

“Why People Sometimes Die After Communion,” // 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 // *Cutting Through the Noise* # 12¹

[Bumper Video: [Men’s Conference Promo](#)]

Announcements

Well you just heard from your Campus Pastors about the Men’s Conference, but let me put my exclamation point on that: **the Men’s conference is gonna be awesome!** We have some of the greatest men’s speakers in the country that are going to be here: Joby Martin, whom I always describe as the country boy’s C.S. Lewis. (If Jeff Foxworthy and C.S. Lewis had a son together, it would come out as Joby Martin.) And then Jon Tyson, a pastor in Manhattan who just wrote a great book on fathering I loved, and one of the most culturally insightful teachers in America (kind of like a new Tim Keller)... And then we’ll have our own Bryan Loritts, and me also. God has really put the men of this church on my heart for the next 20 years, and this conference is going to be about how you men, and future men--bring your sons--can be the leaders God has called you to bin your home, society and the church. **Worship is going to be incredible--it’s really going to be an amazing weekend.**

¹ Works consulted: Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians for You*; Tim Mackie, "It's Not Your Story 'Communion' Tim Mackie (The Bible Project) 1/2/2011),"

LADIES, listen to me: YOU WANT YOUR MAN THERE. You hear me? Look right here, ladies: *You. Want. Them. There. I promise you.* In Jesus’ name, nag them until they sign up. You have my pastoral blessing to do that.

On your way in you should’ve received a handout with a **QR code** that will link you directly to sign-up, or you can just hop on your website or app. Anything less than signing up will result in swift and decisive church discipline. Got it?

Introduction

1 Cor 11, if you have your Bible: It is Super Bowl Sunday. A friend sent me this text earlier this week:

“I know it is late notice but a friend of mine has two tickets for the Super Bowl in Inglewood, CA at SOFI stadium Sunday Feb 13. They are box seats that he spent \$4,500 a piece for which includes a limo ride from the airport, an open buffet, and a pass to the winners’ locker room. What he did not realize last year when he purchased these tickets was that this year’s Super Bowl fell on the same day as his wedding. If you or anyone else you know are interested, he is looking for someone to take his place. The ceremony is at St. Paul’s church at 5 pm. Her name is Ashley and she’ll be the one wearing the white dress. She’s a good cook and enjoys the outdoors.”

(Just kidding. And out of an abundance of caution, for you bloggers... that was just a joke. I never got any such text).

accessed September 1, 2020; Curtis Andrusko, “The Place of Grace,” sermon preached at The Summit Church; Eberhard Arnold, *The Early Church in Their Own Words*; Philip Yancy, *Rumors*.

Of course, we live in the Triangle, and so the main sports focus this time of year, for many, is not even the Super Bowl, but the intensifying rivalries of college basketball. One of the things that people who are new here don't understand is how divided our communities can get in these few weeks leading up to March. NC State vs. UNC. UNC vs. Duke. Wake Forest vs. the Leesville Middle School Girls' Team. The season always starts fairly friendly-- "Oh, looks like you guys got a good team this year." But by this time of year it's like, "I really do think Coach K is possessed by the devil." My first discipleship group here--about 2/3 of the guys in it were from UNC, and the other third were from Duke. Well, Duke had pulled off an unexpected upset that year, and the next morning at our discipleship group, it was spicy. At first, I thought everybody was just joking, exchanging friendly little barbs and witty banter--and then one of the UNC guys, visibly upset, got up and left--literally walked out of the room and didn't come back. I called him later and he was like, "Yeah, I just couldn't handle it that early in the morning."

The church in Corinth was filled with all kinds of divisions, much much more serious than sports rivalries. As we've seen, there were divisions over convictions about what was right and wrong; there were cultural divisions and class divisions.

There will always be diversity in the church--diversity of age, background, class, and race; diversity in our preferences; even diversity in our convictions over secondary matters, political approaches and the like. Jesus' vision of the church was not uniformity in all things cultural, but a unity in Christ that outweighs any distinctions in secondary things.

