

Exod 04-04-11a special

The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night. God has magnified his word above his name. This is Resurrection Sunday morning, the 11th of April, 2004.

We've gathered to celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ, his victory over sin, over death, over Satan. His place is now at the Father's right hand, where he will soon be standing up to descend from the heavens with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The dead in Christ will rise first, and then we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will rise to meet them in the air.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. That is our great hope. It is our expectation.

It is the literal fulfillment of everything that happened some 2,000 years ago on this occasion. We're going to look this morning at two aspects, two topics or two areas of thought that are suggested by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. At first, they may not seem to connect, but it will be my job to see that they do.

But as we do so, let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, to express our personal and individual acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love that he expressed, the sacrifice that he made on our behalf, and to prepare ourselves for the study of God's word. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for the fact that we have the privilege of addressing you as our Father. We have the privilege of representing ourselves before your throne.

We know that this is because of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love that you had for us, the love that he had for us in accomplishing your plan and purpose in saving us out of a lost and hopeless condition. When we were enemies, without hope, without you in the world, the Lord Jesus came and died for us. He emptied himself.

He took on the form of a servant. He became obedient even unto the death of the cross for the joy that was set before him. He endured the cross, despising the shame, and even now he is sitting at your right hand, interceding for us, representing us, reminding the angels, reminding not only the heavenly hosts, but the people on this earth that humanity has been made acceptable in your sight.

We are now, through him, qualified to dwell in your presence forevermore. We thank you for your word and for the truth that it reveals to us. We thank you that as Christians we are not left to blindly stumble through our lives.

You have given us guidance. You have given us the means of fulfilling your plan. You have given us divine strength through the presence of your Holy Spirit and the truth of your word.

We pray that our study this morning will move us toward the goal of maturity, will give us the wherewithal in our souls to think in a healthy and divinely oriented manner, that we can weigh factors, we can assign values, we can establish and observe our priorities and our goals in such a way that our lives will reflect your glory and will exploit the potential that has been created for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for not only his work on our behalf, but also that you raised him again and that it is that new life and victory over death that is the bright hope that we have for the eternal ages to come. Bless us as we study your word.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Our scripture reading this morning comes from the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians chapter 11, beginning in verse 17. We are going to look at two things this morning. One is the Lord's table, which was established as a commemoration and as something to be done until the Lord returns the night before Jesus was crucified.

We have come to associate communion or the Lord's supper with the physical elements that Jesus used as symbols on that night with his disciples, the bread and the cup. This passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, 17 and following, is a reminder of what those elements actually represent. Beginning at verse 17, the Apostle Paul writing to the believers in the church at Corinth says, in giving these instructions, I do not praise you.

What are these instructions? He has encouraged them to follow the Old Testament examples, the picture that was established by the nation of Israel in the passages such as we are studying in Exodus, to learn from their failures, to not make their mistakes, to flee from idolatry. He says in verse 18 of chapter 10, observe Israel after the flesh. Everything should be done to the glory of God.

He says in chapter 11, verse 1, imitate me. He says in verse 2 through 16, observe the structure of authority that God has established. It is pictured in head coverings in that day, the wife's acknowledgement of the husband's authority is the idea there.

He says, I am giving you these instructions and I am not praising you. This is not a warm, fuzzy, aren't you all doing a great job? Because, verse 17, you come together not for the better but for the worse. We talked Friday night about how God has gone out of his way to not establish rules and regulations for the conduct of worship in the New Testament church.

One of the criteria by which we figure out whether we are doing the right thing or not is, are we the better for having assembled? If we are the worse, we are doing it wrong. I cannot tell you

how many assemblies breed gossip and maligning and judging and mental attitude sins of every stripe and description because when people come together, it is not for better but for worse. And if you come away from any assembly of believers, including this one, worse than when you arrived, you shouldn't come.

You need to make some sort of change. Either get the group to change or abandon that group and go to one where when you leave, you are better off than when you came. The purpose of the assembling of ourselves together is to encourage one another to love and good works.

That is why we come together. You look at Ephesians, you look at Colossians, the assembly should come together decently and in good order and it should be for the better. We should come away encouraged, strengthened, with a more positive outlook, with the benefits of fellowship and the ministry of spiritual gifts that each of us has been given.

