

Heartfelt Communion
Good Friday Communion Service
By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Friday, April 19, 2019

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, the music that we've just sang has led us to Calvary. In just a few moments, we'll come to the Lord's Table and that will lead us to Calvary once again. Such a magnificent theme for our soul to contemplate, the highest thoughts that we could ever think would be centered around Christ and around Calvary and it's just a delight to have everyone with us here as we do that together here today on this day called Good Friday, good because it was the day we commemorate on which Christ lay down his life as a sacrifice to turn away the wrath of God from our sin for all those who would ever believe in Christ for eternal life.

In 1 John 4:9 and 10 it says this,

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Before we take Communion, we want to just see some things from Scripture to prepare our hearts. Scripture cautions us, tells us not to take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy way and we believe that the best way to guard against that is to reflect from God's word on different aspects of the cross, of propitiation, of salvation, in ways that would bring to our mind the sobriety of the cross, that would bring to our minds the seriousness of Communion, and yet in a way that reminds us that a price has been paid for the redemption of our souls, that would bring us joy and remembrance that our souls have been on the receiving end of the love of God, the undeserved, unmerited, free grace of God, saving us from our sin according to his eternal plan for our eternal redemption so that we would be with him throughout all of eternity. Those are the most magnificent themes that a human tongue could ever declare, that a human ear could ever hear, and so we want to remember those things as we come to the Table here this evening.

Let me just in this brief meditation, just bring four realities about the cross to your mind. In one sense, they're unrelated in the sense that they don't come from all the same passage, but I just wanted to give you some thoughts to center your mind on and especially to center your heart on, to center your affections on as we come to the

Communion Table tonight, that we might remember exactly what it is that we are commemorating as we partake in just a few moments.

Let me say this, first of all, that Communion reminds us of the sanctity of God. Communion reminds us of the sanctity of God by which I mean this: the God who created heaven and earth, the God of the Bible, is holy. He is separate from us. He is perfectly righteous. He is sinless. He is God above all. He is the most majestic high King and we as sinful creatures are not able to approach him on our own. The prophet Habakkuk said in chapter 1, verse 13, he said, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." So there's this great holiness of God that in standing alone as an imposing force for the fear of God in our hearts, and we realize that none of us could approach him on our own because Jesus, himself, said in Matthew 5:48, "You are to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

When you remember the great holiness, the great sanctity of God, you're mindful of the fact that you fall far short of his glory and so none of us could approach him in our own merit; we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, you have, I have, and Communion reminds us of that great truth. The reason that we needed a mediator in Christ was because there was a gulf too vast for us to bridge on our own and the gulf is not simply our sin but the sanctity of God. Communion reminds us that you do not, you have not, and you cannot fulfill what God's law requires of you in thought, motive, word and deed, and the Communion Table reminds us that God is holy and that there must be a mediator between God and man if any of us are to be reconciled to him in light of our sin. Communion reminds us, then, of the sanctity of God.

Now secondly, Communion reminds us also of the seriousness of the Gospel. The seriousness of the Gospel. Let me invite you to turn to Hebrews 10, if you will. Hebrews 10, beginning in verse 26. As you're finding your way there, we remember at the Communion Table that a price was paid for the redemption of sinners; that Christ accomplished redemption through his work and through his obedience, and now after his resurrection, the Gospel is proclaimed to all of us, the Gospel comes to us and God offers free forgiveness of all of your sins at the cost of his dear Son. The holy God whose law we have broken, the holy God whose realm we could not enter, the holy God in love sent his blessed, obedient, eternal Son in order to be the sacrifice for our sins, the one whom we could never have called down from heaven by our own authority, came down on his own authority, came down voluntarily in order to live a perfect life, in order to give that life on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, in love manifesting unspeakable grace, immeasurable grace, showing immeasurable patience and kindness and love and goodness to unworthy sinners like us.