For the Corinthians, the one place that should have most displayed their unity--their coming together around the Lord's table--only highlighted their divisions. 1 Cor 11, vs 17:

17 Now in giving this (next) instruction I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. (It would be better for you guys not to even meet!) 18 For to begin with, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you (that are noticeable!)

21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?

OK, here is what was happening: Remember, in the early days of the church, there were no church buildings. So typically, they gathered in homes, and it was usually the home of a wealthy person, since their homes would have been big enough to host everyone. So, every Sunday, they would have a shared meal together and then do church. They had a full meal; not just a little cracker and juice. But as a part of this meal, they celebrated "the Lord's Supper," or communion, or the Eucharist, or whatever you prefer to call it.

Well, the rich people--because they all knew each other, and most didn't have to work on Sundays--so they would get there early and eat and drink and have a big time with each other for a few hours. Eventually, the poorer people would start migrating in, about the time for the service to start, but by then all the seats in the main

room were taken, and the poor people would end up having to sit in another room. Essentially, it was as if you had two separate campuses--one for the rich people and one for the poor people. Plus, by the time the poor people got there, all the food was gone. And the rich people had been sipping on wine for hours! So one group is hungry and the other, Paul says, is basically drunk. And so now you got all this bitterness and resentment growing in the church: the rich don't want to be associated with the poor--they're no fun; they make conversations hard; they are uncouth; and the poor feel excluded. What is worst of all, is that the final part of this meal included a moment to observe the Lord's Supper, the bread and cup, and so the rich and poor are basically observing that supper as 2 literally separate groups. The rich people in the first class room, and the poor people out on the porch.

Paul is *completely* exasperated by this. His tone in vs. 22 is, 'I don't even know where to start with you people. Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? You gotta bring this junk to church?'

To address this, Paul lays out **a theology of communion**--the Lord's table, the bread and cup--because, he says, if you understood communion, this would never happen. Remember our main idea in this series--**the gospel is the clear voice that cuts through all the noise of the Corinthian chaos**. Paul says, "Just reflecting on the gospel for 10 seconds will fix this problem. Here he goes:

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep.

33 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another.

3 words arise out of Paul's theology of communion that you should remember in every communion service; 3 words that summarize what is happening in the communion moment when we pass the bread and the cup; 3 words which, if we really believed and applied them, would cure so many of our social divisions. **They are (1) proclamation, (2) participation, and (3) examination. Here we go.**

1. Proclamation (vs. 26)

In vs. 26, Paul says, For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Normally you think of me, standing here, as the Proclaimer, and I am. But Paul says the Lord's Supper is itself a proclamation--the bread and cup are like visual aids; a sermon prop Jesus gave us to help us better reflect on the gospel. (*I've told you that my son Adon has told me that I need to **use more props** in my messages. He says, "Dad, I could pay attention better if you used more props."*) The Lord's table was itself supposed to be a prop. What is it proclaiming?

- **The first thing they proclaim is that we need to be saved!** As Paul notes, on the night before Jesus died, Jesus held up the bread and said, "This is my body which is broken *for you* for the forgiveness of sins." If salvation could have been obtained any other way, Jesus would not have had to die. If salvation could have been obtained through our good works, Jesus would not have had to die. If there really were multiple ways to get to heaven, Jesus would not have had to die. Sometimes people think they are being generous and culturally sophisticated when they say, "Oh, Jesus is my personal way to get to heaven, but I'm sure God accepts other ways--just be a good person and sincere in your religion and God will accept that." That may *feel* kind and culturally sophisticated to you, but do you realize what kind of insult that is to Jesus? Jesus prayed, "Father, if it's possible, if there's any other way, let this cup pass from me." And you're telling me that God the Father was like, "Well, there are multiple ways to me, but I'm still gonna make you die." What an insult to Jesus. **So this cup and this bread proclaim, "You need to be saved."** Being sincere is not enough. You must be born again, from above. You need to be saved by. So they proclaim 'You need to be saved!'
- **Second, the bread and cup proclaim that you can be saved!**

