

Mr Ian Macrae - Do This in Remembrance of Me

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 00] Friends, we can read again these verses that are on the screen from verse 23, the chapter red, verse 21, verse 23 down to 26.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

And the same way also we took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

And especially, with the Lord's help, we like to think of the words that are more or less repeated in verses 24 and 25, do this in remembrance of me.

And Thomas asked me to fill in today a number of months ago now, I think it was, I don't think anybody could have predicted that providence would take the course it has, and that he would be moving on from Carly.

[1 : 20] Certainly not the circumstances I expected to be here in. And I'm fairly confident that all of you will look back over the last, I think it's been four years or so since Thomas came, with fondness and with gratitude for his ministry amongst you.

And it's right and proper to look back for a ministry with gratitude and to remember what your minister and his family has meant to you as a congregation.

But what I hope we can do today is to focus not on Thomas and his ministry, but on the focus of his ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ and the cross of Christ.

What we have here in 1 Corinthians 11 is Paul writing to the church in Corinth to correct some of the errors that they've brought into their practice.

The church is being torn apart by divisions and heresies and some of the problems around how they're remembering the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. They've turned the Lord's Supper into a feast where the wealthy members of the church are eating and drinking and often eating and drinking too much, whilst the poor folk in the church are left out.

[2 : 44] The Lord's Supper has become a sort of status symbol in Corinth and Paul wants to make sure they understand what they're doing is wrong. Paul's telling us how Christ's death is to be remembered.

We've got three actions in this section relating to remembering his death and we'll go through them, the first and the third really just in a couple of words and focusing on the second of the actions and we'll try to see something of what the Lord's Supper means as a memorial of Christ's death.

Just before we get into the text, don't think that these verses are only for Christians because although the detail for how the Lord's Supper is to be carried out clearly is an issue for Christians mainly, what these verses have to say is relevant to everyone because whether you're aware of it or not, the entirety of your life from conception to death, Christ's cross is at the centre of it and your reaction to Christ's cross is at the centre of it.

I hope that as we go through these verses we'll see that to be the case. The first action that we have here is participating.

Verse 16 of the previous chapter says this, the cup of blessing that we bless is it not a participation in the blood of Christ, the bread that we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ.

[4 : 23] Is this word participation, it's translated as communion in the King James Version, it's especially interesting because apparently the Greek word that's used here means partnership and that word I think paints a beautiful picture because here's Paul explaining what the Lord's Supper should be like and he's saying that sinners are participating, are in partnership, are having

fellowship in the Lord's Supper and that's true in two ways.

It's true because God's people who sit at the Lord's table and take part in the Lord's Supper are participating with each other but even more wonderfully friends, they're participating with Christ. They're in partnership with each other, they're in partnership with Christ. That's what takes place at the Lord's table. Well why does Paul call this the Lord's Supper?

And I think I'm right in saying it's the only place that it's called this. Wouldn't the Lord's feast be a more appropriate name given that it's commemorating a King?

Well I could be wrong but I wonder if Paul calls it this because a Supper is an ordinary meal. It's something with which everyone was familiar in their daily routine.

[5 : 56] The poor don't have feasts do they? But in a spiritual sense it's only the poor who are invited to this supper.

The church in Corinth has turned it into a feast for the noble and the wealthy but Paul is reminding them that a supper is a simple thing and it's something that's for everybody.

And then the Supper is for sinners. You might think that you aren't good enough to sit at the Lord's table or that you aren't worthy to sit at the Lord's table.

But if you're thinking that you know what you're right. But if you're thinking that you're missing the point. Because only one person has ever been good enough and only one person has ever been worthy.

And he's the one who invites you and I to come and participate with him because he is good enough and because he is worthy.

[7 : 04] Remember what he said, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. It's not an invitation to the strong or the talented or the successful or the self-righteous but to poor sinners.

God's family is made up of saved sinners and saved sinners only and that's who is to participate in this memorial.

Then the second action is remembering, participating and then remembering. Well why do we need a memorial?

