



## June and July Sermon Series: Messy Church

### Sermon #5: A Messy Lord's Supper

#### Getting the Nod:

#### Pre-Sermon Video: **Communion Intro**

**As we walk through the book of 1 Corinthians... we have concluded that it was a messy church that Paul was dealing with.** They not only knew how to fight... they knew how to ruin even sacred things like communion. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians and let's look at how they even corrupted the Lord's Supper...

NKJV | 1 Co 11:17-22 **Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that **there are divisions among you**, and in part I believe it. 19 For there must also be **factions among you**, that **those who are approved may be recognized among you**. 20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 21 For in eating, **each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry, and another is drunk**. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or **do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?** What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.**

Talk about a mess! It was a vanity fair nightmare. It was a church fellowship disaster!

**Illustration of Prune Juice and Communion Sunday:** One communion Sunday, the communion was passed out with grape juice that looked much darker than usual. When the pastor lifted the lids, he thought nothing of it and began to serve the communion. Promptly upon receiving the cup, each recipient's face had a peculiar, stunned look. When it came time for the pastor to receive, he discovered why the strange looks...**the juice was prune juice!** One parishioner stated, "Perhaps this is a Divine commentary on our church...**we need a little loosening up!**"

**Transition:** The Corinthians needed to loosen up their fights and get back to the core reason for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

#### Connecting Us:

**In studying this passage this week,** I was stirred by several things that Paul was trying to expose about this church when it came to their practice of communion. **And as I pondered their actions... I felt that we could learn a little more about "HOW NOT TO DO COMMUNION" and how to get back to the bottom line of this very important practice that Christ has called us to.**

**Transition:** The Lord's Supper in Corinth had become the wrong kind of feast...

#### God's Take on 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians:

**You have to know that carry-in dinners have been around a long time! The peoples of the ancient world were very sociable.** It was the regular custom for groups of people to meet together for meals. There was, in particular, a certain kind of feast called an **eranos** to which participants brought their own share of the food, and in which all the contributions were pooled to make a **common meal**.

**The early Church had such a custom, a feast called the Agape, or Love Feast.** To it all the Christians came, bringing what they could; the resources were pooled, and they sat down to a common meal. It was a lovely custom, for it was a way of producing and nourishing real Christian fellowship.

**But, in the church at Corinth, things had gone sadly wrong with the Love Feast.** In the church, there were rich and poor; there were those who could bring plenty, and there were slaves who could bring hardly anything at all. In fact, for many poor slaves, the Love Feast must have been the only decent meal in the whole week. **It was a wonderful opportunity for unity and fellowship... but the Corinthians made it...**

### **The Wrong Kind of Feast:**

#### **1. Instead of sharing they were hoarding.**

- **But, in Corinth, the art of sharing had got lost.** The rich did not share their food but ate it in little exclusive groups by themselves, hurrying through it in case they had to share, while the poor had next to nothing.
- The result was that the meal at which the social differences between members of the church should have been obliterated only succeeded in aggravating these same differences. Unhesitatingly and unsparingly, Paul rebukes this.

#### **2. Instead of equality there was superiority.**

- **The early Church was the one place in all the ancient world where the barriers were down.** The world was very rigidly divided: there were the free-men and the slaves; there were the Greeks and the barbarians—the people who did not speak Greek; there were the Jews and the Gentiles; there were the Roman citizens and those considered to be outside the law; there were the cultured and the ignorant.
- **The Church was the one place where all groups could and did come together.** But they had divided themselves into cliques and threw out the “Not Welcome Sign” to the poor and needy.

#### **3. Instead of fellowship it was a social clique.**

- **A church should be a place without social and class distinctions.** In fact, when we make class distinctions... we cease to be a church at all.
- **A real church is a body of men and women united** to each other because all are united to Christ. Even the word used to describe the sacrament is suggestive.
- **But the Greek word for supper is *deipnon*.** For the Greeks, breakfast was a meal where all that was eaten was a little bread dipped in wine; the midday meal was eaten anywhere, even on the street or in a city square; the *deipnon* was the main meal of the day, where people sat down with no sense of hurry and not only satisfied their hunger but took their time and lingered together. The very word shows that the Christian meal ought to be a meal where people linger and spend time in each other's company.