- Jesus did not add any qualifiers to the word "you" when he said, "This is my body, which is broken for *you*." Which means if *you* are a *you*, then he's talking to *you*. Sometimes people think, "Oh, not me. My sins were too flagrant. Too shameful. I've turned away from God too many times." Not true. This is my body which is broken *for you*.
- Or maybe you've gotten some messed up view of Calvinism--my wife says she was like this for years--and you think, "I must not be one of the elect." Not true. This is my body which is broken for you. If you're hearing this right now, it can be for you.
- Jesus said, "Whosoever will may come and eat the bread of life freely." I'm glad he said "whosoever," because if he had listed out certain kinds of sinners, I would have wondered if my sin was included in that list. In saying "whosoever," he means anyone from anywhere, no matter what mistakes and sins and shame you bring. John 3:16... Put YOUR name in that verse. For God so loved JUSTIN, or RACHEL, that if Justin believes in Jesus, Justin will not perish, but have eternal life. His death is sufficient FOR YOU.
- There is a fountain filled with blood... The dying thief...
- There is a place at this table for you, no matter who you are or what you've done. No matter what kinds of failures or struggles you bring into this moment. You might be the biggest sinner in our city ... in this state! there's a place for you.
- One of the greatest feelings to me in high school was when I'd come in for lunch, and the room was packed, nowhere to sit, and one of my friends would wave at me and say, "Here--we

have a seat for you here. We saved you a seat.” Jesus saved a seat at his table for you and invites you to sit there by him.

- **Third, we proclaim that suffering and death are not the end.** Vs. 26: **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death *until he comes*.** In this world, good people live with hardship. Sometimes they are poor. This table proclaims, “Death is not the end! Poverty is not the end. Jesus rose, and he will return again.”
 - **Eberhard Arnold, in this book *The Early Christians in Their Own Words*,** says that one of the favorite worship postures of the early church, and they used it in communion, was worshiping with their arms outstretched, not this way (vertical), but this way (horizontal), imitating the posture of the cross--for them it was the ultimate posture of triumph. The cross--what looked and felt like death--was part of God’s great triumph.²
 - **The gospel says to the poor:** you’re not going to be poor forever. Jesus will return in triumph and then you’ll feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb. To the sick it says, “You’re not going to be sick forever. You will suffer a little while, and the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his wings.” The gospel says to the oppressed, you won’t be oppressed forever. The righteous Judge will return and make all things right. To the lonely and those who feel abandoned, it says, “I’ll never leave you or forsake you. I have gone to prepare a place for you, and I’m coming again to take you home to be with me forever.”

- This table proclaims that our hardship, like Jesus’ cross, is part of bringing God’s good plan into the world. Don’t look down on the poor; they are not poor because they did something wrong or they are not good enough. Jesus was poor, and that was all part of God’s good plan.
- **Fourth, this table proclaims that this church is first and foremost a community of the forgiven.**
 - If the above is true, that we all need to be saved, and that all of us can be saved, and that poverty and suffering are not the measure of our lives, just temporary states that God has assigned to bring salvation in the world, soon to be overturned by his coming, that ought to create a profound equality around this table, right?
 - **Religious pride has no place at this table.** “Where is boasting?” Paul says. We are first and foremost lost sinners who have been redeemed. For by grace we’ve all been saved, by faith, and not even that of ourselves. It’s the gift of God; not of works, where no man can boast. All our best righteousness, Isaiah says, is like filthy, diseased rags. The blood of Jesus is the ONLY hope for the best of us and the CERTAIN hope for the worst of us.
 - **The Lord’s Supper** was fashioned after the Passover meal: In the Passover Jews the Jews reflected on the fact that they were all slaves until God delivered them. There were no classes of slaves--rich slaves, poor slaves; good looking slaves, ugly slaves. Just slaves who needed to be freed.
 - Religious pride has no place around this table.

² *Early Church in Their Own Words*, Eberhard Arnold, 6.