Communion reminds us of those things but, beloved, what I would have you remember in this moment in time, this moment in our service is this, is that that kind of holy love, that kind of manifest grace, the great infinite worth of Christ and the sacrifice that he made at the cross, demands from you the fact that you would take that seriously and that you would respond to it. When we come to the realm of the cross, we come to holy ground where, figuratively speaking, we take our shoes off and realize that this is a matter to be

treated with sobriety, with seriousness, with earnest contemplation, with sarcasm banished from our souls, with comedy banished from our thoughts, with all manner of frivolity and human silliness set aside to realize that this is the great momentous occasion of the universe that we are recalling here, and that we are recalling the one, single, solitary act that had the power and ability to redeem your soul from sin, to bring you out from the dominion of the devil and to deliver you to the realm of God's own dear Son, and at the alternative price of eternal damnation for your sins. Oh, this is serious. Yes, it's a manifestation of grace but it's not to be trifled with and Scripture tells us that in no uncertain terms in Hebrews 10:26.

Look at it with me. It says,

26 ... if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." 31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

As serious as it is to violate the law of God, this passage teaches us and conditions us to think that it's an even more serious crime of cosmic proportions against God to reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that there is no excuse for that. When free forgiveness is offered to you, when you are called and commanded to repent and believe in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and that God offers this freely in love, to spurn that offer, to turn away, to reject Christ whether through outright defiance or simply through casual indifference or from a deferral that says, "I'll take it up another time," friend, I want to tell you that that is greatest crime against God that anyone could ever commit. Communion reminds us of this. To refuse the Gospel is to scorn the sacrifice of God's Son and such contempt for God, such indifference to God, such ingratitude for a free offer of the salvation of your souls, can only magnify your preexisting guilt to eternal infinite levels.

The Gospel is serious and Communion reminds us of that even as it reminds us of the sanctity of God. God is holy and he says in his word, "I will be treated as holy." In fact, look at Leviticus 10 where that statement is made. Leviticus 10. This is the passage where the sons of Aaron were slain for offering strange fire before God. They offered incense and strange fire which he had not commanded them in chapter 10, verse 1, and it says in verse 2,

2 ... fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what

the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'"

So, my friends, what we realize here is that God intends his word to be taken seriously and if the law of Moses required the death of those who refused to do so, much more now as the Gospel is proclaimed and Christ is presented, we find something even more serious laid before us that calls for us our most earnest response, and so we invite you, we call you to consider seriously the Gospel, the cross of Christ tonight either as a Christian as you contemplate soon partaking of the elements, or as that unbeliever who somehow God has brought before us here this evening, to realize that these are eternal matters that weigh on the ultimate eternal destiny of your soul. The Gospel is serious and God intends it to be taken seriously and that's what we seek to do here this evening through his word and through the music that we have sung.

Well, thirdly, you could say this, that Communion reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ. It reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ. Look at the Gospel of John 10 with me, if you would. John 10. This sacrifice of which we have been speaking, in the elements, the red juice reminding us of the red blood of Christ, the bread reminding us of the body which was literally nailed to a cross on our behalf, we realize that there was a real God-man, a real God in real human flesh who in real time really offered his life up on a cross and was really nailed to it, his blood was literally shed, he literally felt the nails and even more literally felt the wrath of God, the eternal wrath of God on our behalf. This was a sacrifice that Christ made for us and Scripture tells us that he did it voluntarily.

Look at John 10:17. John 10:17, and as we read this passage, we realize that there was no external compulsion, there was no higher authority causing Christ to do this, none other than the eternal council of the Triune God of whom he was the second member, the second person. In John 10:17 it says,

17 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

As we remember the sacrifice of Christ, one of the blessed things we remember is that in love this is what our Lord was glad to do on our behalf. It was obedient to the plan of the Father but Scripture tells us Jesus said, "I am doing this on My own authority. I voluntarily do this." Beloved, let it warm your heart, let it comfort your heart, let it be your comfort in the midst of the consciousness of guilt that we all feel from time to time, to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ gladly, voluntarily, in love, in mercy, laid down his life and that's what we remember here at the cross. This was the greatest act of love that humanity will ever know. This act of love will be the song of believers throughout all of the ages of eternity. To magnify Christ, to love him, to bless his name because he loved us in our unworthy state and at the cost of his own precious life offered up a sacrifice that was sufficient to save us from our sins, my friend, I want to tell you and remind you that

