

1 Corinthians 11:17-22 - The Star Spangled Banner was officially declared our national anthem in the year 1931.

Last November, the coach of the men's basketball team at Virginia Tech noticed that during the playing of the national anthem, his players were not participating in a worthy manner. They were fidgeting with their uniforms, looking around, and talking to each other so he did something about it. He took his players to the empty Virginia Tech gymnasium and lined up all the chairs they sit in for the games. He made them face the empty chairs, then he called in over a dozen war veterans to stand in front of those chairs facing the players, only 4 feet away. And he said this: "We — didn't earn those chairs. Your talent didn't earn those chairs. I didn't earn those chairs. These veterans, when they were your age, interrupted their lives, they paused their educations, they changed their careers and they gave their lives for those chairs. So when the anthem is played, we're going to stand like grown men and we're going to honor men like this, that gave their life, so we can have a chair to sit in. And when we stand, we're going to put our right hand over our heart and our left hand behind our back...we're standing still with perfect body language and all that we're thinking about are these men who earned the right for these chairs to be here."

Reminders like this are powerfully sobering folks. But these Virginia Tech students weren't the only ones who needed a sobering reminder. The Corinthians had a far more serious problem than not honoring veterans; they weren't honoring their Lord as they partook of the Lord's Supper. They abused the Lord's Supper. They used it as an opportunity for personal gain and treated it like a common meal with no real significance. So what Paul does in this chapter is he lines the Corinthians up and has them face the empty table of the Lord, and He puts Jesus right there in front of them and says, "We — didn't earn this table. Your talent didn't earn you this table. This man, the Son of God lived His entire life and gave His entire death so that we could have a table to eat at. So when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we're going to honor Jesus by partaking of it in a worthy manner where all that we're thinking about is Him because He is the one who earned the right for this table to be here."

1 Corinthians 11:27 - In Paul's sobering reminder to the Corinthians, he makes 4 challenges to them about how to partake of this Supper in a worthy manner, and they're the same 4 challenges to us today.

1. Remember the Cost

- **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** - When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, look again at the language He uses. To describe the bread, He said this is My body, which was given for you. Then He says the cup represents the new covenant in His blood! **It cost Jesus both His body and His blood for us to eat this Supper.**
- **Story:** There was once a young boy, about 5 years old, who told his mom he wanted to give her a break from shopping for dinner and that he and daddy were going to go to the store and he was going to pick her out the perfect dinner. She agreed and couldn't wait to be surprised, but a few hours later she received a call notifying her that her husband and young son were in a car wreck. They were rushed to the hospital, she rushed to meet them there. When she found her husband, he was okay except for a few cracked ribs, but tragically their young son didn't make it. A week later after a period of intense grief, the husband was released from the hospital with

his personal belongings, including a bag of groceries with one of those cheap frozen microwavable dinners in it. It was the dinner their son picked out for her. The parents kept it in their freezer for almost a year, cherishing it, breaking into tears periodically when they saw it, but when grief had finally run its course, and they were thinking more clearly, they realized that, in a sense, their son's last dying wish was that his mom have that meal.

- She gathered up all her strength and courage, her husband right there with her, she put it in the microwave, and even though it was just a cheap microwavable dinner and didn't taste all that great, it was the most precious meal she had ever eaten, because she knew what it really cost, and that the cost was paid in love for her and a desire for her to enjoy that meal. They still kept the box.
- **Folks what we're eating**, this unleavened bread and grape juice, isn't fancy or elaborate or expensive. Yet when we understand what it cost, it becomes the most precious and wonderful meal we could ever eat, because we know the cost was paid in love for us and a desire for us to enjoy this meal.
- **1 Peter 1:18-19 - All human blood is precious.** In the Old Testament, God said the blood is the source of our life. Yet Jesus, because He was the sinless Son of God, this innocent lamb, had even more precious blood than ours because it was blood that did not deserve to be shed. His was innocent blood, and in the story I told, that child who died shed innocent blood too, but here's the major difference. In that story, that boy's death was an accident. Jesus' shed His blood on purpose so that we could have this meal.
 - **Mark 14:65** - Jesus let them beat him with their fists and hit Him in the face on purpose.
 - **Mark 15:15** - Jesus let them scourge Him on purpose. Scourging meant being beaten with leather straps laced with animal bone and shards of glass until the flesh was ripped almost completely off your back.
 - **Mark 15:17** - Jesus let them put a thorny bramble on His head and then beat those one and a half-inch thorns into His skull on purpose.
 - And of course, **Jesus let them hammer** thick nails through His hands and feet so that He experienced a level of pain it's impossible to articulate, on purpose.
- That's what this Supper cost folks. He willingly gave His body and His blood so we could have this table to sit at. When Jesus says "Do this in remembrance of Me," He meant do this remembering that **it cost Me to save you.**
- **When Paul said we proclaim Jesus' death until He comes**, he means every time we partake we're acknowledging we would not and could not be here without Jesus' death. And that folks is why the Lord's Supper is so bitter-sweet; it's a time of mixed emotions, because on the one hand we're sad that our sin cost Jesus His body and blood, but on the other we know Jesus' last dying wish was that He wanted us to be partakers of this Supper.

