

Thoughtless Remembrance

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[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians 11, and Jenny's going to start reading at verse number 17.

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1 Corinthians 11, verse 17. Tweety is the yellow canary with a speech impediment in the Looney Tunes series of cartoons.

[2 : 12] And in one episode, Tweety calls Sylvester the cat a hippo-twit. And for a while in our family, I guess especially when our kids were younger, they occasionally transposed this and it became a hiccuprit.

Have you ever been called a hypocrite? Do you know why the word hypocrite stings? It stings because of pride.

By making an accusation of hypocrisy, the accuser says, I know you better than you know yourself. I know what you say is true about yourself. I know what I see is happening here.

And these two things are not the same. They are as different as mismatched socks. You just can't see it or you don't care.

[3 : 25] And now I'm going to tell you about this mismatch that is happening between what you say you are and what I see you to be. I'm going to tell you about it.

We don't like this. Being called a hypocrite stings. And it stings because of pride. Less than 20 years after the Lord Jesus died and was ascended back into heaven, Paul plants a church in the bustling city of Corinth.

Paul serves and loves and teaches and disciples this church, shepherds this church for about a year and a half.

And then Paul leaves to plant other churches. And after some time, Paul gets word that the church of Corinth is in serious trouble.

Among their issues, doctrinal impurity, shocking tolerance for sin, interpersonal conflicts, severe problems with their worship gatherings.

[4 : 36] Deeply concerned, Paul writes the church a letter, and we call Paul's letter 1 Corinthians. And in this portion that we're going to look at today, Paul addresses a problem in their worship gathering.

He wants the church to remember this, that the family that eats together stays together. I don't know if there is such a thing as love languages or not.

But if there is such a thing, my love language is words of affirmation. And so if I was a member at the church in Corinth when verse 17 was read, I think I would have just sort of slid down the pew and tried to hide.

Look at verse 17. Paul writes this, But in the following instructions, I do not commend you. I do not commend you.

This is me. This is words of affirmation. And Paul says to the church that he spent a year and a half with, I do not commend you.

[5 : 55] I would slide down the pew and try to hide. When you come together, Paul says, When you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse.

It would be better if you weren't gathering at all. When you gather for worship, your worship gathering does more harm than good.

That's awful. Isn't it? Tweety would say, You're a bunch of hypocrites. Hypocrites do not see themselves rightly.

They don't see themselves accurately. And this is true of the church in Corinth. First, they are divided when they should be unified. Look in your Bible, verse 18.

For in the first place, Paul says, When you come together for your worship, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I believe it in part.

[7 : 02] For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. Paul says, You're right.

There are differences among you. But it's not the differences that you think. You expect, and you think that you are divided by politics, and social status, and wealth, and all the diverse ethnic backgrounds in Corinth.

You think that those are the things that divide you. But these differences are not the real issue. The real issue.

My greatest concern, Paul says. The first thing that you need to know is that some of you are not genuine. In other words, some of you are not Christians. Some of you have not been born again. Some of you are not saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. When Paul writes, There must be differences among you.

[8 : 09] I expect that his use of irony here masks deep pain. Paul watched this church be born.

He disciplined this church to maturity. And now, they are divided when they should be unified. And left unchecked, church division leads to church death.

Imagine one evening, we come together for our midweek gathering. gathering. And Lois brings tacos in a bag.

One of my favorites. And the Orcutt family sends a text to let us all know that they are running late because Kara is taking photographs at a special event for school.

So we start the meal. And we devour everything. We leave no thing behind.

[9 : 34] A little nacho cheese left in the crock pot, perhaps. A few Doritos. And three tiny jalapeno pepper slices. That's what's left. And when the Orcutts arrive to our midweek gathering, we've already moved forward with the evening and we have already begun our time of singing together.

The kids are already gone. I wonder, Orcutt children, how you might feel about that. How would you feel?

Not good? Unloved? Unloved? Unwelcome? Unknown?

Not seen? Doesn't anybody care about us? Something like that is what's happening here in Corinth. They are self-centered when they should be gracious. Look at verse 20. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

[10 : 45] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry. Another gets drunk. 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? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this?

No, I will not. The church calls this a worship gathering, but it looks more like a typical private feast in Corinth.

those who are wealthy, those of high social status, they arrive early and they eat and drink to the full, fully enjoying themselves.

And then those with the least control of their schedules, those with the least resources to live on, they get Dorito crumbs and some crusty nacho cheese.

[11 : 52] no wonder Paul says, what? Do you expect me to be happy about this? To commend you?

Narrator voice, Paul is not happy. The Lord's Supper, which should have been evidence of their unity, is instead proof of their hypocrisy.

they are self-centered and being self-centered is utterly unchristian. Do you know why? Because being self-centered is utterly unchrist-like.

Think about that for a moment. I don't think Jesus thought about me above all like the classic worship song says.

things. But I know that Jesus was more concerned about saving me than he was about saving himself.

[13 : 03] Those who are self-centered are concerned with questions like, what's best for me? What accomplishes my goals? What makes me look good? What do I need to do or say to get out of this situation or to get out of that person what I want?