- **Classism has no place around this table.** In God’s eyes, we were all poor, wretched, helpless and blind when he saved us.
 - **If you’ve seen the movie Titanic,** you know that the whole boat was divided up into class sections. Rich people up here, poor people up here; one couldn’t get to the other. (Jack and Rose can’t be friends; they have to eat in separate dining rooms, hang out on different decks.) This part wasn’t in the movie, but after the Titanic sank, and back in America people were wondering if their loved one had been rescued or drowned, the NYT printed 2 columns of passengers: “lost” and “saved.” No other distinctions. In that moment, that’s all that mattered; everything else was inconsequential. **At the table, we all recognize that at our core, we were sinners that God saved. Classism does not exist around this table.**
- **Racial division has no place around this table.** Yes, God created the ethnicities of the world as a panoply of his beauty; but in our most fundamental sense, we’re all the same. At our most fundamental level, there’s only one race: the human race. Men and women made in the image of God. We all have the same problem, sin; we all only have one hope, the blood and resurrection of Jesus. **That by itself should destroy racism. Jesus didn’t die as a white man or a black man** or a Latino. He died as the representative of all humanity. And when he was raised from the dead, he wasn’t raised as a Jew or a Greek, or a white man or black man, but the Lord of all.
 - One of the biggest failures of the church in America was that, in large part, the church (at least the majority of it)

did not lead the way in the civil rights movements, and we should have--because of all people we have the gospel that teaches us that we’re all equal: one race of people made alike in the image of God with a common problem, sin, and a common hope, Jesus.

- **Dr. Clarence Jordan, a Baptist preacher in Sumter County GA in the early 1960’s, said it this way:** “The thing that breaks my heart is that the Supreme Court is coercing pagans to act more Christian than the Bible is compelling Christians to act like Christians. I can hardly stand it when I see the integration struggle being fought-- not in the household of God--but in the buses, the depots and around Woolworth tables. We are arguing about whether or not we can sit down and eat hamburgers and drink Cokes together, when we ought to have been sitting around Jesus’ table drinking the wine and eating the bread together. **“The sit-ins never would have been necessary if Christians had been sitting down together in church, at Christ’s table, all these many years.”**³

The Lord’s Supper is a sermon, a **PROCLAMATION**, that destroys all these divisions.

2. Participation (vs. 27–29)

At the Lord’s table, we “participate” in the body of Christ. Now, technically, the word “participation” doesn’t occur in this chapter. But it’s implied in vs. 27 when Paul warns people not to participate in these things in an unworthy manner, because if we do, he says, we’re

³ Philip Yancey, Rumors, Ch14 - “Stereoscopic Vision” p. 235-236

actually sinning against Christ's body. You're literally touching something holy--the symbols of the death of his Son--while your heart is in a posture of rejecting it.

In the chapter right before this one, chapter 10, Paul does use the word "participation," check it out: **10:16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?** "Participation" here means "fellowship." You are mingling with it; it's presence is touching you.

There are two ways Christians go wrong with this: The first is where Christians over-read this, believing the bread and cup become the actual body and blood of Jesus as we eat it. That's called "transubstantiation." The bread and cup literally transform into his flesh and blood—his actual DNA—as you take them.

But that's not what is happening here. The righteousness and presence of Christ are given to us through *faith*, not through eating. What does Romans 10:10 say? **"For the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."** Righteousness didn't come to us by getting wet in the baptismal tank or by eating bread or drinking wine.

How does righteousness come into your life? By believing the word of God; by trusting in Christ and confessing him as Lord and Savior. Communion is not some kind of extra grace blessing that goes beyond the righteousness of Christ imputed to you when you trusted him. When you trusted in Christ, you got the full righteousness of Christ,

not a downpayment that you supplement with communion or other sacraments.

In the same way, the presence of God was given to you through faith. Isn't that what Paul says in Galatians? **"Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? (Gal 3:2)"** Did you receive the Spirit by taking communion or by hearing the gospel with faith? His answer is, "by hearing with faith." You received the Spirit the same way you were given righteousness--by believing the gospel. You got all of him when you trusted in Christ.

So communion brings neither the righteousness of Christ or his presence into you. Both of those were given to you fully when you accepted Christ.