2. Remember the Communion

- **1 Corinthians 10:16** - When Jesus shed His blood and died to give us this Supper, He didn't do that so we could have physical food to eat. Jesus didn't say, "I think what people really need is a piece of bread and some grape juice every week, that'll

just make their week so much better.” No, that bread and fruit of the vine are symbolic of something much deeper.

- **Here Paul says it symbolizes a sharing in the body and blood of Christ.** The word “sharing” there implies an intimate, close connection with someone. You have such close fellowship that it’s almost as if you’re one person with them. It’s the same word translated “fellowship” in other places in the Bible. And yes, in some Bibles like the King James Version and the New King James Version, the word sharing is here translated “communion.”
- **Illustration:** I saw a funny picture this week with two little kids, a boy and a girl, standing side by side inside the same shirt. Their parents had stretched out an old T-shirt so that it was big enough to fit over BOTH of their children at the same time. The kids did not look happy about being in that shirt, and there was writing on the shirt that said, “This is our ‘Get Along before we get a whoopin’ shirt.”
 - **Now of course that’s not a perfect analogy** because those kids were being FORCED into communion with each other. They were being FORCED to have fellowship. But Jesus’ body and blood are like that shirt that stretches over us and draws us into communion with Him. It brings us in close to Him, and that’s not forced and it’s not a disciplinary measure; it’s the GREATEST blessing in the world to be in close communion with Christ, because it means we can experience things like peace, joy, hope, and love in a way people outside of communion with Christ simply cannot experience.
- **To further illustrate the idea of communion** and close, intimate relationship, think about what do we actually do with these emblems which represent Jesus’ body and blood.
 - **God designed this as a meal** so that we are, in a sense, eating the body and drinking the blood of Jesus. This is why early Christians were accused of being cannibals because people thought, “These people are getting together every week and eating flesh and drinking blood! What a bunch of maniacs!” Of course, what we’re doing is not literally eating flesh and drinking actual blood. It’s bread and grape juice. But symbolically, that’s exactly what we’re doing!
 - **John 6:53-57** - Just to be clear, this passage is NOT about the Lord’s Supper. Jesus isn’t saying in this chapter, “The way to have eternal life is to partake of the Lord’s Supper.” No, faith in His body and blood are the key to eternal life, but the Lord’s Supper reminds of us that fact every week in a very vivid way! Jesus is making the point in this chapter that it’s His sacrificial death that sustains us and gives us eternal life. Just as physical bread sustains our bodies and gives us life, so too does His body, the spiritual bread, give us life by being sacrificed on the cross. Just as our blood gives us physical life, so too does His blood give us spiritual life when it’s poured out for us on the cross. When Jesus talks about eating His body and drinking His blood, He’s really talking about believing in Him and the power His body and blood sacrificed on the cross have to give us life. The eating and drinking imagery captures the idea of taking Jesus, who is external to us, and making Him internal by faith. By faith, we invite Jesus to abide with us so that we can enjoy all the rich blessings that come from Him! The Lord’s Supper is a weekly physical re-enactment of the faith we’re putting in Him to sustain our lives. Communion with Jesus means life eternal!

- **1 Corinthians 10:17** - It's not just that Jesus' sacrifice is the shirt that stretches over us and brings us into communion with Him. But it also stretches over all of us and brings us into communion with each other. All of us who come from different backgrounds, who have struggled with different sins, who were raised by different families in different cities, states, and even countries, can come together around this table and be one body with each other. Why? Because we're all eating from the same bread and drinking from the same cup. Every one of us gets our eternal life from the same body and the same blood; the body and blood of Christ.
- **Do you see why Paul was so angry about what the Corinthians were doing?** They were taking the Lord's Supper in a divided fashion, they split each other up into the haves and the have-nots and the rich people got to eat all the food, and the poor people didn't get any of the Lord's Supper, and if they did it wasn't until later and they had to eat it all alone. How tragic!
- **Let's remember that this Supper means we must be at peace with one another**, that there can be no divisions among us, no hostility or strife or unforgiven sins, because if we're partaking of the Lord's Supper with hatred in our hearts for our brethren, we're disgracing the Lord's memorial and completely missing the point.