Why do we need to be reminded of this? We need a memorial because there's a chance we'll forget. And isn't there something far wrong friends when we need a reminder of what Christ has done for us?

It's human frailty to not value something as we ought but God in His mercy and because He knows our weaknesses and failings He's given us this reminder.

[8 : 13] But this isn't a normal natural forgetfulness that Paul's talking about. He's not talking about forgetting to pick up something from the shop or forgetting to reply to a text from your mother.

That's not what he's talking about here. He's talking about a sinful forgetfulness. A deliberate forgetfulness that blocks out the most important things.

The American philogen Robert Rabond explains it like this. He says Christ's summons to remember is addressing not so much the defect of man's memory where may he forget something he has learned but the unbelief and ungratefulness in which the heart neglects and allows to be superseded what should never be superseded.

Nothing should come before Christ in your life or in mine and your thoughts or in mine in your heart or in mine. But friends how often does sin lift something or someone or your emotions or your responsibilities, your duties up above Christ?

And perhaps even worse how often does sin lower Christ in your heart, in your mind, in your opinion to such an extent that he's below so many other cares and concerns?

[9 : 40] Well if that's the case we desperately need this reminder don't we? And the bread and wine used as symbols in the Lord's Supper they're so familiar aren't they?

The bread of course in our tradition it's usually cut before the service. In other places it's broken piece by piece and handed to the person before they take it.

This is my body broken for you. But either way the bread is broken in front of the congregation to show that Christ's body was broken physically.

Christ's death wasn't peaceful. It was a brutal anguish, terrific death and the broken bread is a physical reminder of that.

Just as the blood red wine in the cup is a physical reminder that blood flowed from his body as he hung from the cross.

[10:34] Well the Lord's Supper is like a diamond with dozens maybe hundreds of facets, little faces that you can see. We can mention four of those facets, four things that reminds us of.

It's a reminder firstly of Christ's death. Now that is so obvious why even mentioning it?

Well because Christ's death is at the centre of Christianity, it's at the centre of what you believe if you're a Christian.

And if you're not a Christian here today Christ's death is at the centre of your accountability, your responsibility, your eternal destination.

We talk about Christ's death sometimes in such an off-handed way as something that we're so familiar with but there's nothing simple or straightforward about it. And the Lord's Supper is a reminder of different aspects of Christ's death.

[11:39] For example it's a reminder of the horror of Christ's death. Think about who exactly died on that cross at Calvary 2,000 odd years ago.

It's the one who provides for all of your needs every day. He's the one being commemorated by the bread and wine. The one who gives you life is the one whose death is being remembered.

The one who never did wrong or harm is the one being punished. Whose death are you remembering? The death of the Son of God in human nature.

It is horrific that the one who was and is and always will be perfect and holy died.

It is horrific that there was a separation between the Father and the Son during the hours of darkness, whatever exactly that entailed. It is horrific that the King of Glory was handled and deathed with as if he was nothing more than a common criminal.

[13:00] And it's horrific that your Thun and mine is what nailed him to the cross. The Lord's Supper reminds us of the horror of Christ's death.

It also reminds us friends of the reality of Christ's death. It's real bread and real wine that we use, isn't it? There's nothing mystical about them.

And just as you can actually see and touch and taste and smell these elements, they remind you that Christ actually, literally, historically died.

When you see a gravestone or a memorial, you understand that it's there to remind you of someone who actually lived or something that actually took place.

In the war cemeteries in France and Belgium, maybe some of you have been, there are literally thousands of gravestones without a name.

[14:06] They just say a soldier of the Great War known unto God. Nobody knows who's buried in the grave, but God knows.

And when you look at those graves, we've no idea who it is, we've never met him, but we know somebody's there. And even though you've never seen him, seen God, even though you've ever known him in a physical, literal sense, this memorial reminds you that these things actually took place.

And then this is a reminder as well of the anguish of Christ's death. This was no easy death if there is such a thing.

This wasn't someone peacefully slipping away in his sleep. This wasn't a death surrounded by comfort sitting with friends and family or sitting around.

