

Isaiah 26:1-8; Luke 22:15 The Intimacy of Communion

The time around the Lord's table is ordained by Christ to be a time when we fellowship with Him in a way that is unlike any other time of fellowship. The word *communion* conveys the idea of *fellowship*. And this ordinance serves the purpose of enabling us to enter into that fellowship with Christ.

Underlying the very concept of communion is the truth that we know and love and serve the true and living God and His Son Jesus Christ. Our Savior is One who can and should be known by His people. This was the emphasis of the early church when they stressed, the way they did, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They knew Him. They knew He was risen. They knew they were not merely following cunningly devised fables.

We don't merely subscribe to theories about God – we know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. We walk with Him in the light of His word. We speak to Him. He speaks to us and we know His power and His presence. And we strive to know Him more. We're not happy that we know Him as well as we should. The Lord's table answers to this desire and to this striving.

The intimacy of our fellowship becomes evident when we realize the words of our text – *We waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee*. This is certainly an expression that can be applied to our time around this table. Our desire is for Christ and we will remember His body and blood this day.

And we may also view Christ's words in Luke 22:15 as an expression of this mutual desire - *And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer*.

This communion feast, we could say, is a place where we desire to meet with Christ and where Christ desires to meet with us. And it is the strength of this desire in our hearts and in Christ's heart that gives rise to the expression – *the intimacy of communion*.

And so I have a few thoughts to share on this theme in preparation for the Lord's table today. I want us to consider the way into this intimacy. And then I want us to think upon our desire for Christ. And then finally Christ's desire for us.

The Intimacy of Communion

I. The Way into this Intimacy -

Our text reads – *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee*.

This text is found in a section of Isaiah that some analysts call *The Little Apocalypse*. It consists of chps. 24-27 and the picture that's presented is one of world-wide judgment.

Isa. 24:19-21: *The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.*

A parallel theme to the theme of judgment found in this section is the theme of salvation that is brought to the Lord's people –

Isa. 25:8,9: *He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

When you understand these two themes of judgment and salvation going hand in hand then it clarifies the meaning of our text which tells us *in the way of thy judgments have we waited for thee*.

As the world increases in wickedness and the name of Christ is treated with contempt and the way of sin and ungodliness seems to gain prominence in this nation and in the world then certainly the longing of the heart of the Christian is for God to vindicate His name and His cause. And this is especially the case for the church when she suffers persecution as a result of the world's wickedness. In the way of God's judgments we wait for Him to move with power and might.

Paul, in writing to the afflicted church at Thessalonica vividly expresses this truth when he writes: *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: (2Thess. 1:6-8)*

Wait for your vindication and the vindication of the Lord which will come when He returns – Paul is saying to the Thessalonians. And to those who do wait patiently – groaning within for mortality to put on immortality and for death to be swallowed up in victory – their testimony becomes the testimony of our text – *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee*.

Now – there is another application which can be drawn from the text which applies directly to our time of communion. We are waiting upon the Lord, this morning, in the way of His judgments.

One of the activities that we engage in around this table is to judge ourselves. *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged* – we read in 1Cor. 11:31. The church at Corinth was treating the Lord's table as a frivolous thing. A lack of earnestness and the failure to perceive the solemnity about the ordinance moved the Lord to deal with some of them severely. It took the Lord's chastening hand on some of them to save them from the condemnation of the world.

But this act of judgment is first committed to us as believers. If we'll exercise it upon ourselves by facing our sins and confessing them and pleading the blood of Christ over them then we will be enabled with a clear conscience to partake of this table.

So we wait upon the Lord in the way of His judgments by examining our lives and dealing with our sins according to the gospel. But we also wait upon the Lord in the way of His judgments by reckoning upon the blessed truth that the cross work of Christ is a work of judgment.

...from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour we read in Mt. 27:45. Christ, of course, was nailed to the cross during that period. And when the time came for Him to bear God's wrath – our sins being imputed to Him – such was the awfulness of that scene that a veil of darkness must be drawn across it.

And from behind that veil of darkness, as it were, there would come the cry from Christ that indicates to us that judgment had indeed been meted out to Him. And the crowning affliction of that judgment was the forsaking of the Son by His Father. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* – was Christ's cry.

The reason He had been forsaken was because *God had made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him* (2Cor. 5:21). And as a result of that judgment we read in Mt. 27:51 that *the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom* – indicating to us that the way to communion with God and with Christ was now opened to the people of God.

This is why I say that the way of intimate communion with God is to *wait on Him in the way of His judgments*. The cross is a manifestation of grace and mercy and love by Christ. *In my place condemned He stood* – we sing in that hymn. But we must ever remember that the cross is a place of judgment. Your sins were judged. My sins were judged. And that judgment called for the shedding of Christ's blood. Let that be the truth that the cup brings to your remembrance today. Your sins were judged and because they were judged there is now no condemnation to your soul.

And because your sins were judged you are able to enjoy fellowship with Christ. *In the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee*. This is our testimony this morning. And this is our practice. We judge our sins in the light of the cross and thank God that because our sins have been judged through His shed blood we can serve God. We can fellowship with God. We can live for God and for Christ.

The way of His judgments leads to our next consideration which is:

II. Our Desire for Christ –

The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

This is the mark of a man who has been won to Christ – whose heart has been captivated by Christ’s love – you have a desire toward His name and in keeping with that desire you desire to remember Him.

