

“Preparing Our Hearts to Receive” Talking Points Delivered by A J Johnson February 2 2020

Psalm 32:3-5, 2 Corinthians 13:3-5, Mark 14:17-25, **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** (Sermon)

FOCAL SCRIPTURE READING: (NT) 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

¹⁷In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval. ²⁰So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, ²¹for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²²Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, 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.” ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

²⁷So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³²Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

Today is Communion Sunday.

Communion.

That important meal when we partake of the sacrificial Body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Each time we take communion, We were reminded not to come to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner.

But that we should come prepared to come to the table with our hearts and minds prepared for the newness that Christ can offer.

A newness that is offered only in Christ.

Communion is a reminder of what Christ did for us.

That our place at this most sacred table was purchased at a great price.

One that was paid for by Christ, because we could not pay it ourselves.

This is the ultimate reminder of the ultimate expression of the 'I love you' expression that Christ offers to us.

Communion matters.

Communion ... this meal matters.

And because it was paid for with such a high price, Christ asks us not to come selfishly to the table so concerned about our own needs that we forget the needs of those whom we share this table with.

And Paul reminds us that Christ's requests that we have this meal in 'remembrance of' Christ.

But here too, God reminds us of the mother that sets the food on the table and insists that we prepare for the meal by washing our hands, and leaving any quarrelling and foolishness away from the table.

The Lord's Supper ([1 Cor. 11:20](#)), along with baptism, is one of two sacraments that Jesus commanded His church to observe.

We get the name "communion" from [1 Corinthians](#)

[10:16](#) ("sharing" is the Greek word, *koinonea*, which means "fellowship" or "communion").

While communion or the Lord's supper goes by other names, communion is a key one, because it means "fellowship" it means coming as one together to the table of the Lord.

To literally arrive at the table with my family.

Communion is not an individual fast food meal to be gobbled in the car alone on the way to work.

It's a meal where the table has been set by God Himself.

And because God set it, it's important to come right. But here God is telling us also that in coming right, we must arrive at the table 'together' as one.

In our scripture lesson from 1st Corinthians we find an agitated Paul, upset because he has gotten word or become aware of some.

In a world where are more keenly aware of how humanity seems to find itself constantly pointing to differences in people.

Lifting up a mentality of 'my side is better than your side', or my group that I identify with is superior to your group.

The Christ's message of unity is actually 'revolutionary'

It is a message that says it's okay to be different but it is not okay to ignore that which makes us one.

Christ Jesus. Our acceptance of Him and Him crucified. But Lifting up differences and using those differences to divide is not what we are told by Paul that we should 'be about'.

Paul cites Jesus' words ([1 Cor. 11:25](#)), "do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." He adds (v. 26), "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

And when we are coming in Fellowship with one another, we recognize that if my heart is clean, it should be reflected in my behavior.

If I have prepared by cleansing my heart by coming to God and asking Him to wash me and make me new, it ought to reflect in how I treat the others who are gathered at the table.

So how are we to prepare to receive this blessed meal?

Well prepared.

Because our behavior impacts not just us as the individual, but the family Christ has assembled at the table as well.

Our 1st reading from Psalm 32 shows the Psalmist writhing in the agony of the results of sin. He has moved from one who kept silent in his sin, to one who knows that the God of His heart is ready to forgive and prepare him to live right with God. The Psalmist becomes repentant and recognizes “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ and you forgave me the guilt of my sin.”

The Psalmist reminds us that preparing our hearts to be in communion with God means we first must open our hearts first to God seeking forgiveness.

And let us not forget that when we receive communion we usually pray as our Lord taught His disciples to pray with that last phrase that ends with our asking God to forgive us as we forgive others.

That means that whatever ill we have against someone else, we give that away.

We give it to God in prayer.

We leave that at the foot of the cross and walk away.

Because when we put our feet under the Father's table, He doesn't want us to bring any mess with us.

Paul reminds us that when we remain focused on anything but God, the others we are at table with suffer and we are unaware of it because we are focused on our own selves.

That's two ways to prepare our hearts.

Ask God to forgive us as we have forgiven others. Go to God with repentance and others with forgiveness, seeking unity.

The 3rd way is to come to the table with the Love of Christ in our hearts and show it to others. As Paul is giving instructions about how to come

to the Lord's table (1 Cor. 11:23-32), he he confronts the problems of division and strife in the church.

We have to remember in love that when we harbor things against people it prevents us from fully loving as God intended us to love. It leads to separation, division and strife. According to Paul a complete ignoring of the needs of those right in the congregation, and a level of selfishness and gluttony that Paul found offensive, corrosive and wrong.

If our hearts have been cleansed by God, we have to let stuff go.

To not do so is to shame and humiliate God Almighty

Our 2nd scripture reading Paul asks us to "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"

Paul is asking us to hold our behavior and what's in our hearts up to the example of Christ Jesus, realizing that if we have accepted Him, He then is in us.

If we believe the Philippians scripture "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" then believe that God is able to restore unity, peace, love, safety into our homes, our lives, our businesses. And if unity in your home, business, life seems slow in coming...give God a chance knowing and understanding that He is indeed working all things for the good of those that love Him.

Paul says it like this:

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

Think of it like this. You holding something against somebody isn't going to make them act any better. All it's going to do is to mess up your own meal and your own fellowship with the Body of Christ.

Truly, believe that God can do all things, including changing the hearts of those around you.

Finally, after you have asked God to examine your heart, after you have asked Him to change you, Remember to Remember.

Christ said Do this in Rememberance of ME. He gave so much for us that we might have an abundance of joy, peace, freedom in Him. And in this month that our culture celebrates Valentines Day, remember the One Who Loved You Best. The Christ crucified, risen who now dwells richly in you and in this table

Because if we remember the kind of Love Christ showed for us when were at our most unloveable, we can find strength in that and show others in our lives that we love them still. That we love them too.

Is your heart prepared this morning to come to the table?