And if that doesn't happen, we need to, as they say, get out of dodge. Go to another group. Find where God can bless, where God can strengthen.

There are many, many assemblies. There are many, many pastors. There are as many different teaching styles as there are teachers.

It is no crime and it is no shame to realize that you have outgrown a pastor or outgrown a teacher and you need to move where you can be fed. I'm not encouraging anybody to leave, but it is a decision that all of us have made in the past at one point or another and may have to make again. This is the criteria, one of the criteria.

When you come together and it is not for the better but for the worse, there is a malady. There is something wrong that needs to be corrected. Hopefully, it can be done through the process of communication, of approach and say, you know, I think we are deficient in this area.

Is there something we can do about it? And we work together to heal. You know, the great thing about the human body, Christ compares the assembly of believers to a physical body, is that if you are in the process of injuring yourself, you lay your hand on something hot or you mash or cut or otherwise injure yourself, that happens at a distance from your brain. But there are intermediate parts of your body that make sure that your brain knows that you are in the process of injuring yourself.

We've all had the experience, I think, of having been numbed up for one reason or another, local surgery or most often the dental chair. We wind up having a part of our self numb and you know what happens if you don't get that feedback, if the intermediate route of that information gets blocked, you can chew your lip off, you can chew a hole in your cheek, you can do yourself a mischief when that mechanism is not functioning. And part of being decent and in good order, part of having an assembly that is better rather than worse, is good communication.

Give the body a chance to stop injuring itself and to do that, the individual parts of the body have to have communication all the way through. This was not happening in Corinth. Paul says,

look, first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you and I think this is partially true, is what he's saying.

I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you, there must be divisions so that those who are approved may be recognized among you. He says there is a kind of distinction within a body, you look at any group of human beings and you say, well, this is a family, when you look at a family, you say there is one family, but you look within it, you can make a distinction and say these are the adults, these are the children, right, and that's a healthy thing. And Paul is saying, you know, it isn't that there shouldn't be any sort of distinction in a group, it is necessary to distinguish your approved ones from the ones who are not.

You have to be able to identify leadership, you have to be able to identify elders, and there needs to be separation and division in the sense that there are those who are grown up and those who aren't. But, when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, and he's just kind of come out of the blue with the Lord's supper, it's not like it was a topic anywhere in the first ten and a half chapters here. He says, when you come together, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, because in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others, and one is hungry and another is drunk.

What, do you not have houses to eat and drink in, or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. He says, in your group, there are those who are approved, there are those who are mature and are doing the right thing, but there are others who are not. And when you come together, you are not eating the Lord's supper, and the implied finish of that sentence is, as you should be.

When you come together, you should be eating the Lord's supper, but you're not, because you're getting into, basically, food fights. People are jostling one another out of the way, elbowing each other out of the way, because the issue in coming together for your fellowship has become the food. And people are focused on the food, and boy, look at there, old Hannah brought her special roasted chicken, and I'm going to get me a piece of that.

You know, people are always getting the drumstick before I get up there. I'm going to get up there and get that drumstick, or whatever it may be. And because of this, each one is taking his own supper ahead of others.

One is hungry, another is drunk. He says, because of this, you are not eating the Lord's supper. Now notice, there is a lot more food involved here than just bread and wine.

There's an entire meal going on. I mean, you look at your typical observance of the Lord's table, you couldn't fill yourself up on the little crackers, and you'd have to get a whole bunch of those little bitty plastic cups, you know, to get drunk, even if it was real wine. This is not what is in view here.

What he's saying is, there is a fellowship of believers who should be coming together, and it should be for the better. People should come away strengthened and encouraged in every way. And he says, you're not.

And what has happened, the thing that is splitting and dividing and is the symbol of everything that's wrong in the group, is the way you treat each other when it's time to eat the physical food. This is something that you can see. Very difficult to see mental attitude sins, especially when people are good poker players.

You know, the best thing I ever got out of all of the bad music of the 70s was, they smile in your face, and all the time they're trying to take your place. Backstabbers. Remember that song? But this is what happens, you know, they smile in your face, but behind that smile, there's all kinds of machinations.

