

# Pr Mark Turner: The Last Supper (8/6/19)

## **Introduction:**

As the name suggests, the communion service is all about fellowship. Fellowship with each other, and fellowship with Christ. That is what we are here for today. To be connected, or, reconnected.

## **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

Paul, in this passage, is actually seeking to correct the practices of the church in Corinth. They had become divided regarding the practice of the communion service because selfishness had made its way into the service that symbolised the complete antithesis. So Paul, the pastoral man that he was, addresses them on this matter of how to practice the communion service. Interestingly, the way that he chooses to address the issue is by reminding them of the origin of the service, allowing them to derive the meaning and practice from its original purpose.

This passage, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, is probably one of the most familiar passages when it comes to practicing the communion service in our churches. But sometimes becoming so familiar with something causes us to lose its meaning. That has probably become our experience with this passage, and was likely the very problem that Paul was addressing by the writing of the passage.

So, rather than being so familiar with the words that we aren't impacted by them, let's take a closer look at the elements that Paul chooses to bring to view in the passage.

After a quick read through the passage, the first thing that you will notice is that everything Paul talks about doing is derived directly from the way that Jesus instituted the service during His last supper with the Disciples.

So then, according to the Apostle Paul, Jesus' own words and actions constitute His view on the significance of His death. And, because Jesus knew that His death was coming, He told us exactly what He intended His memorial service to look like - emphasising those elements that would edify His church.

Three of the things that He made it clear we needed to remember by this service were:

1. The Centrality of His Death
2. The Purpose of His Death
3. The Need to Appropriately His Death Personally

## **The Centrality of His Death:**

The Lord's Supper dramatises neither His birth nor His life, neither His words nor His works, but only His death.

It's not that Jesus doesn't want us to remember the other things, but that the one central-most thing that Jesus wants us to remember is His death. It is the central pillar by which everything is supported.

Therefore, we can conclude that if the Cross is not central in our religion, it is not the religion of Jesus!

## **The Purpose of His Death:**

Jesus' words about the cup referred not only to His blood, but clearly spelled out the connection to the 'new covenant' which was associated with His blood.

His blood, He says, was to be shed "for the forgiveness of sins."

How does the shed blood provide forgiveness from sin? Notice what these two passages from Exodus & Jeremiah teach.

Exodus 19:3-8 & Exodus 24:3-8

- God extends a covenant and pledges Himself to it.
- The people agree and pledge themselves to the same agreement.
- The blood of the covenant is that which ratifies their commitment.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- 'Six centuries later,' God promises through the Prophet Jeremiah, 'a better covenant will be ratified with the blood of Jesus and will extend the forgiveness of sins.'
- The shed blood of Jesus, ratifying the new covenant, will be the agent that procures the forgiveness of sins.

## **The Need to Appropriately His Death Personally:**

The Disciples weren't merely spectators in the drama of the cross; they were participants in it.

Just as the bread and the wine which was broken and offered by Jesus wasn't enough, but needed to be internalised; so the death of Jesus is not enough - we need to receive it!

John 6:53-55

- In this verse Jesus clearly defines the meaning behind the symbols that He uses in this service.
- The bread represents my body and the wine represents my blood.

The Lord's Supper remains a perpetual reminder that we need to personally receive the gift of Jesus for it to be effective.

*"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" 1*

Corinthians 10:16 (NIV)

## **Challenge:**

Let's move from being passive spectators of the drama of the cross to an active participants in it!

Let's participate in His life of service to others as an act of appreciation for His great love!