These things--the bread and the cup--are merely symbols of his body and blood, not his actual body and blood. But that leads to the second error that Christians make with Communion. They see this whole ceremony as *just* symbolic. Just walking through some rituals that help illustrate the gospel. Paul says that in Communion we are actually participating in Christ. We are experiencing his presence in a special way. His presence is here in these moments in a unique way.

You say, "But isn't he always here? Isn't he always in my heart?" Yes, but he manifests his presence in special ways at different times, and communion is one of those times. **My favorite illustration of this is me walking along the sidewalk** with one of my kids when they were young--say it's Ryah **(pic)**--and I look down at her and think about how cute she is and just get overwhelmed by fatherly emotion and I pick her up and spin her around and blow raspberries in her neck and

she says, “Oh, Daddy, you’re so silly.” Question: Is she any more my daughter in that moment than she was the moment before? No. Did I love her any less before I picked her up? Was my presence any farther away? No, but in that moment, when I picked her up and hugged her, she felt it in a special way. That’s what happens in Communion--his presence manifests itself. His arms are even closer. If you quiet your heart, you can feel the squeeze of your Heavenly Father; maybe you can hear him whispering his promises in your heart, feeling his delight over you as he dances over you and assures you that you are his child; promising that he will never leave you or forsake you.

So this moment is not just proclamation; it’s also participation. But see, that raises the stakes a little bit:

3. Examination (vs. 28)

28 Let a person examine himself... 27 for whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord... 30 (For) this is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep.

Listen to me: Paul warns that eating and drinking from this table “unworthily” brings judgment on you. When you touch the bread and the cup in an unworthy manner, because Christ’s presence is here in a special way, you can actually bring God’s anger on you in a special way. Because the stakes are raised with his presence, so is the demand that we come into that presence with the right attitude. Coming into that presence unworthily can bring God’s discipline, his judgment, onto you.

⁴ Tim Mackie

So, you ask, what exactly does it mean to eat “unworthily”? It can’t mean that we should only take communion when we feel worthy of Christ’s presence. Because that would be ‘never.’ None of us are worthy to take the bread and the cup. That’s why we take of the bread and the cup.⁴ None of us are worthy of Christ’s presence. Jesus said that at our best—on your best day, when you’re having the longest righteousness streak you’ve ever had, “18 days without a sin”— you are still unprofitable servants. Even though we’re forgiven, we have more corruption in our hearts than we can possibly comprehend. So it doesn’t mean “only eat when you *feel* worthy.”

So what does it mean? Well, notice that “unworthily” is written as an adverb, which is how it is in Greek.⁵ You say, “What difference does that make? “Unworthy” as an adjective would describe you, and like we said, you are always “unworthy” to participate in Christ. But Paul’s focus is on something different: he’s talking about how you approach this table. You can approach this table unworthily. So what does that look like?

- **A Spirit of Self-righteousness:** You don’t realize how dependent you are on Christ’s mercy. You don’t see how your only hope is the body and blood of Jesus. The irony is that you approach this table unworthily when you fail to see how unworthy you are to partake of this table. If you know you are unworthy, then you are approaching this table worthily. If you think you are worthy, you are approaching this table unworthily.

⁵ https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_corinthians/11-27.htm.

- **Secondly, A Spirit of Defiance:** If you partake of this table when you know that you are not submitted to Christ--that is, you are openly and intentionally living in a way that you know displeases him--you are engaging in the very lifestyle that put Jesus on the cross. Think about it: In taking the bread and the cup, you are saying, **“Thank God for Jesus and his death, it is my life and my hope”** but then with your life you are openly crucifying him.” God? With your mouth you are celebrating his cross while practicing the lifestyle that put him on the cross. You can’t shout “Worship him” and “crucify him” at the same time and not expect God’s anger.