This is what it means. This is what it looks like. This is what it sounds like to be self-centered. And in stark contrast to being self-centered, think of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is gracious. He is kind, generous, and good to those who don't deserve it. Jesus lovingly does what is best for others, though we offer him nothing in return except for our sin.

The Corinthians' bellies are full, but their hearts are like the Grinch, two sizes too small.

they are self-centered when they should be gracious. Third, they are forgetful when they should be thoughtful.

[14:26] Look at verse 23. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also, he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. You can read your Bible by yourself. Is that true? I'm glad that that's true. You can pray without other Christians.

Is that true? That is true. I'm glad that that's true as well. You can even worship alone singing in the shower or in the car. And I'm glad that's also true. That we can do all of these things alone and by ourselves.

[15:50] But you cannot be baptized and you cannot celebrate the Lord's Supper alone. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are communal acts.

Think about it. think about baptism. Baptism is something that happens to you. You're there but the person doing the baptizing does all of the work.

What do you do? You just sort of go limp, right? And the person who's doing the baptizing dunks you under the water and brings you back up. It's a communal act.

You can't baptize yourself, at least not biblically. And the Lord's Supper is similarly communal.

Think about a table that is set with bread and a cup.

That table that happens to be set, maybe it's staged at a house showing or something like that and there's a loaf of bread and a glass of wine or a cup of juice or whatever on the table.

[16:57] That is not the Lord's Supper. What makes it the Lord's Supper is when the church gathers around it. It becomes the Lord's Supper when the church gathers.

The bread and the cup take on meaning in the context of the community of faith. But there's an interesting thing here as well because the Lord's Supper also creates the community that it requires.

This is 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 17 because there is one bread one bread we who are many are one body.

Okay? So the bread and the juice are not themselves the Lord's Supper. It becomes the Lord's Supper in the context of the community of faith. But the Lord's Supper also creates that community that it needs that it requires because there is one loaf and as we join together and participate in it together we become the one body.

Do you see that? The Corinthians have forgotten this. That's why Paul says I delivered to you.

[18:17] I already told you this. I already taught you this. Have you forgotten all of what I taught you about the Lord's Supper? How sad to forget about the Lord's Supper.

See in the Lord's Supper we encounter unity. In the Lord's Supper our starved unity is nourished. In the Lord's Supper our damaged unity is restored. It is not because of some magic in the bread and the cup but because of what the bread and the cup proclaim.

What is it that they proclaim? They proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus and it is in the death of the Lord Jesus that all of the walls that used to divide us have been demolished and we have been made one body.

But in Corinth instead of dissolving their division their time of communion was magnifying the differences among them.

[19:40] They are forgetful when they should be thoughtful. They have forgotten that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is both the source and the sustenance of Christian unity.

They must be reminded that Jesus' death demolishes division. It is as we remember the awful price that Jesus paid to purchase our redemption that our feelings of superiority fade.

Do you find that to be true? That when your attention is drawn to the price that Jesus paid to redeem you, your feelings of superiority of being better than, smarter than, more faithful than, more humble than, more loving than, all of those feelings of superiority begin to fade away.

And we remember the great price that Jesus paid to redeem us. we become humble people who give God all the glory and unity flourishes in humility.

The family that eats together stays together. together. Now, you'd think that being self-centered like these Corinthians are, would make a person aware of their own heart.

[21 : 31] But ironically, this isn't true. The Corinthians are careless when they should be discerning. Look at verse 27.

whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup for anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly we would not be judged.

But when we are judged by the Lord we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[22 : 43] Some in Corinth are nourished by Christ during the Lord's Supper and some eat and drink judgment on themselves.

What a strong warning against carelessness. Paul tells us that it is sinful to eat the bread and drink the cup without examining your own heart.

Failure to examine your heart. Failure to check your own heart. This warrants God's disciplinary judgment. And while we cannot trace sickness or death to a specific sin, Paul makes it clear, at least in Corinth, that their carelessness had led to sickness, and some people had even died.

Why? Look at verse 31 again. If we judged ourselves truly, they are hypocrites.

They are not seeing themselves accurately. Paul says, if we saw ourselves rightly, if we examined our hearts and we knew what our hearts were really like, then we wouldn't require God's disciplinary judgment.

[24 : 21] If we understood our proneness to wandering, like we have sung together this morning, if we were aware of our ever-present need of God's grace and Jesus' sin-atoning blood, if we would receive the Holy Spirit's crystal-clear insight on our heart, if we would humbly submit to the sharp edge of the word of God, if I could see my pride lurking in the dark corners of my heart, then it wouldn't sting so badly when someone like Paul says, I know you better than you know yourself.

You're a hypocrite. They are divided when they should be unified, they are self-centered when they should be gracious, they are forgetful when they should be thoughtful, and they are careless when they should be discerning, and so Paul offers to them a remedy for their hypocrisy, and it is in verse 28, let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Does this mean that the Lord's Supper is reserved for those who are worthy? worthy? For those who can somehow make themselves worthy?

