

**Text: I Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:17-29**

**Title: “Table Manners”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Before I get started this morning I want to tell you about a new sermon series that I will begin two weeks from today and that will climax with our Easter celebration. The new series is entitled “Heaven ... Really?” There’s a new movie coming out in a few weeks called “Is Heaven for Real?” and it’s about a little boy who supposedly died and went to heaven. He came back and told his parents the things that he saw. People are obviously very interested in heaven, and the thankfully God’s Word tells us everything we need to know about heaven ... more than any human can ever tell us. We’ll have a special guest with us on Easter that will bring the series to a climax. His name is Brooks Douglass who produced and starred in a powerful movie called “Heaven’s Rain.” So begin now inviting your friends. We’ll have a great time together studying what the Bible says about the place the place we were made for.

**ILLUSTRATION – PHOTO OF FORMAL DINING PLACE SETTING** – Have you ever been to a really nice restaurant or to an elegant dinner where you sat down to a table that looked something like this. Now maybe you’re used to eating meals on a TV tray and the most you would have is a plate for your food, a glass for your drink, and a fork to eat with. If you were having pizza you didn’t even have the fork. But now you sit down to a setting that has 3-4 different forks and 3-4 knives and a couple of spoons. Maybe you jump in and start eating and you look around and realize that you’ve started off eating your salad with the fork that was supposed to be used for your dessert. Or you grabbed a glass of water only to realize that it was the glass that really belonged to the person sitting next to you. Well those occasions may not come around very often, depending on your lifestyle, but it pays to learn some table manners, doesn’t it.

Well the same thing is true when it comes to the Lord’s Supper. This morning we’re going to share together in the Lord’s Supper. It’s an opportunity to go back to a sacred moment when some very important things happened.

- It’s a time to remember what happened on the Cross two thousand years ago when Jesus died for our sins.
- It’s a time reflect on the meaning of the Cross. There using the symbols of bread and wine, Jesus talked about His death, and how it would accomplish forgiveness of our sins.
- And it’s a time to renew our commitment to the Lord.

Now since the Lord’s Supper is a very important part of the worship of the church, God gave us some instructions in His Word as to how we are to go about worshipping at the table of the Lord’s Supper ... table manners. One of those places is in I Corinthians 10:14-17. Turn there with me. The Corinthian church had some problems with their table manners ... how they were behaving when they came together for the Lord’s Supper. It had been about thirty or more years since Jesus had first established the Lord’s Supper. And the practice had been passed along. But they had forgotten how they were supposed to behave at the Lord’s Supper. To get started let’s read I Corinthians 10:14-17.

There’s more to the Lord’s Supper than most of us realize. In fact, it’s easy to not take it seriously. But in the Lord’s Supper there’s something about:

## 1. OUR APPRECIATION (I Corinthians 10:16)

Notice that in v.16 Paul calls the Lord's Supper the "cup of thanksgiving." Remember that the Lord's Supper was born out of the Jewish Passover observance when Jesus ate with His disciples on the night before He was crucified. In the Passover observance Jews would drink from the cup at various times. The "cup of thanksgiving" was the third cup which Jesus, on the night prior to his death, reinterpreted to point to the shedding of his blood on the cross. So this became synonymous with the Lord's Supper. It was a time of thanksgiving and of blessing the Lord for what He did for us at the Cross.

The Lord's Supper is also about...

## 2. OUR CONNECTION (I Corinthians 10:16-17)

In the Lord's Supper, a special connection happens. In the first place, in the Lord's Supper we are connecting or participating with the Lord Jesus. In a very real way He is present in our sharing in this celebration.

**1 Corinthians 10:16 - 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?**

The word for "participation" is *koinonia*. It means "fellowship" or "sharing." So when we take the bread or the juice, in a very real way we are connecting with the Lord. Note: There is nothing magical about the elements of the Lord's Supper that are actually the body and the blood of Jesus. They are symbols, but very important symbols.

**ILLUSTRATION** – When we look at the picture of a loved one or friend we can remember and have feelings of love for them. And the Lord's Supper is like looking at a picture of our Lord. But there's this difference. Our loved ones or friends don't know what we are thinking when we look at their picture. It's not the same as actually being in their presence. But when we look at this picture of the Lord's Supper Jesus knows what we are thinking and He draws near to us as we draw near to Him and give thanks to Him for what He has done.

A spiritual connection is established with the One we worship. This is the context of I Corinthians 10 where Paul is talking about pagan worship and idolatry, and the connection those worshippers have with demons.