3. Remember Your Conviction

- **1 Corinthians 11:28** - **Can you imagine** what those Virginia Tech basketball players were thinking when they stood just feet away from that line of veterans staring right at them? They probably felt shame. They probably thought about those men and women out in combat putting their lives on the line, uncertain whether they'd come back alive, and watching many of their friends die so that we could have the freedoms we have here. And here they were living an easy life, getting a good education, playing basketball, not having to be in combat at all. So they'd be ashamed for taking their lives for granted, but they'd also be ashamed of their own behavior during the song that honored these veterans. **But after the shame passed**, there would also be gratitude and a renewed appreciation for those vets and for their freedom which would help them live better lives with better attitudes. A conviction is just a firmly held belief. I believe that experience changed the convictions of those boys and reminded them of the convictions they SHOULD have.
- **Paul says when we come together** to partake of the Lord's Supper, and we stand face to face with Jesus, it's a time to examine ourselves. When we partake in a worthy manner by remembering what this Supper cost and the great blessings communion in Christ brings, it's only natural we'll start thinking about our own convictions about the Lord.
- **Standing face to face with Jesus** at a meal with Him forces us to ask things like, "Do I have the same conviction I had when I first became a Christian, or is it waning? Am I living in such a way as to give honor to Jesus? Am I grateful for what Jesus did to save me? If so, how grateful am I really? How does my life demonstrate my conviction about Him?"
- **The Lord's Supper can actually be uncomfortable** at times because when we sit face to face with Jesus and examine ourselves, we don't always like what we find. Yet at once there's also a flood of comfort in knowing Jesus still

wants us there in His presence. The Lord's Supper can feel like an **emotional roller coaster**, because one second you're sad, one second you're glad, one second you feel shame, one second you feel free and grateful, but what we're ultimately struggling with is, "How in the world has Jesus accepted ME at this table?" And the thought is just so marvelous it ought to re-ignite the flame of our convictions!

- **Revelation 2:4-5** - The Lord's Supper is a great time every week to be reminded of our first love and reminded of our conviction that Jesus really is our Savior and Lord, that He is the source of eternal life, that He's the most important thing to us in the world, and He deserves our love and obedience and glory.

4. Remember the Conclusion

- **1 Corinthians 11:26** - "Until He comes." There is an anticipatory aspect to the Lord's Supper. Not only are we looking backwards, remembering what the Supper costs, not only are we looking at the present day, examining our convictions based on the blessings of communion, but we're also looking forward to the conclusion of all things when Jesus returns and we have final victory over all our enemies and even death is defeated once and for all because we'll be resurrected from the dead to be with the Lord forever!
- In the Old Testament, the prophets described this conclusion of all things when the Messiah would destroy all His enemies and give victory to His people as a time of joyous feasting!
 - **Isaiah 25:6-8** - Even Jesus used language throughout His ministry that hinted at this great victory banquet in the end.
 - **Matthew 8:10-12**
 - **Luke 22:17-18** - Now of course there's some application to the church here. While we eat this Lord's Supper meal, Jesus is here with us in spirit, but Jesus was ultimately pointing to the period of restoration of all things, when in the end He really would be eating with us in the victory supper when death and sin are gone forever and there is no more suffering. Even in Revelation 19 there's this great picture of the marriage supper of the Lamb when Jesus has the final victory!
- **Point:** Our theme for this month is Victory in Worship, and so the message I want to leave us with this morning is that the Lord's Supper is a foretaste of victory! Every time we gather around this table, we're not only proclaiming Jesus's death, we're proclaiming our confidence in the victory we'll have in the end when He finally comes back! THAT is the conclusion, THAT is the consummation of the ages and this Lord's Supper reminds us every week how it's all going to end! It's all going to end with all those at God's table celebrating as more than conquerors through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- **Invitation: [step down with Bible]** Will you be able to take part in that final feast of victory? If you've not turned your life over to Christ by believing and being baptized, you won't be. And that's a very serious thing.
 - **Isaiah 65:13-14** - Don't be shut out of that feast. If you're not a Christian, nobody here is going to stop you from eating the bread and drinking the juice when it comes around, but just know if you haven't given your life to Christ in baptism,

those emblems mean nothing. It's just bread and juice, there is no communion with the Lord, there is no hope of a final victory feast.

- But that can change for you today if you'll surrender to Jesus. If you want to know more about how to do that, I'd be happy to study with you about it, but if you know what you need to do, come forward right now.