no matter how close you are to the person sitting next to you, your spouse, your child, friend, whoever you may be next to, that dear child you hold in your arms, I want to tell you that no one has ever loved your soul like Jesus did and no one ever will, and as a result of that, Christ has claim on the deepest, highest affection of your heart so that there is no one else in competition for him for that enthroned place of highest love and praise in the inner being of your inner man. That's what Christ deserves. That's what he commands from you, is to love him with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and to say with Paul, "I love Him because He loved me and gave Himself up for me."

You know, one of the things that we remember, and it's okay to make eye contact with me from time to time just as we remember these things, one of the things to remember is that if you're a believer in Christ, that Christ died for you by name. He didn't die for a sinful lump of humanity for it to be sorted out later who would be saved. Christ knew you by name. God the Father chose you by name before the creation of the world in order to enter into this salvation, and when Christ was on the cross and when Christ was executing the plan of redemption, my Christian friend, he had you in mind by name. He thought of you as he suffered. Your sins were laid on him as he suffered. Your particular sins were laid on him and he took them all upon himself.

That's what Paul is saying in Galatians 2:20. He says, "He loved me," first person singular, "and gave Himself up for me," first person singular. My Christian friend, you can speak about Christ in that way as well. Yes, God loved the world and sent his only begotten Son to save whoever would believe in him, but if you're in Christ tonight, you can say with the Apostle Paul with that same singular purpose and laser-like focus, "He loved me and gave Himself up for me." That's what Communion reminds us of, that sacrifice of Christ so that we remember at Communion what the Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God," so that he might bring us to God. The cross was Christ bringing us to God. It wasn't us going to God, it was God coming to us and doing what was necessary to bring us to himself.

That's what we remember at Communion. Communion reminds us that Christ made the necessary sacrifice. With the bread that represents the body, with the juice that represents the blood, we remember him who loved us first. It makes all the difference in the world, my friends, to remember and to understand who the initiator in salvation was. It was not you. It was not us. It was not me. Scripture says that we love because he first loved us. While you were alienated and estranged and outside the covenant of the promises of God, Christ came and died for you. In that passage I read to open the service, while we were ungodly helpless sinners, Christ loved us and gave his life for our sins. That's what we remember at Communion. We remember that we have an elder brother who now intercedes for us in heaven having paid the price for our sins, and every aspect of Communion that it points us to reminds us of his love for our soul and the sacrifice that he made on our behalf.

That's what we remember. This ceremony, this Communion reminds us that Jesus Christ has secured the eternal safety of your soul. These are wonderful truths, aren't they? This

promotes a joy in your heart that goes beyond a superficial happiness, we realize that in these truths which Scripture proclaims to us, that in these things we have the most valuable possession in all of the world, we have the pearl of great price, it belongs to us through faith in Christ. Colossians 1:19-20 says,

19 ... it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,
20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Communion reminds us preeminently of the sacrifice of Christ.

Finally we could say this, is that Communion reminds us of satisfied justice. Of satisfied justice. Salvation is not simply an expression of the love of God, although it is that. What the work of Christ accomplished was it fulfilled the justice of God, it fulfilled the demands of the law of God. Yes, God is holy. Yes, you have sinned against him. Yes, he judges sinners just like you. But in Christ, all the demands of justice have been satisfied. In Christ, everything that God requires from sinners has been fulfilled. The perfect righteousness of Christ applied to our account, the fullness of the penalty of your sin paid in full at the cross, that's why Christ could say and cry out at the crowning moment of his death, "It is finished! Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." In 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says,

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

So, my friends, as we come to the Communion Table, we realize that all of the demands of the law of God for the believer have been silenced because they have been fulfilled. What God requires has been satisfied. What God intends for us to know is that righteousness is found in Christ and in him alone and in that we rejoice. He has forgiven our sins not because of the works of our hand but because the Father accepts the work of Christ. Friends, this cross that we remember tonight, this cross has justified you. This cross has sanctified you. One day we will see that the cross has also accomplished glorification for us as well. In every aspect conceivable, it has reconciled you to God. The cross supremely reveals the love of God for your soul and Communion remembers that it has all been paid and in that we find the satisfaction of our soul, we find holy joy.

