

This Is My Blood
Mark 14:22-25

October 7, 2018

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Today is world communion Sunday. It is a special Sunday when several Christian denominations observe the sacrament of communion. A sacrament is a religious ceremony of the Christian Church. It is an expression of faith, a visible sign of grace, and a Christian rite. This particular sacrament is set up by Christ himself for our sanctification. It is a memorial to remember him by and I like to refer to it as a living monument. The Holy Communion promotes oneness - being one in Christ. It promotes Christian unity because everyone is welcome. Today we gather together around the Lord's table with millions of people throughout the world to remember Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. We remember his teachings, his living example, and specifically the price that was paid for us on the cross.

Right before he faced the cross Jesus instructed his followers to do this in remembrance of him. Jesus did not say "I hope you consider doing this." Jesus said "do this." It is a commandment. People often ask me "why do you have communion weekly?" The real question is "how come you don't?" Jesus said "do this" and the disciples "did it." The church began with the breaking of bread on Sunday. In Acts 20:7 it is written that on the first day of the week the disciples met to break bread. They met on Sunday for the very specific purpose of celebrating the Holy Communion. The establishment of the Christian church is founded on this key principle. In Acts 2:42 we learn that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and prayers. The establishment of the Christian church is founded on these specific principles - teaching, fellowship, Holy Communion, and prayer. These are four essential pillars of the church. Over time religious practice develops and people gradually develop habits and traditions. As a consequence they lose focus on being the original church that Jesus established. Reformation is needed to get us back in focus on being the church that Jesus originally set up.

I am a Christian and you are a Christian. As Christians we follow the teachings of Jesus. So, we eat the bread and drink the juice as originally instructed by Jesus. We continue to do so weekly because this is a commandment by Jesus. This is the church that Jesus established. It is hard to be a Disciple today. It takes work and focus. It takes a spiritual discipline to stay focused on being the church that Jesus set up within the framework of today's society as opposed to being a church that people set up for themselves in today's society.

I'm going to call your attention to an old testament lesson to help us understand the significance of this particular commandment from Jesus "take this and eat it." In the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel was told by God to eat this scroll. When Ezekiel consumes the scroll, it changes him. He is filled with the word of God. The word of God is now in him. He then is able to deliver the word of God to the people. As he consumes the word he is filled with the word. He and the word are joined together - inseparable. The word is alive within him as he is one with the word.

Jesus takes a similar approach. In John 6:27 he teaches "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

Jesus gives the believers the food that endures for eternal life and the believers consume this food that endures for eternal life. This is known as "the bread of life." When we consume the bread of life we change. The very nature of the Lord is in us. As we consume it we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We are one with the Lord. So, in the Bible, Jesus presents to the disciples his body and his blood. It is not just a lesson. It is not just something to do. It has a very significant meaning and purpose. We are in communion with the Lord. We are one with the spilt blood, the broken body, and the death of Jesus. His death is now a matter of who we are as Christians. It is our identity.

When it comes to the Last Supper we also learn something significant from the Apostle Paul. He teaches the followers of Jesus to do this often. It is a rite that is to be frequently repeated. We are a purpose driven ministry that is founded in solid New Testament teaching. Disciples obey everything that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). Disciples worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This means we don't just do whatever we want to do. We do what Jesus tells us to do. We do what the Lord commands. We study the scriptures, discern the will of God, and follow the teaching of Jesus and the commandments of Jesus.

Jesus brings to us salvation. Jesus gives to us eternal life. Jesus brings us into covenant and establishes a new covenant. The Lord's table reminds us of God's grace. The challenge for us is what our response to God's grace is. With the Holy Spirit within us we are filled with the love of Christ. We live a life that is devoted to Jesus, his sacrifice, and his teachings. Jesus had compassion on the hungry and he fed them. Jesus offered bread to the Gentiles. Jesus is himself the bread that is declared to be the body that is an offering for others. The cup of blessing that Jesus gives and we drink is interpreted as his blood of the covenant. Jesus gives his life as a ransom and offers his self as a sacrifice. Jesus sheds his blood as a sacrifice. Jesus sets up a new covenant between God and the people of God.