Friend, I say this with all humility: **Do not touch the elements of this table** if you are not surrendered to Christ. I don’t mean if you’re struggling with sin, or overwhelmed by your sin. Jesus came for people like that. His death is healing and help for those who know they are sick! What I mean is don’t touch this if YOU KNOW there’s some area you refuse to submit to him. Don’t add to your condemnation by hypocritically saying, “Thank you Jesus for your death” while stubbornly doing the very things that put him on the cross. **Keep your rebellious, treasonous hands off of these elements.** It’s dangerous for you.

- You eat unworthily when you come with self-righteousness, defiance, and lastly: **A Spirit of Division**

This is, I believe, what was most in Paul’s mind when he said, “Don’t come to this table unworthily.” Because that’s the context of this passage, in vs. **33: Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another.**

Don’t come when in your heart you are separated from others by some kind of pride or classism or racism. Don’t come when you harbor resentment or unforgiveness in your heart. Don’t come claiming to cherish the forgiveness of God when you won’t forgive someone else. Don’t come when you are divided from your brothers and sisters over some secondary, non-essential matter--a political perspective or a cultural bias. Some of you should not take of this table because you are more Republican than you are Jesus. Or more Democrat than you are Jesus. And I say that because you can’t stand someone who approaches politics differently than you, even if they love Jesus like you and you agree on all the essentials--the authority of the Bible, what it teaches about morality or being pro-life or whatever. Even though you agree on all these things, because they bring a different perspective or a different set of priorities with them when they come into the polls, you resent them. Truth is, you hate them and you wish they’d just go to another church; and if they don’t, well, you are thinking you probably should. Don’t touch this table if you harbor divisions and resentments unbecoming of the body of Christ. That’s eating in an unworthy manner.

Jesus put it this way in the Sermon on the Mount: If you are offering your gift at the altar, and you have division with your brother in Christ, leave your gift before the altar and go reconcile with him. **FIRST** be reconciled with your brother, and **THEN** come offer your gift. Paul is saying something similar: First, feel a real sense of unity with your brother and sisters, and let that be reflected in your attitude toward them, and how you behave

toward them, and how you fellowship with them, and only then partake of these elements.

And what happens if you don't? What happens if you disregard the body? What happens if you disregard the lordship of Christ? What happens if you eat from this table "unworthily?"

Paul says, vs 30 "this is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep." You say, "What does that mean?"

There's no way to sugar coat this. Paul means that many people have gotten sick and died for not taking this moment seriously. Not everyone who participates in communion unworthily dies, but Paul says that sometimes that happens, and that at least shows you how God feels about those who don't take this sacred moment seriously.

The Theologian DA Carson tells the story of a pastor friend, who had a church of about 200 and sin was so rampant that he could not even discipline, for the leadership was involved in a lot of the sin and didn't want to do anything about it. This pastor prayed for 3 months for God to change the church or move him out. The next year, he said, he had 34 funerals. 20% of the church died in the space of a year! The year after that he baptized 200.

Does that always happen? No. Thank God. In his mercy, he doesn't always do that. But Paul says the fact it sometimes happens should make you realize how seriously God takes this.

We see a similar thing happening in Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira come into the church with an offering, and they lie

about the offering they are bringing. (They told everyone that they were bringing the full price of the land they sold when in fact it was only half. The sin was not bringing half--they were free to do that. The sin was lying to the church, and to God, about what they were doing.) Now, thank God that he does not strike dead everyone in church who exaggerates their giving. What a moment that would be each Sunday, when the CP says, "Take out your phone and text 'Give' to 33933" and someone thinks, "I'll just pull out my phone so people think I'm giving, even though I'm really just starting my Wordle game" and we start seeing the glow of lights and then hear people keeling over dead. God doesn't strike dead everyone who exaggerates their offerings in church, but Acts 5 gives you a glimpse into how he feels about people who posture and lie and are phonies in church. Worship is a deadly serious thing.

How does God feel about those who take this bread and cup, saying, "I'm thankful for this bread and cup, it's my salvation," all the while harboring in their heart the sin that put Jesus on the cross, or relishing in sinful resentments against their brothers and sisters that Jesus died to make into one family.

This is supposed to be a moment of incredible gospel clarity--where the church puts on visible display the unity of the body Jesus died to create. Where we declare, our common hope in Jesus is more important to us than any secondary thing that divides us.

