

2016-17-20 1 Corinthians 11:23-28 **Receive His Assurance of Forgiveness** Maundy Thurs. 04/13/17  
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God's gracious forgiveness has been given and poured out for us through Jesus, our Savior! Amen.

Paul instructs us to prepare for the blessings Christ offered in the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28  
These are the words of our Savior. They offer life to all who believe. Your Word is saving truth. Amen.

Dear forgiven Sinners in Christ,

There are many games where something must be passed on. Think of a relay race. A girl may be the fastest runner on the track. If she makes a good handoff of the baton, her team is sure to win. Woe to the runner who drops the baton! It's the same with ball players whether a ball is thrown or hit the object is to catch the ball. Woe to the person who drops it! The Apostle Paul said that he too had something very important to "pass on." It is the truth of what Jesus said and offers to believers. Jesus taught Paul about the Lord's Supper and Paul passed those truths to the Corinthians. Tonight, through God's Word, he is passing those same truths for us to hold on to as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

### **Turn to Jesus and Receive His Assurance of Forgiveness.**

**How could we drop what Paul is passing on to us?** Paul had spent almost two years in Corinth teaching about Christ and Christian living. But, once he was away, he heard a report that the Corinthians had "dropped the ball" regarding the Lord's Supper. The believers usually met in a joint meal before celebrating communion. Instead of going to the Lord's Supper for a feast of salvation, they were getting drunk. Also, some people were taking all the food and leaving others hungry. This was a sign of divisions within the congregation. The very word communion pictures believers united with Christ and encouraging each other. The Corinthians communed improperly. So, the Lord's Supper had become an abuse of Jesus' command; and they were not blessed through it. We read in verse 30: *"That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep [died]."* May this never happen to any of us!

This was only one way that Satan worked hard to get Christians to "drop the ball" regarding the Lord's Supper. His other tactics include questioning what Jesus said. He might ask: Does "*is*" really mean "*is*?" Some say that Jesus meant "it represents my body." But in all human language "is" means is. If you point to a cat and say, This is a cat. It doesn't represent a cat. It is a cat. Jesus said, *"This is my body"* and, *"This is ... my blood...."* (v. 24-25) Others question: "How can Jesus' body and blood be in many places?" The answer is: This is the body of God's Son, who after His resurrection could appear wherever and whenever He wanted. His glorious body was not limited by space or time.

Others challenge, "What good can physical eating and drinking do for a soul?" Jesus answered, *"This is my body given for you ... my blood ... poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* (Matthew 26:28) Others ask: "How can Jesus give us body and blood and bread and wine at the same time?" Answer is: *"With God, all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26) We put objections aside for our second question:

**How do we keep from losing the precious blessings of His Supper?** Paul taught the Corinthians the proper use of the Lord's Supper. He wrote, *"I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread..., he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"* (vs. 23-24) Paul used Jesus' words to remind them that it wasn't their supper; it was the Lord's Supper. This was God's gracious gift to them. And to this day it is the Lord's Supper; proclaiming His death for us until He comes!

Jesus' words assure us that when we receive the bread and wine, we also receive his true body and blood for the forgiveness of all our sins. His body and blood are really present with the bread and wine. The Son of God promised it and He can't lie! He gave us Himself in the Supper to comfort our injured hearts!

We need Jesus' comfort! At our homes, most of us have a closet or room where we pile things we have used or think we will use some day. The same happens with past and current sins in our lives. Only, we couldn't fit all those problems and sins in a closet, we need a warehouse! We have secret sins, "little" sins and big sins. We have accidental sins and willful sins. All our sins are against God or some against others and us. We are sinful from birth and by nature at odds with God! But in spite of all of that, Jesus comes to us as a friend of sinners to save us from our sins. He comes with His body and blood to assure each of us that every sin has been paid for in full. God opens to doors to the warehouse of sins and sees nothing but Jesus!

As we kneel before the Lord's altar and hear His words of institution, as our tongues taste the bread and our lips the wine, we receive the body and blood of Jesus that were given on the cross to save us. Jesus gives us Himself! And where He is, there is forgiveness, life, and salvation to all who believe!

This evening, as Jesus gives us His body and blood for our forgiveness, let us praise Him! Such a great blessing needs to be received reverently. Blessings carry responsibilities. That's the way it is in life. If the Lord blesses parents with children, they need to feed, educate, and train them in God's Word. If the Lord blesses us with a husband or a wife, our spouse requires our total love and commitment. So it is with the Lord's Supper: it needs to be received respectfully and faithfully. Paul wrote, *"Whoever eats... or drinks ... 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."*(v.28) We want to receive Jesus' body and blood properly. We don't want to sin against Jesus body and blood that were given to save us!

What does "unworthy manner" mean? First, hear what it doesn't mean! The Bible doesn't say, "Whoever is an unworthy person . . . will sin against the Lord." In the past, some Christians have not communed because they felt that their sin made them "unworthy" to receive the Supper. But Jesus gave His meal for sinners! The Bible doesn't use the words "unworthy people." If it did, none of us would ever go!

St. Paul wrote "in an unworthy manner." Let our taking of the Lord's Supper reflect what it is. The Supper is for our forgiveness; therefore we need to recognize our sins and repent of them. A person is prepared who takes Jesus at His word about the Lord's Supper: what it is (Jesus' body and blood), what it gives (the full forgiveness He won of the cross) so that through faith in Him alone we have eternal life!

Before receiving the Lord's Supper we are to examine our lives. The word "examine" meant to test things to see if it was genuine. We need to examine our lives to make sure that we are coming to the Lord's table for the right reasons. Let's answer these questions: Do I have sin? Am I sorry for my sins? Do I desire the Lord's forgiveness? Do I believe that Jesus' body and blood are truly present to offer me His forgiveness in this meal? Do I find myself united in mind and heart with what this church believes and teaches? If yes to these questions, then we are prepared to gladly receive the gift offered in the Lord's Supper: Christ and His forgiveness! He instituted this Supper for us, just as surely as he lived and died for us and rose from death! The Lord Himself has passed on an awesome treasure to us. He gives us Himself with the consecrated bread and wine. Tonight, we turn to Him at His table for the full assurance of His forgiveness. We trust in Jesus' word! As we commune we hold to Him without letting go. And yet also we pass on the truth to proclaim His death until He comes! Amen.