

The Horizontal Aspect of the Cross in Communion

by Jeremy Utley

This sermon emphasizes the importance of self-reflection and judging ourselves rightly before coming to the communion table. It highlights the communal aspect of communion, focusing on the shared participation in the body and blood of Christ. The message encourages a deep longing to share in communion with fellow believers, mirroring Jesus' desire for unity and purity within the church. It challenges individuals to have a genuine concern for the welfare and spiritual growth of others, aiming for a body of believers without spot or blemish, reflecting the love for God and neighbor.

Scripture: Luke 22:14, 1 Corinthians 10:16, Ephesians 5:27, Philippians 2:19, Mark 12:30

Topics: "Self-Reflection", "Unity in Communion"

Description

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Transcript

As we were preparing to approach the Lord's table, I wanted to mention a verse that's been on my heart a little bit. It's from Luke chapter 22, if you wanna turn there. I was blessed to hear from Bobby, 1 Corinthians 11 31.

If we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. And whenever we come to the communion table, we probably often think of that, we have to judge ourselves. It says, if you judge yourselves, you won't be judged.

I wanted to mention, and it is also written. We also heard about how the truth is like two wings of a bird. If you only have one wing, you'll fly in circles.

And one of the truths that I've been blessed is to see that we emphasize in our church, which isn't a truth that's proclaimed much, and it has to do with communion. But if you look with me at Luke chapter 22,

here's an, it is also written in regards to communion, you could say, so to speak. In verse 14, it says, Luke 22 14, when the hour had come, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him.

And he said to them, I've earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. And what spoke to me, that verse has been on my heart the last day or so, because what spoke to me is, Jesus had a longing to eat this meal with his disciples. And yet, we can many times, when we approach the communion table, we can just say, it's just me and you, Lord.

And we don't have any regard for the disciples at the table. And what the Lord's been reminding me is, just like Jesus had a longing, I've eagerly desired to eat this meal with you. Can I say, even as I approach the communion table, it's probably pretty natural for us, and it's good to say, Lord, show me if there's any wicked way in me.

I wanna be cleansed. Definitely, we have to judge ourselves rightly, that's clear. And one of the things I believe, if we are seeking to be judged rightly, that the Lord wants to point out is, do you have a eager desire like Jesus did, to share this meal with his disciples? He had an earnest desire to eat together with his body.

And we can make the mistake of thinking, I only have one direction here in mind, whenever I'm partaking of the communion table. Yet, if you look with me at 1 Corinthians 10, one of the verses that we've learned, which I had never heard before, in connection to communion, and I'm so glad that I learned it here. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 16, is not the cup of blessing, which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ, is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ.

Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, and we all partake of one bread. And it's good to know that we don't partake of communion individually in our home. Have you ever had communion individually in your home? If you, the only time I ever have is when we've been at a church meeting on Zoom, right? And it's kind of weird.

I mean, we're together, but we're doing it individually, but communion is a communal activity. And in part, it's because that's how the Lord Jesus instituted it. He instituted it with his disciples.

But there's a sharing of one bread that we come together to share. And it's good to say, is my will set like yours, Lord? You, it says in Ephesians 5, he wanted to present to himself the church in all her glory, Ephesians 5, 27, without a spot or a wrinkle or a blemish or any such thing. That's Jesus' passion.

And the question that I feel as I think about being one bread, it's partaking of one bread with you all, of which I am one member of the body together with you, is do I have that same passion? Do I wanna present the church to Jesus Christ without spot or wrinkle? Or do I come to the community table and I say, I just care about my spots and my wrinkles. And I wanna be cleansed of my spots and my wrinkles. But increasingly, we should be seeking to have that same longing that Jesus had.

I want the church to be pure. I want the church to be radiant. I want the church to have no spots of sin or wrinkles of wrong priorities.

I have a longing for others too, just like Jesus did. And I love what Jesus said there in Luke 22. I've eagerly desired to share this meal with you.

And I feel that way today, brothers and sisters. I've eagerly desired to share this meal with you. And just like we think about the communion table as a way to renew our vows to the Lord, so to speak, to renew our commitment, to renew our desire to walk the way of the cross, hopefully it's also an opportunity for us to renew our vows.

I wanna do it in the context of this church body with these brothers and sisters. And part of what it means here is I want to present others, every brother and sister complete in Christ. I wanna have a longing for the church to be made pure, not in a judgmental way, not that I'm looking out to find spots or blemishes or wrinkles, but I wanna have a care, a care for others.

Paul said of Timothy, I don't have anyone else. If you look with me at Philippians chapter two, I've often thought I wanna be like this young brother that Paul mentions here in Philippians chapter two in verse 19. He says, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly so that I may be encouraged when I learn of your condition because why does he wanna send Timothy? I have no one else who's like me of kindred spirit.

And how is Paul who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare? Because anybody else I could send, they have their own interests and they aren't focused on the interest of Jesus Christ. But Timothy, whose interest was Jesus Christ, when I come to the communion table, my interest is Jesus Christ. He was the way the interest in Jesus Christ, the interest of Jesus Christ was manifested was he would be genuinely concerned for them.

And as we come together to the communion table, it's good to say, I wanna be as much as I have a longing to be pure of any spot or blemish myself. Let me have that same passion for the church of Jesus Christ. That his whole bride, his whole body would be pure and blameless and spotless.

Just like when the lawyer came to Jesus and he said, hey, what's the greatest command? And Jesus said, well, there's two, you can't separate them. One is love the Lord with all your heart and all your strength and all your mind. And the other is like it, love your neighbors just like you love yourself.

And we can think the highest form of self-love, if I really love myself as a Christian, what should that mean? That I love Jesus with all my heart. And what does it mean to love my neighbors and my brothers and sisters as myself in the context of the church? That I want them to love the Lord with all their heart and mind and strength. The two are inextricably connected.

Just like we've heard, like the cross has a vertical direction and a horizontal. We come together to the communion table. We always rightly think about the vertical.

Let's not neglect the horizontal either. That's what the Lord had laid on my heart. We aren't doing this as disembodied members of the body.

Fingers thrown over there, wrists chopped off and in the front yard. No, we're coming together as a body. And the body is marked by a care for itself, a longing to build itself up.

And so even as we come to the table, definitely not with a spirit of judgment or anything like that, but as with the spirit of Lord, make me love your church like you do. Give me that same longing you had, the same longing that you had that first communion night. I eagerly desire to share, to be one of spirit with you all in my longing to walk in purity with the Lord.

I pray that the Lord would help us with that.

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