**Illustration of CHICKEN FOR DINNER:** Some time back in the 50's, there was a small boy who wanted to go fishing, but no one would take him. He sat on his porch with his fishing pole and pretended to be fishing until that became too boring. So, he put a hook on and put a piece of bread on the hook. Then his grandmother let her chickens run free. It wasn't long until he got a nibble. He jerked and hooked a good-laying hen right through the head. The boy would never forget the

spanking, but he also remembered the family had fried chicken that night. And the little boy most of all remembered "It was worth it!"

**Paul was scolding the Corinthians about their destruction of the Love Feast... and the Lord's Supper in latter verses...** but he was trying to get them back to the sacred truth and experience of it.

**Transition:** Let's go back to the rest of this passage... starting with verse 23...

### Our Response:

NKJV | 1 Co 11:23-34 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. 33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

### Background:

- It was in the context of those Love Feasts that communion was practiced.
- Paul shows the Jesus narrative from the Last Supper and the importance placed on it by the Savior.
- But then Paul opens their eyes to several themes that must be considered when practicing it.

### Six Themes to Remember at the Lord's Supper:

#### 1. The cost of salvation.

- **The price that Jesus paid to save us from sin and death and hell was ultimate.** He gave His body and blood to give us **remission for sin.**
- The cup of the New Covenant is not just to be remembered. When we partake of the bread and juice, it creates **a living contact with Jesus with His presence.**

#### 2. The need of forgiveness.

- The Lord's Supper is to be a reminder of our **forgiveness and the relationship** we have entered into with Jesus Christ.
- We have committed to a relationship that makes **Christ the Source of our lives and eternity.**

#### 3. The truth about fellowship.

- Just as the passage is in the context of the Love Feast, this practice and act is connection with all other brothers and sisters in the Family of God.
- WE DO THIS TOGETHER... AS ONE FAMILY. This is what binds us together as a family.

#### **4. The center of agreement.**

- The Lord's Supper is our act of agreement with Jesus; our act of loyalty with our church family; and the act of agreement before all to see. We agree to worship and serve Christ all our days.

#### **5. The place of worthiness.**

- **Very Important!** Paul has just been rebuking those who, with their divisions and their class distinctions, were dividing the Church; so, this at least means that the people who eat and drink unworthily are those who create divisions; refuse to share with the needy; separate themselves from other church members; and who hate the brothers and sisters.
- The warning of unworthiness is due to the fact that they came to the table divided as believers and were not showing the love of Christ to all.
- The table of the Lord's Supper was only for the perfect, none of us would be able to approach it. So, to the sinner who knows they are sinners and are ashamed of it... taking the elements with repentance is a powerful moment. But remember, the communion doesn't save you... only God can when you pray for His salvation.

#### **6. The joy of celebration.**

- The Lord's Supper is a VICTORY EVENT! It is the ultimate reminder that we have been chosen and saved; and our Lord has set us free! That is to be celebrated!!!

**Transition:** Let me share this last thought...

#### **Closing:**

A More Celebrative Communion: In his sermon "The Sinner's Feast," Lee Eclöv describes what should be the celebrative side of Communion in the context of worship:

This table is different. This table of the Lord isn't where sinners find Christ but where sinners celebrate being found ...

Maybe some morning, instead of solemnly passing these trays, we should dance for joy. Maybe we should sing every born-again song we know. Maybe we should tell our "testimony" stories and laugh like people who no longer fear death. Maybe we should ask if anyone wants seconds and hold our little cups high to toast lost sisters found and dead brothers alive.

That is a little more like shouts of victory!!!