. Let me encourage you, as strongly as Paul did his readers, to examine your heart today.

How does your life measure up to Jesus’?

Do you, like Jesus, value serving over being served, healing over hurting, sacrifice over self-indulgence, generosity over greed, love over hate, truth over deception, justice over injustice, inclusion over exclusion, humility over arrogance, forgiveness over revenge and peace over war?

Like Jesus, are you serious about confronting evil, righting wrong, lifting up the lowly, liberating the oppressed, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the grieving, giving people a second chance and building bridges of goodwill, understanding, reconciliation and hope instead of erecting walls of suspicion and hate?

“A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.”

You know what has no place at this table? There is no room for...

...deception and hypocrisy;

...a smug, self-righteous attitude or a critical, condescending spirit;

...arrogance and entitlement;

...self-centeredness and self-indulgence;

...intolerance and disrespect;

...immaturity and irresponsibility;

...hate and revenge.

You know what there is room for at this sacred table? There are ample spaces for...

...humility and honesty;

...confession and repentance;

...mercy and grace;

...forgiveness and encouragement;

...redemption and reconciliation;

...hope and change.

“Create in me a clean heart,” David wrote in our earlier reading from Psalm 51.

I invite you to come to this table to begin this process.