It is, of course, no difficult task in multiplying reasons why we desire Him. We desire Him because of His willingness to become one of us. We desire Him because He was willing to become our mediator. We desire Him because of our awareness that He has fulfilled all the obligations of the covenant on our behalf.

Our text says that our desire is to His name. His name depicts His character. He is Emmanuel – God with us. And the reason He can be Emmanuel to us is because His name is Jesus – the name that was given to Him because He would save His people from their sins. Whenever I think on the names of Christ I’m reminded of His own proclamation of His name when He descended upon Mt. Sinai to cause His glory to pass by Moses and we read in Exod. 34:5 –

And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, the LORD, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children unto the third and to the fourth generation.

There is so much in this proclamation that we desire. We desire His name because we desire His mercy and grace. We desire His forgiveness and we desire the justification that He provides by His grace. We desire His name because the work He has wrought upon our hearts by His Spirit has given us new desires to be conformed to all that His name represents.

So we desire to be holy because He is holy. We desire to be faithful because we find Him to be faithful. We desire to be loving because we bask in His lovingkindness. We desire to be generous because we know that He has given us so much. Truly our desire is to His name.

And I would point out that it is around this table that our desires toward His name can find fulfillment. You see our desire is not only toward His name – as the text indicates but it is also *to the remembrance of thee.*

What is it that causes a Christian to lose his love and his zeal and his faith? He loses these things when he loses sight of Christ or when he forgets Christ. This ordinance, then, functions as a safeguard to our souls to make sure that we maintain fellowship with Him. We can expect that as we remember Him in the way He calls upon us to

remember Him that He will draw near to us to fill our hearts to overflowing with His presence. And by so doing our deepest longings within our hearts are met.

By meeting with Him in the way of judgments we deal with everything that comes between us and our Savior. We come clean where sin is concerned – pleading the blood of Christ over it. And then we expect that as we remember Him our desires for Him will be met.

There remains one more point of consideration which is perhaps the most amazing thing to consider which is:

III. His Desire for Us –

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer (Lk. 22:15).

For communion to be intimate – there must be mutual desires between 2 parties one toward the other. It would not do for only one of the parties to be interested in the other and for the other to be something less than interested. Now we can understand our desire for Christ – we need Him. We're lost without Him. All our hopes and aspirations for heaven and for everlasting life are bound up in Him. It's no wonder we would desire Him.

But does He desire us? What does He gain by us? Why would He desire us? I don't suppose that's a question we'll ever be able to answer. Why does God love you or me? The answer can only be traced to His sovereign good pleasure. And in fact that's the answer that is given in Deut. 7:7,8

The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen.

He loved you because He loved you. The devil would try to convince you otherwise. How could God love sinners that are so unlovely? – he would ask. Look at how easily you fall into sin. Look at how often you fall into sin. Look at how far short you come of His glory even at your best! Could God really love you? Would God actually desire you?

And the answer to the devil's accusations comes not through denying what he may say about our sinfulness. We can't deny that. But we answer him and we assure our own hearts by looking to the bread and realizing anew what it symbolizes. *This is my body which is broken for you* – Christ says.

His body was broken for you. A crown of thorns was pressed into His brow for you. His back was subjected to the lashes of the Roman whip for you. Nails were driven into His hands and His feet for you. Surely He must love you.

And then we look at the cup which brings to our remembrance His shed blood. The blood that He sweat in the garden came forth for you. The blood that came forth from His side when that side was pierced with a spear came forth for you. His broken body and His shed blood testify to His love for you.

And we may look upon these elements with awe – not that we worship the elements in themselves but we see beyond them with the eye of faith the things that they symbolize – His body and His blood and we should be moved at once to exclaim – *how He must love me!*

Or as a hymn expresses it – *What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what wondrous love is this O my soul? What wondrous love is this that led the Lord of bliss to shed His very blood for my soul, for my soul, to shed His very blood for my soul.*

John 15:13 *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* That's a rather incredible statement for Christ to make isn't it? The One who rules and reigns over all condescends to call us His friends – and condescends much lower still to die for us!

And what is the message behind His death – His broken body and His shed blood? *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. 5:7,8).

And so the way is made for intimate communion with Christ, our risen, glorified King. *In the way of thy judgments O LORD, have we waited for thee.* And the testimony of the gospel in this respect is that the handwriting of ordinances that was against us that went contrary to us has been blotted out – Christ took it out of the way, in an act of judgement, nailing it to His cross (Col. 2:14).

An impenetrable barrier therefore has been removed that blocked us from knowing any kind of fellowship with God. But because He's made provision our desire is toward Him. And in the making of that provision He's proven beyond all possible doubt that His desire is toward us.

The order is important let's remember that we love Him because He first loved us (1Jn. 4:19). And now it is our blessed privilege to demonstrate our love toward Him by remembering Him in the way that He has ordained.

May our experience of Him be such that we may say in the words of our text – *in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.*

And may we in turn with the hearing of the heart perceive Him saying to our souls – *With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.* And may we be reminded by the elements, that following that Passover He did suffer. And so we may

hear from His words and perceive from His actions in suffering that He loved us all the way to Calvary's cross.

If your desire is for Him and you are convinced by His words and actions that His desire is for you then you can truly expect that in remembering Him around this table you will enter into intimate communion with Him.