This, the romance, youth crucifixion because there was a way of publicly humiliating, disgracing the victim with an agonising, brutal and drawn out death.

[15:17] There was no difference for Christ. This isn't what he says in a prophecy in Psalm 22, we've sung some of these words.

I'm poured out like water, my heart is like wax, my strength is dried up like a poacher. They've pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones.

Christ's anguish on the cross was immeasurable, even in a physical sense. We used to hear, and some of you will have heard this often, I'm sure, over the year, the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings.

And although this is undoubtedly true, I think that at risk that that was minimising his physical suffering. And I don't think it's right to do that. Because if there was no need or purpose for Christ to suffer physically, he wouldn't have gone through such extreme physical suffering.

I remember hearing the late Lord of Alayne Cloud, the minister from Stornoway, many years ago saying that thirst was a sure sign of physical pain.

[16 : 34] Whatever it's put after this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfil the scripture, I thirst. Well, what scripture was he fulfilling when he said, I thirst?

Well, he was fulfilling Psalm 22, my tongue sticks to my jaws. Psalm 69, for my thirst, they gave me sour wine to drink. But according to Wadowalek, if I remember this right, and I think I do, there's more to it than that.

Because he maintained that this phrase, I thirst, was fulfilling every single prophecy relating to the physical suffering of Christ.

Because thirst is a sign of extreme physical agony. Well, I don't know for sure if that details right or wrong.

But regardless, this memorial brings us a reminder of the physical anguish of Christ's death. It reminds us too of the spiritual anguish of Christ's death.

[17 : 39] We agree with this statement, that Christ's entire life on earth was full of spiritual anguish. How can we suggest that Christ had spiritual anguish throughout his life when he had perfect fellowship with the Father throughout his life, other than those hours of darkness?

Well, remember how Habakkuk describes God, you who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.

And that's true for all three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But friends Christ had no option but to look at sin and wickedness and evil all his life on earth.

What was that like? What was that like for him? Well, we can't come close to understanding it. But you know yourself how it makes you feel when you see or hear wickedness or sin, even though you're a sinner, there's a great phrase in Gaelic, hachur girur l'iran.

And you know what that means? It sends a shudder through you to see evil, to see wickedness.

And that's when you are a sinner yourself, capable of committing evil and wickedness.

[18 : 58] Well if that's the case, wouldn't it be infinitely worse for the one who's perfect and pure and holy to be surrounded by sin and by the effects of sin every minute of every hour of every day he was on earth?

Is it right to say that his life was full of spiritual anguish? Well I think in a sense it is. But just in passing, if you're a Christian here today shouldn't that give you an enormous amount of comfort because if Christ suffered during his life as a result of sin, the sin around him of course, there was none in him.

Shouldn't you expect to have spiritual anguish too as a result of your own sin and the sin of others? He knows firsthand what it's like.

But Christ's most extreme spiritual anguish wasn't a result of being surrounded by sin. It was a result of being made sin.

The result of Christ being made sin for us was his being forsaken by the Father, a separation in an eternal union. And who can understand that?

[20 : 20] God forsaken of God as Luther put it. And it took place when the world was shrouded in unnatural darkness, no doubt the unnatural darkness was to reflect this horror that was going on in the Godhead.

Now I'm not going to take it upon myself to try to explain what was going on. But just to see this in connection with it, the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the spiritual anguish associated with Christ's death.

It's a reminder that God the Father turned his back on Christ. And friends, it's a reminder that because Christ suffered being forsaken by the Father, that God will never forsake anyone who trusts him and puts their faith in him.

The Lord's Supper is a reminder of Christ's death and everything associated with it. And the second thing the Lord's Supper reminds us of, this takes in part of what we said about his death as Christ's work.

Think about everything that's part of Christ's work preaching, healing, teaching, leading by example, suffering, dying. The elements used in the Lord's Supper aren't just a reminder of Christ's death, they're a reminder of his works of provision and creation.

