

October 2, 2022 The Details 1st Corinthians 11:23-34

Almost all celebrations of the Lord's Supper, including the Roman Catholic Mass, make use of the reading from 1st Corinthians 11, beginning at verse 23. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you," and that is the first detail we know, accept and treasure about the Lord's Supper. There is a temptation in theological circles to try and separate the tradition of Peter, from the tradition of Paul, in other words to speak of the sacrament as being recognized in a Catholic or a Protestant tradition. The fact is that the Gospels tell us, and Mark was greatly influenced in what he wrote by his uncle who was Simon Peter. In Mark 14 he tells how Jesus took the left overs of the Feast of unleavened bread and instituted this sacrament. Paul reminds his audience that what he has taught and shared about the Lord's supper, he received from the Lord and passed on to believers. The Lord's Supper came to us through both Peter and Paul from Jesus.

Jesus took bread, in light of what was about to happen, and he broke it. HIS words were, "this is my body, broken for you." Jesus knew that HE would shortly be arrested and crucified. HE gave us and HE gives us this ceremony, that we might remember that the central reality of the faith life to which we have been called, is that significant death, HE would suffer on the cross at Calvary. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood....do this in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:25) What we do at the Table is fundamental to our understanding as

followers of Jesus. Bread broken as Jesus body was broken. Red wine or grape juice as the symbol of blood shed for us and to redeem us. And the call as we eat and drink to remember HIM. There is a redeemer.

There is what I find to be a very touching detail in the instructions of Paul concerning the Lord's supper. "We are to wait for one another" when we participate in this rite. What that means in simple parlance, is that we are to take it together. In Corinth there was a great deal of poverty and especially among the followers of Jesus. As a result they tended to rush for the bread and the wine, and in fact they wanted to get all they could because they were hungry. Paul reminds us to remember Jesus. HE also reminds us that we should be mindful of the rest of the gathering. It is not about the quantity we swallow. And it is about the need to see that everyone who wishes to receive does so. Mindful of Jesus. Mindful of the others who are involved in the worshipping circle. Some serve. Some help. But the eating and the drinking and remembering...should happen together.

We will I am certain get back to a time when we will pass the elements from hand to hand, everyone waiting until all have been served, before we eat and drink. Waiting for others to be served, is part of the details of the sacrament. No one is to be left out and no one is to be left unserved.

It is definitely not about getting stuffed. This little wafer, these few drops of grape juice make the point, that the

feast is not about quantity. Just enough to remember Jesus loves us and loved us so much that HE gave HIMSELF for us. And our love for God is lived out as we care for one another. As we love each other.

Part of what runs through the reading in 1 Corinthians 11 is the concept that there is nothing casual about participation in the Lord's Supper. We participate because we believe. We participate because we want new life in Jesus. We come to this table because we care about eternal things. The Kingdom of God. Eternal life, which does not begin at our deaths, but begins and continues beyond death because we have committed our lives to following Jesus, and therefore, serving and caring for others.

With the devastation we have seen on the East coast in our maritime provinces we have a remarkable opportunity to give of our substance to relief efforts. Whether it is the Red Cross, or through the Relief funds of the Church it does not matter. What matters is that we show that we care about people who we do not even know. But whose pain and loss and hardship we can relate to. The fact that we do not know them personally is part of the reason to help. Whether they are believers or not has nothing to do with it. Jesus calls us to love those who are in need. We are called to seize opportunities in which we can help others. Period. We have been loved by God in spite of all our wrongdoing. So we are to help when we see help is needed.

And if the Lord's Supper is so important how come we celebrate 4 of 5 times a year? And why do some communions celebrate every time they gather to worship, or at least at some service every Sunday? Actually those practices are two sides of the same coin. Our Anglican and Roman Catholic brothers and sisters (and that is what they are!) celebrate frequently because the sacrament is important. Many Protestant communions celebrate as we do at set times of the year, in our case the turning of the seasons. We do this infrequently that we might underline the special nature of the celebration.

On this day we celebrate along with many other denominations of the church world wide. It is a reminder, another reminder that we do not have a corner on the truth of the Gospel of God. We have other brothers and sisters that do things differently from us. The key is we remember Jesus as we eat and drink...as do they... when they eat and drink at the Lord's Table. These are the basic details concerning the Lord's Supper...remembrance of Jesus and HIS redeeming love for each one of us.

Let us pray;

Heavenly Father we give thanks for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. We are mindful today as we participate in the sacrament that the household of faith is far bigger and involves many whose traditions are somewhat different than our own. Bless YOUR church in all its places and in all its brands.

Grant that we may remember that we have this in common with all who remember YOU as they take the bread and drink the wine. May our lives give you the glory and the praise.
Amen