It's supposed to be a time of togetherness, where we feel the warmth of family. J I Packer, the late Canadian theologian, always said that for that reason, whenever he was in a church for

communion, he would always sit close to someone even if he doesn't know them, as a matter of principle. Because this is supposed to be a moment of family, of connection. Not just you and God. It's you and God's other children.

It's why, if I could say this gently, for those joining us from home—still—I want you to know there is something profound you are missing out on in not being with your brothers and sisters. I know that some of you have medical reasons to stay separate. We suspended meeting in big groups on the weekend for a while in 2020, so I get it. But you should be aware of what you're missing, and you should be seeking to get out of that situation and get back in the presence of your church family as soon as you can. I say that because some people are like, "Oh, I like getting up, coming downstairs in my pajamas and sit on the couch and watch church with my kids. It just works better for my family." Church at home can be a substitute for church in an emergency, **but it's not church. Church is being with the body, particularly for moments like this.**

When I'm away from my wife, sometimes I look at her picture because I miss her. Or even better, I FaceTime her. But looking at a picture and talking to her digitally represented image is not the same thing as being in her presence; and if you think it is, I'd say you don't understand marriage. Dialing into church online is fine in an emergency, but if you think it's the same as church I'd say you don't understand what church is.

I started this message with college basketball, so let me end there.

I've told you before I love going to local college basketball games where the whole crowd is united in cheering for the same team.

Cameron Crazies, NC State, UNC, Eagle Pride. It doesn't matter. People say, "Who do you cheer for in those moments?" I cheer for the team of whoever gave me tickets. But I love those moments because you look around the room and you see that a lot of these people would be divided on a million other topics, but in that room, for 90 magical minutes, they are united around the importance of Duke basketball, or UNC or NC State basketball. When things go well for your team you are hugging and high fivin' random people, that's how much commonality you feel. That's at least partially what the gospel should be like. We are just so overwhelmed by Jesus that the other differences seem less relevant, and when we come to church our commonality in him outweighs any secondary perspective or preference.

VAMP

So, brothers and sisters, let's take the Lord's table together. This is our unity.

Now, the bread and cup you got when you came in don't look like this. And yes, part of that is because of COVID. Get started on opening it; you'll need that time.

You have the bread and the cup, let's take them...

First, let's bow our heads and do what Paul says: Examine ourselves.

- **Do you recognize Christ as your only hope of salvation?**
- **Are you fully surrendered to him?** I don't mean you don't struggle with sin—I still do all the time--what I mean is, right now are you living with some sin you know is wrong but you just say,

“I’m not ready to change that.” Friend, if that’s true, don’t touch the bread or the cup. It’s dangerous for you.

- **And if you don’t yet know Christ, please don’t take these things.**

Like I said, they are a sermon. You don’t preach a sermon you haven’t embraced for yourself yet. The sermon is being preached this morning to you. All around you people are about to preach the gospel. What you can do is receive the grace these elements point to, grace that is offered to you this morning if you’ll receive by faith--Chris shed his blood for you and you can receive that right now as your own. Trust Christ as your Savior, accept him as your own, and surrender to him, and the forgiveness of sins and new life in him will be yours!

- **Lastly, are you harboring some resentment, some division**

against a brother and sister? Reconcile with them in your heart. Forgive them. You may need to hold off taking these things and go and make things right with them. Just whatever you do, don’t be hypocritical when you take the bread and the cup--hating or looking down on someone else that Jesus died to save and has put into your family.

OK? Examine yourself...

Now, take the bread: this represents the body that is broken for you. Forgiveness, healing, God’s presence. Receive it. Jesus told us to do it often because he knew we’d be prone to forget.

The cup: our unity. Our future. As Paul said, in light of all of this—the fact that the blood of Jesus is the only hope for the best of us and the best hope for the worst of us—let us love as we have been loved. As often as you take it, do it in remembrance of me.

Summit Church, at all of our campuses, would you stand? Let’s worship together with the sense of family that God has created.