

Sermon Notes “The Lord’s Supper As Worship” 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 Sunday, November 6, 2016

Today we’re beginning a series on worship. There is so much we need to do to lay a proper foundation for our understanding of the importance of worship. Let me bring your attention to this from John Piper. It comes from the very first chapter in his book, *Let the Nations be Glad*. The book is all about missions. But listen to how he begins.

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man...worship abides forever.”

Worship dwarfs everything, and everything is about it, because everything that we do and that God is doing in our lives is to shape us and make us ready to worship God forever. John Wimber captured this so well in his comment, “Worship is going on all the time in heaven, and when we worship we are joining that which is already happening.”

This morning we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. And it is fitting in a series on worship that we deal with the place and meaning of the Lord’s Supper in worship. As we look at the Lord’s Supper and worship, it is very important not to miss the new and radical point of the New Testament, namely, that worship is driven into the heart as a matter of spirit and truth, and out from the heart, worship flows in all of life, not just in “worship services.”

The essence of worship is our response—the inner experience—of treasuring the true beauty and worth of God. The outward forms of worship are the acts that show how much we treasure the beauty and worth of God. Therefore, God created all of life as worship. In the gathered (or “corporate”) life of the church, one of the external acts of treasuring Christ that we do is celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

Now, here in this passage Paul is dealing with an abuse of the Lord’s Supper. His directive is that “*when you come together as a church*” the spirit and demeanor of the gathering should be one of focus on the Lord and sensitivity to the needs of others.

So the question for us is, if the Lord’s Supper is worship, how does it express our response? Let me mention five things from the text. This is how we express the value of Christ.

1. First, the Lord’s Supper expresses the value of Christ by remembering Him.

This is worship if in the doing of it there is an authentic heart experience, which says: “We must remember him because he is the most valuable Person in the universe. We must remember his death because it is the most important death in history.”

2. Second, the Lord’s Supper expresses the value of Christ by proclaiming His death.

This is the normal movement of worship: the unbelievable preciousness of Christ, and all He has done on our behalf, presses itself on our memory, and then that inner remembering breaks out in proclaiming the worth of what we remember.

3. Thirdly, we express the value of Christ by praising.

John Calvin says this about the Lord’s Supper, “The Lord’s Supper cannot be without a sacrifice of praise, in which, while we proclaim his death and give thanks, we do nothing but offer a sacrifice of praise.

4. The Lord’s Supper expresses the value of Christ by nourishing our life in Christ.

Here He nourishes us by faith—then the Lord’s Supper will be a deep and wonderful act of worship. Nothing shows the incredible worth of Christ so much as when we come to him to feed our hungry souls. Where do we see this in the text? We see it in the fact that the Lord’s Supper is a supper. And here Jesus tells us that the bread we are eating is His body, and the cup we are drinking is the new covenant in His blood. So the eating and drinking are no ordinary eating and drinking.

The Heidelberg Catechism instructs us in this manner: “As surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given to me as sure signs of Christ’s body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul...”

Who is Jesus Christ? The language is unequivocal: Jesus identifies Himself with the “bread from heaven.” He is the living bread, the bread of life. In and through Him only there is life. As we are born again, made new in Christ, our very lives are sustained and renewed by Jesus Christ Himself. How? By a response of faith. We know Jesus Christ as the living bread by believing in Him, having faith in Him. Now, in the history of the church there have been some divergent views about how this takes place.

Roman Catholic View: transubstantiation

Lutheran View: consubstantiation

Reformed View: We believe that there is a real feeding on Christ spiritually by faith - not on His physical body, but on His real, spiritual presence.

5. All of which leads us to participation.

Paul gets to the meaning of participation especially in 1 Cor. 10:14-18. Paul is dealing with the Lord’s Supper by addressing the issue of eating at idol feasts. It is Paul’s presupposition of what the Christians do at the Lord’s Table that becomes the basis for why you cannot eat at the table of the demons. The presupposition of that is that Christians do something else! That is, they are already eating at the Table of the Lord! And in doing that, as Christians we are “koinonia” (“participating” or “fellowshipping”) in the blood of Christ and they are “koinonia” with the body of Christ!

So there is a real presence. We are in the real presence of God the Holy Spirit and are in this eating—this feasting—actually sharing in Christ Himself by the Spirit. It is, in fact, a means of grace. It is a time we do participate in the Lord’s grace—by faith always, you understand. It is not magical. By faith we participate in the grace of God that is expressed in what Christ Jesus has done at the Table. Koinonia (our true fellowship—our real participation) is koinonia with the Lord Himself!

So Paul is saying, when you come to the Table, be the Body of Christ! Act as the Body of Christ. Recognize that you are all gifts to one another! Their behavior and attitudes toward one another belies the gospel that they claim to embrace! That’s the only thing that’s being examined.

So what are we celebrating? We are celebrating precisely what the Table is telling us—that we are forgiven, justified, washed, sanctified and the beloved people of God. That’s who we are. So let us come and remember, proclaim, praise, participate and eat.