

The Living Memorial

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Not only is Washington D.C. our nation's capital, it is also a place of many monuments and memorials. There is the Washington Monument built in honor of George Washington, our nation's first President. There is the Jefferson Memorial built in honor of Thomas Jefferson, our nation's third President. Of course there is the Lincoln Memorial, built to honor the 16th president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. Each of these magnificent monuments serves to remind us of what these great men have done for our country.

There is another Memorial in Washington D.C. - the Vietnam War Memorial. It has two walls of polished black granite over 250 feet long and 10 feet tall. On these walls are engraved the names of the 58,175 men and women who gave their lives during the Vietnam War. Thousands upon thousands of visitors come weekly to this Memorial. Many of them leave medals, badges, letters, flowers and pictures. Each in their own way come to this wall to say "I'll never forget you."

As Christians we have our own memorial. It's not centered on a stone monument or a wall; it's centered on a cross and a table. It's a living Memorial we call the Lord's Supper.

This morning there are four key words I would like for us to focus on as we consider the meaning of the Lord's Supper: *remember, reflect, rejoice, and recognize.*

1. REMEMBER

As we gather around the Lord's Table we need to remember why it is we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

First of all, we need to remember the loss in the Garden.

The Bible tells us in the book of Genesis that God created man from the dust of the earth, making him after God's own image. The Lord then placed his crowning creation in a beautiful garden in a place called Eden where man's every need was abundantly supplied. Man was given authority over all creation and the freedom to enjoy what the Lord had made with one exception. Adam and Eve were not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Garden of Eden was a perfect place where man and God enjoyed sweet fellowship. But then something tragic happened that destroyed that fellowship. Satan found his way into the Garden and persuaded Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. The moment those once pure, undefiled lips touched that forbidden fruit, the poison of sin entered the blood stream of humanity and separated man from God. In that moment, innocence was lost; Paradise was lost; life itself was lost.

After the fall of man in the Garden, God made coats of skins for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. Where did those skins come from? They came from an innocent animal whose life was sacrificed. Can you imagine the tremendous impression it must have made upon Adam and Eve as they watched God take the life and shed the blood of that little innocent animal, and all because of their sin? As we come to the Lord's Table we need to look back to the Garden of Eden and remember the terrible price of sin. The bible says in Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death.*"

Second, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning we need to remember the lamb in Goshen.

The book of Exodus tells the exciting story of how God delivered His people Israel from their many years of heavy bondage in the land of Goshen. God spoke to Moses and commanded him to go before the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt and demand that he set God's people free. But Pharaoh refused. Because of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart God sent plague after plague upon the land of Egypt. There were plagues of blood and frogs, lice and flies, pestilence and boils, fiery hail and devouring locust, and darkness. After the plague of darkness, God spoke to Moses again and said, *"The time of your deliverance is at hand. I am going to send one more plague upon the land of Egypt. I will pass through the land and all the firstborn, both man and beast, will die. Tell every household of the congregation of Israel to choose a lamb from their flock. It must be a perfect lamb, one without spotter blemish. Take the blood of that innocent lamb and place upon the lentil and door post of every house. And when I see the blood of the lamb, I will cause the curse of death to pass over you."* As we come to the Lord's Table, we need to look back and remember that on that dreadful night when the angel of death passed through the land of Egypt only those under the blood of the lamb were saved.

There is one more thing we need to remember as we gather around the Lord's Table this morning. Not only do we need to remember the loss in the Garden and then the lamb in Goshen, above all we need to remember the Lord Jesus at Golgotha.

After Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He gathered with His disciples in an upper room to observe the Feast of the Passover. Verse 24 of our text this morning tells us that as they were eating, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, *"Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you."* Then He took the cup, gave thanks to God for it, and said to His disciples, *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as your drink it, in remembrance of me."*

As we come to the Lord's Table we need to look back and remember the great sacrifice Christ made to save us from our sins. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:4-6).

On the cross of Calvary the sinless Son of God became the sacrificial Lamb of God. He gave His life and shed His own blood to pay the price for our redemption.

Jesus said, *"As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me and all that I have done for you."* Not only do we need to remember, we also need to...

2. REFLECT

Before we break the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper we need to look within our heart and reflect on our relationship with God. Paul says in verse 28 of our text, *"But let a man examine himself."*

Every Christian is to “*examine*” or test the condition of his or her heart in the light of the Word of God and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit of God. Our prayer ought to be that of the Psalmist who prayed, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me, and know my thoughts! And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*” (Psalm 139:23–24). Before we share in the Lord’s Supper we need to prayerfully ask, “Lord, how is it between me and Thee?”

We also need to honestly look at our relationship with others. Jesus said, “*If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift*” (Matthew 5:23–24). We need to ask ourselves, “Is there anything between me and a brother or sister in the Lord?” Beloved, there can be no fellowship with the Father when there is jealousy, bitterness, envy, or anger in your heart. You can’t be right in your relationship with the Lord when you’re relationship with others is wrong. How is it between you and the Lord? How is it between you and your brothers and sisters in the Lord? How is it with your heart, your soul, today?

As we come to the Lord’s Table this morning we need to remember, we need to reflect, and thirdly, we need to...

3. REJOICE

Every time we share the Lord’s Supper together we should not only remember what Jesus did for us on the cross so long ago, we should also rejoice because of what He is going to do someday.

First of all, we should rejoice because of the resurrection Jesus has promised His children. Look again at verse 26. “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.*” Jesus said in John 14:3, “*I will come again.*” And when He comes again there’s going to be a resurrection of all the dead in Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, “*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*”

Second, we should rejoice because of the rapture Jesus has planned. The bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*” Scripture teaches that there will be a generation of believers who will not see death. Instead, they will be swept up to meet the Lord in the air at His return. I pray that we are that generation. Jesus is coming soon. Beloved, I want you to know that I am not looking for the undertaker; I am looking for the “upper-taker.”

Third, we should rejoice because of the reunion Jesus has prepared. Following the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture of all the saints of God living at the time of the Lord’s return, there will be a great reunion in heaven around the throne of God. We will be reunited with all of our loved ones and friends who gone on to be with the Lord. Ah, but the best of all is this – we will united at last with Christ.

Can you imagine what it's going to be like to actually see the Savior? As Christians we live every day with Jesus in our hearts, but some day dear ones you and I are going to see him face to face.

Face to face with Christ, my Savior,
Face to face—what will it be,
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ Who died for me?

Finally, before we share in the Lord's Supper in just a few moments, there is something very important we need to...

4. RECOGNIZE

We need to recognize that this living memorial we call the Lord's Supper is for believers only. The Word of God teaches that there are two essential qualifications for sharing in the Lord's Supper.

First, you must be a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*You must be born again.*" What does it mean to be born again? It means to be born from above, to be born of the Spirit of God. It means to have a spiritual birth. The Word of God says that we are all spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins; but when we confess our sin to God and trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior we are given spiritual life. We are born again. Have you been born again? In just a moment we are going to stand and sing a hymn of invitation. If you are not absolutely certain that you have been born again you need to meet me down here at the front of this altar when we begin to sing. I'll be waiting for you. We'll pray together. You can invite Jesus Christ into your heart and life today and leave here a born again child of God.

Second, you must be a baptized believer. Please understand, being baptized won't save you, but if you are saved then you need to be baptized. Baptism is the first act of obedience for the child of God. Perhaps you have never been scripturally baptized by immersion since becoming a born again believer in Christ. If not, when we begin to sing our hymn of invitation in just a moment you need to step out, walk down here and present yourself for baptism. We won't baptize you today, but you will have taken the first step of obedience in making your public confession of faith.

Let's pray.