[21 : 38] Because he's the one who created every good thing. He's the provider of every gift you receive. James says that every good and perfect gift is from above. Even in the bread and wine were reminded of that element of Christ's work.

But it's also a reminder of his work as a shepherd. Well, how's that so? Remember what Isaiah says, all we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned everyone to his own way. As a result of going astray and in order to rescue your situation and mine, he, God, can't lead on him Christ the iniquity of us all.

Christ in his death is going out to find the sheep who've gone astray and gather them to himself, bringing them all together as one flock. And just as a shepherd protects and feeds and provides for his flock, so Christ does the same for his people in the Supper.

The Lord Supper reminds us of Christ's work. Then thirdly, and again connected with his death it all is, the Lord Supper reminds us of Christ's identity.

[22 : 50] Now you must never lose sight friends. That the one being remembered is God, the second person of the Trinity in his holiness and power and glory and perfection.

The second person of the Trinity in human nature in his obedience and humility and perfection. And you should be amazed when you think that the bread and wine represent Christ, the one who's always existed, the one who created the entire universe and everything in it, the one who had perfect fellowship with the Father and who laid it aside for a time in order to save sinners.

Does that fill you with all that this is the one? This is the identity of the one who did all that for you? And in himself Christ is pure. But this reminds us that he became impure. In himself Christ is worthy of praise and worship, but this reminds us that he was cursed and despised and mocked.

You could almost look on his death at the cross and say that seeing him hanging there on the cross bleeding broken, that there's no sign there of a glorious identity.

[24 : 04] But friends, when you remember him in the Lord's suburb and when you understand who he is and what he has done for you, you can't but see his glorious identity there on the cross.

It reminds us of a fourth thing as well. It reminds us of Christ's resurrection. He would be wrong for us to think about his death as if that was the end of the matter because Paul says about the Lord's Supper you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

There's a day coming when there's going to be no need of bread or wine because the one they represent will be with you himself.

Christ promises to return and so you and I should participate in the Lord's Supper when we have the opportunity with joy and hope and certainty. It's amazing how God works things out and how He works them out even when they confound and contradict human logic.

Hugh Marden says this. He says that it is the death of him who is the life, who remained the life even in dying and who by death became to us the resurrection.

[25 : 25] The life becomes by death the resurrection. And friends if you're a Christian you have a part in that. Well of those are some of the things that this memorial should bring to mind.

What effect should it have on you? What's the impact? Well surely it should increase your love for Christ who suffered and died in your place and for your sake.

Surely you should appreciate more and more what he's done and that it's been done for you. Surely you should be grateful if you understand what he's done.

An obedience should run like a thread through your experience of the Lord's Supper. It's obedience that takes you there in the first place because it's a response to Christ's command to remember his death in this way and life long obedience should be the result of taking part.

Especially when we think about the obedience that Christ displayed in going to the cross for you. Does obedience to God mean never going wrong? Of course not.

[26 : 36] But it doesn't mean that when you or I go wrong it pains us because our overriding desire is to obey and please God.

And you can be revived and renewed and strengthened and reinvigorated and encouraged by taking part in the Lord's Supper. But notice friends that all of these things, all of these benefits can only, they're not found in the Supper itself.

They're received by taking part. Sitting back and watching is not enough. The participants don't just look at the elements.

They take them and feed upon Christ through them by faith. Blessing results from participation. There has to be obedience.

There has to be action to eat the bread and drink the wine. But there has to be discernment as well to understand what it all means. Malcolm Eclean the minister and grave friar says this.

[27 : 36] The Lord's Supper does not give grace through a mere participation. Drinking the bread and drinking the wine without faith in Christ is not what is required. The bread and wine are symbols and participants must have communion with what is symbolized before the Supper becomes a means of grace.

Who should participate? Who should remember Christ's death, work, identity and resurrection? And everybody who has fellowship with Christ by faith and every saved sinner has fellowship with him even if you're not always aware of it.