**I Corinthians 10:20 – "No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons."**

"Participants" is the same word as in v.16 ... ones having fellowship. Some of the members of the church in Corinth were guilty of not just attending pagan functions; but they also actually took part in the pagan worship. And Paul said that they were actually participating with, sharing in and connecting with demons.

So when we share together in the Lord's Supper we are connecting with Jesus.

But there's not just a spiritual connection with the Lord Jesus in His death. There's also a spiritual connection with the people with whom we share the Lord's Supper.

**ILLUSTRATION** - There's a part of the symbolism of the Lord's Supper that we miss because of the way that most churches observe it, particularly the "bread." When we distribute the bread, we hand you little crackers of unleavened bread. If you look at them carefully you'll see that they are miniature wafers ... little squares. This is largely a matter of convenience for us. The same is true of the juice. We each will hold miniature cups from which we will drink the juice symbolizing the blood of Christ shed for us.

But when Jesus shared the meal with His disciples on the night of his betrayal and arrest, the night before His crucifixion, He did so in the customary Jewish manner of observing the Passover meal. The bread they ate all came from the same "loaf." **SHOW MATZO LOAF.** And they drank from a common cup. **SHOW CUP.**

Paul explained that there was an underlying meaning to the Lord's Supper that flowed out the primary meaning of Christ's death in His body on the Cross. The Church is the Body of Christ. And when we observe the Lord's Supper, we are participating and connecting with one another.

**I Corinthians 10:17 – "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."**

There is *individuality* to our salvation. And there is *commonality* to our salvation. We have a personal relationship with Christ, but the instant that God saved us the Bible says that we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Instantly my individual faith becomes a common faith with all other true believers. There's no such thing as a stand-alone believer.

It's no wonder that in the OT and the NT one of the powerful images used of the life shared by the people of God is a feast or a banquet.

**ILLUSTRATION** – When our family gets together for a meal it's noisy occasion. There is food being passed back and forth; there's laughter and sometimes a little debate about something. We're all eating food that comes out of the same pot or the same dish. We're sharing together, and it's a powerful and special thing.

In the same way the Lord's Supper is supposed to tighten our bonds of unity and fellowship. And if there's something wrong in a family, you can generally tell it at the dinner table. Again, the same is true with the Lord's Supper. **Turn to I Corinthians 11:17-22. Read passage.**

Paul talks about what happened at what was called their "agape feast." They would come together regularly to eat a meal together ... like a pot-luck dinner. At the end they would probably participate in the Lord's Supper. But what ended up happening is that there was such selfishness in the church that some would arrive early and start eating and drinking. When the others arrived there was no food left for them, and the others were already stuffed with food, and perhaps even drunk. So when

it came to sharing in the Lord's Supper it was just a sham. And Paul chastises them, "Your meetings do more harm than good. Observe some table manners. Remember the connection you share with each other, as well as with the Lord."

So when we come to the table there should be appreciation and connection, but there is also...

### **3. OUR PROCLAMATION (I Corinthians 11:23-26)**

Baptism proclaims the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. And the Lord's Supper also proclaims the Lord's death and all that His death accomplished for us in our redemption. Jesus instituted this observance for the church to insure that the Gospel would always be central in all we do. This is why baptism and the Lord's Supper is only for those who have openly professed their faith in Jesus Christ for the gift of eternal life.

Paul goes on to explain. Read I Corinthians 11:23-26.

So let's think about that as we share in the Lord's Supper.

Then finally there's something here about...

### **4. OUR EXAMINATION (I Corinthians 11:27-29)**

There's more going on in the Lord's Supper than most of us truly realize. This is serious business. **That's why it says in vv.27-29 ... read text.**

So their attitude and their actions were sinful when they treated others in this selfish way at the church gatherings. They were supposed to put aside their own selfish desires and focus on the needs of others, but some had failed at this. And when they acted this way they were not only sinning against their brothers and sisters, they were sinning against the Lord's body and blood.

So they were to examine themselves ... test their attitudes and their actions. If we don't do this, we invite the judgment of the Lord. You see if we test and judge ourselves in this way, the Lord doesn't have to. But if we don't, the Lord will discipline us. This is serious business.

So before we begin to take the Lord's Supper together I want us to have some time to examine ourselves.

- Have you been guilty of acting in a selfish way toward others?
- Have you hurt others by things you did or said but haven't confessed to them and sought their forgiveness?