So it's no wonder in light of the sanctity of God, it is no wonder in light of the seriousness of the Gospel, it is no wonder in light of the sacrifice of Christ, it is no wonder in light of satisfied justice that Scripture says these words to us in 1 Corinthians 11:27. I invite you to turn there, 1 Corinthians 11:27. In light of this memorial that reminds us of Christ, the Bible says,

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28

But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Well, what should you examine yourself for here this evening? Let me just give you a couple of thoughts to meditate on as we will soon receive the elements.

First of all, only a true Christian should take the elements here this evening. This is the Lord's Table, it's for the Lord's people. This is not something for an unbeliever, for a non-Christian. To partake of these elements is to confess, is to symbolically confess the Lordship of Christ over your life. And as from time to time I like to remind people, is that when we take the elements, we are making a public profession of our guilt, we are making a public confession of sin that says, "I need the sacrifice of Christ to cleanse me from my guilt." And if that's not somehow embedded in your partaking of the elements, your contemplation of the elements, friend, it would be far better for you to let the elements pass and contemplate the truth of what has been said to you here this evening. If you know you're not a Christian, let the elements pass. Contemplate the Gospel, contemplate Christ and not bring additional guilt onto your soul.

For those of us that know the Lord, just consider whether there is sin in your life that you've been clinging to. Oh, I'm not talking about did you miss your quiet time this morning; we're not talking on those levels here. Are there patterns of sin that you refuse to address? This is a time for you to contemplate that and to repent and if you're holding some sinful pattern in your life, to confess that and to commit your heart toward repentance, turning away from it before you take the elements. Here this evening because in Communion we remember a sacrifice for sin, how unworthy would it be for us to in one hand be holding onto sin and with the other hand putting the remembrance of the sacrifice for sin into and onto our tongues. That wouldn't be right, would it?

So we need to contemplate these things, but to end on a joyful note, we understand that, you know, we walk imperfectly even now. That's why we need a Savior, right? But if you're a Christian walking in Christ, not perfect but with your heart devoted to him, your heart seeking him, your heart hating sin when it manifests itself in your life and that's what's true of you and you're conscious of your trust and faith in Christ, to take Communion in a worthy manner for you as an obedient Christian, let me encourage you to take it with joy, to take it with gratitude, to realize that you are remembering the one who has loved your soul and truly redeemed you, and that he gladly accomplished redemption for you; that he gladly fulfilled the law on your behalf; that he gladly paid all of the sin; and that he invites you and welcomes you to come to this table to remember him, to be blessed and encouraged in the remembrance of his love and the sufficiency of his sacrifice on your behalf, and to remember and to anticipate that one day soon enough you'll be with him with this world, with sin and this sinful flesh left behind and nothing to hinder the full fellowship that he died to bring you into. So in that sense, we take it in a worthy manner when we take it with heartfelt gratitude and that's what I invite you to here, my brother and sister in Christ, heartfelt gratitude for Christ as we take these elements.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the cross of Christ. We thank You for the love of a perfect Savior. We thank You for an eternal plan of redemption that included us, unworthy, insignificant, sinful us, sinful me, including us in the plan by Your grace. We are delighted, we are honored, we are pleased, we are grateful to be able to call You our Father, O God, to call You, O Christ, our Brother who represents us in heaven, our Savior, our Lord, our King, the One who loved us and gave Yourself up for us. We remember You, O Holy Spirit, who points us to Christ. We thank You for Your work of regeneration, of applying redemption to our souls, to opening our eyes for Your keeping, sealing work, Your indwelling work. Oh, we remember all the fullness of the Triune God as we come now and we thank You for every aspect of our salvation, every aspect of Your love and grace, our God, and we pray that You would fill our hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory as we partake of the elements now.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.