For those who consider themselves worthy? No, no, it is actually quite the opposite, isn't it? Paul directs the church to careful self-examination that leads to self-awareness, like a jeweler examining a diamond to see, whether it is genuine or fake.

Pay careful attention to your thoughts. Pay close attention to your attitude, your emotions, your motive, your conscience. Understand your own tendencies to sin.

[26 : 33] Be mindful of what sins tempt you the most. don't be ignorant of the devil's schemes.

Be alert and watchful. Examine yourselves, Paul says, and then come and eat.

Pull the plug on pride. Humbly yield to the Holy Spirit, to the Word of God, and to your brothers and sisters, listen, who may actually know you better than you know yourself.

What am I looking for when I examine myself? How can I know if I am participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

Are you participating erroneously? I love that word. It's a little hard to pronounce. It's a little hard to write down. The root is error, right?

[27 : 44] Are you participating erroneously in error? Do you think that eating the bread and drinking the cup makes you right with God or earns his grace?

Then you are participating in an unworthy manner. You are participating erroneously. are you participating haphazardly?

Do you prepare yourself before coming to worship? Do you take seriously the time that we provide during our worship gathering to respond to the preaching of the gospel?

Or does it mean nothing to you to gather together with God's people around the bread and the cup? then you are participating haphazardly and you are eating in an unworthy way.

Perhaps you are participating ritualistically. You are going through the motions but without any emotion. You have something less than the highest thoughts for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as we gather.

[29 : 00] It's just become a ritual for you. it's not truly a part of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Then you are participating ritualistically and eating the bread and drinking the cup in an unworthy manner.

Are you participating unrepentantly, perhaps hiding some sin that no one else knows about, sin of pride or anger or lust, bitterness, worry, unforgiveness, something that we can't see from the outside?

If you are participating unrepentantly, hiding your sin, then you are participating in an unworthy manner. Are you participating selfishly?

I don't mean, do you check and make sure that there's enough for everyone to have some? It's good if you do that. Thank you for doing that. But how much better to pause and consider the needs of those gathering with you around the bread and the cup?

how about not thinking so much about yourself but about those who are with you in the time of worship? How is he doing right now?

[30 : 28] How is his spiritual life? How is her walk with Jesus? Where is she hurting? How can I care for her?

Perhaps you are participating selfishly which would also be eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. Maybe you are participating faithlessly rejecting Jesus' gracious life-giving claim on your life and just consuming for yourself all of the blessings of being part of a church.

Perhaps you are participating faithlessly. The Lord's Supper compels us not to be thoughtless hypocrites but careful discerners, considerate brothers and sisters, and faithful witnesses to those who do not yet believe in Jesus.

Our differences and our divisions, they will melt away when we examine ourselves and then eat the bread and drink the cup in a worthy way, focusing our attention on God's gracious work to redeem sinners, to reconcile sinners to himself, and to adopt us all into his family.

It is the family that eats together, that stays together. Perhaps the simplest segue into a time of remembering the Lord Jesus that we could possibly have.

[32 : 25] Let's pray together and let's remember to examine ourselves and then let's celebrate the Lord's Supper as God's people, brothers and sisters.

Father, thank you for your word. Blessed Holy Spirit, thank you for being with us as we have opened your word. forgive me for not pausing to pray before we began this time.

So grateful for your ministry among us, Holy Spirit, in spite of my forgetfulness. Father, would you please help us as we have heard now the preaching of your word and perhaps we feel the sharp edge of your word that we read about in the book of Hebrews, that it divides, it cuts and it divides between various parts of a body.

It's able to do that like a scalpel. Father, would you help us and Holy Spirit, would you please work in our hearts as we submit ourselves to the sharp edge of your word.

Help us to examine ourselves as we take a few moments together to do that right now. Amen.

Amen. Father, would you please give us all of the sufficient grace that is ours in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be discerning.

[34 : 43] not just now, not just today, but as we continue together regularly to remember the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus by taking the bread and the cup.

Would you give us all of the sufficient grace that we need to be thoughtful about the price that was paid to redeem us, to welcome us into your family and make us brothers and sisters with one another.

Would you give us all of the sufficient grace that is ours in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be gracious, oh great God, make us gracious rather than self-centered.

Make us like Jesus, Father, would you please give us all of the sufficient grace that is ours in Christ Jesus, that we might be unified, that we might remain unified, that when we sense our unity being lost, we would gather again and we would remember again, we would examine our own hearts, we would feel our superior thoughts of ourselves fading, we would remember our proneness to wandering, and we would again all be humbled at the foot of the cross, and we would remember that unity flourishes in humility.

Father, we ask these things, not for ourselves, although we fully expect to be the beneficiaries of your goodness in answering these requests, we ask these things for the sake of your name, for the sake of the fame of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the spread of this gospel all over this world, for the sake of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ in this community, we ask that you would help us to guard and maintain and to keep unity.

[37 : 06] we love you, and we are grateful to be your people. Please help us as we continue our time of worship.

It is in the name of the Lord Jesus that we pray. Amen. Let's celebrate the Lord's Supper together.