We often hear the words at the start of verse 28 quoted that a person let a man examine himself. But too often the quote is left there. Because there's a purpose for this examination and the rest of the verse explains the point of it.

That person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. This self examination to see if you're a saved sinner not as even good enough, it's to be a door that opens the Christians way to the Lord's table.

Not a wall to keep you away. But what if you're here today and you know you're not a Christian?

[29 : 05] Well if that's the case it's maybe even more important for you to remember these things that it is for us Christians. You need to remember that Christ actually, literally, historically died an agonising death on the cross.

You need to remember Christ's work. You need to remember that it was the Son of God who did all those things. Not a fraud, not an imaginary character, not somebody from legend.

You need to remember friends that he didn't deserve to suffer and die, that he suffered and died willingly so that whoever believes will be saved. That's you.

You are whoever. There's no limit on that word. You need to remember Christ's resurrection that he's still alive, that he's reigning over heaven and earth and that he's going to come again.

Why do you need to remember these things? What if you don't? What if you ignore everything you've heard? I don't just mean today.

[30 : 21] Or if you just want to forget everything about Christ. Well, those who don't remember Christ and what he's done, those who don't come to him for salvation in this life will never forget Christ and what he's done in hell for all eternity.

And there they would do anything to forget about him. They'll never forget every opportunity they had to believe and be saved.

You're going to remember the Lord's death for all eternity, one way or another we all are. A friend makes sure that it's with him at the eternal feast in heaven rather than in the mothory and suffering and regret of hell.

Participating, remembering and then just in a word, the third action we have is proclaiming. You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

While you're proclaimed to the church that you're a Christian, you're proclaimed to the world looking on that there's something different about you. You proclaim that you're part of a family in our tradition particularly where those who are at the Lord's table sit at the front.

[31 : 51] There's a clear division. You're showing you're together. You're eating and drinking the same thing. You're even drinking from the same cup usually. It's a gathering that proclaims God's forgiveness and His mercy because that's what leads everyone to the table.

If you feel weak, if you feel far from God in your Christian life, you have to go to the table with your brothers and sisters and receive strength and grace to help there.

By participating you show that Christ died for you. It's a form of preaching the gospel and because it's a form of preaching the gospel you're proclaiming something to everybody, to those who aren't yet Christians.

To proclaiming there's something different. I'm sure that those who watch, they understand something of what it means.

They understand something that something is going on, something has happened in the lives of those who are taking part. That there's meaning in the bread and the wine.

[32 : 57] That in some way you're partaking of Christ. The Lord Supper is a corporate witness, not an individual one.

Malcolm McClain again, he says that the Christians meeting together illustrates the reconciliation to God through the death of Christ and the reconciliation to one another in Christ.

Isn't that a beautiful thought? That when you come together to remember Christ's death, you're proclaiming your unity to God through his death and your unity to each other in Christ. When it comes to partaking, to taking part in the Lord Supper, remember friends these three actions, participating, remembering and proclaiming and that you're doing it with Christ in Christ, on Christ and about Christ.

But one last thing, we're not to leave it to certain times of the year to remember Christ's death.

[34 : 10] It should be a focus at all times. Now I know that the ministry has just come to an end for you here in Carly at the cross at its centre, at its focus.

And that should be the case for each one of us every single day. We hope and pray that that will be the case for each one of us today and every day moving on from here.

Let's pray. We ask, gracious Lord, that you would help us to remember and not forget, that you would help us to value and not ignore, that you would help us to understand and not disregard what happened on the cross of Calvary all those years ago.

We give thanks that we have the Lord's Supper to remind us.

We acknowledge that so often we forget what has taken place on the value of it. We pray, O Lord, that for each one of us, that we would remember all that has happened, all that it means, and that we would value more and more the work and identity and the death and the resurrection of Christ and all that that means.

[35 : 35] And for any O Lord in here today who haven't closed in with you, who haven't come to know you as their own Saviour, we pray that you would come into their lives and work in their hearts and that they would come to put their faith and their trust in you for time and for eternity, for Christ's sake.

Amen.