And this takes place, or can take place, in an unhealthy fellowship of believers. I honestly think we are small enough, and I'm unaware of any such goings on here, praise the Lord, but it does happen. And in other circles, other gatherings, which include believers, of which we may be a part, whether it's in our family or in other social contexts, it's not always the case that everyone is there, and you come away uplifted.

Many times you come away traumatized, and that's not the goal. So Paul says, when you come together, verse 20, in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper. You're eating some other kind of a supper.

You're eating the supper of Sam. You're eating the supper of fill in your name in the blank. And he says, this isn't as it should be.

If your focus in coming is just to eat and drink, why don't you do that in your own house? That's not the purpose of the assembly, is to give you a potluck meal. Then he goes in verse 23 to recount the only extended description that we have of a meal that the Lord Jesus was a part of. And this is the meal the night before he was betrayed and crucified.

I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you. The Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was betrayed, the night before he was crucified, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, take, eat.

This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. What is Paul's point in bringing it up in this context? Is he saying, now, y'all are doing the ritual of the Lord's table all wrong.

You need to all have one cup, or you need to break one piece of bread, or you need to sit in rows. Is he talking about the kind of observance that we have now? He is introducing this upper room meal as an example of self-sacrifice, as an example of selflessness. Their problem is selfishness in the assembly.

They're looking out for number one. What can I get out of, for example, the table laden with food? He said, take, this is my body, broken for you. In the same manner he took the cup.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. This used to just spook the willies out of me when I was young. And you get into your early teens and they say, okay, you're old enough now.

You can partake of the Lord's table, but do not partake in an unworthy manner. You're guilty of the body and blood. And you just, you might as well become a Catholic and start being worried about, you know, all kinds of purgatory.

So verse 28, let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks damnation. It says in the old King James, judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

What is Paul doing here? Why does he bring up the ceremonial observance that the Lord participated in and instituted with his disciples in the upper room? He says, look, the gathering together should be focused on Christ, not on one another. The focus should be on the Lord Jesus, not on ourselves. What is the Lord's body? Is it the bread or is it the assembly of believers? The church is the body of Christ.

How many times have we heard that? So to elbow aside or to treat with disrespect or to, in any other way, sin against a fellow member of the body is to disrespect the body of Christ. And Paul says this would be the same as disrespecting the words of the Lord when he says, this is my body which is broken for you. We think about his body on the cross and bearing our sins in his body on the tree and the veneration and the reverence.

I mean, we talked a little about the shroud of turn on Friday night. You think about just the second and third hand relic removed from the actual body and blood of the Lord and people get all in awe of that. And yet we are not in awe of the living body of Christ on this earth, which is the fellowship of believers.

This is Paul's point. This is why he brings up the Lord's table in this context. Many, many times when you observe the Lord's table, instead of taking it out of the gospels, the pastor will take it out of 1 Corinthians 11.

And we think, well, this is Paul telling the church how to do the Lord's table. He is using it as a teaching point. And he says, you know how precious the body and blood of Christ is that was broken for us, that was shed for us on the cross.

And yet you have the body of Christ assembled and disrespecting the one is no different than

disrespecting the other. And this, of course, is designed to shock and to sober and to give one a different view of fellow believers in the assembly so that you do not elbow people out of the way and make a pig of yourself. Of course, they can't make a pig of themselves if they're Jewish, can they? To gluttonize or to engage in selfish behavior in the assembly.

That's the idea. And because people do that, Paul says in verse 30, for this reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep. This is not because they weren't thinking the right thoughts when they drank the cup or ate the cracker.

The reason many are weak and sickly among them in the Corinthian church is because they are willfully, selfishly sinning against one another in the assembly. It is their lack of Christian love for one another that is the problem. It's not like, well, I wasn't in exactly the right frame of mind when I swallowed the grape juice or when I partook of the cracker and God's going to come down and blight you for not paying enough attention.

God is not concerned with the grape juice and the cracker. God is concerned with His children. What did Jesus say about someone who causes one of these little ones to stumble? It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea.

You just link that with verse 30 here. For this reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep. Many have been yanked out of the game.

Have been benched. It is the injunction to love one another as Christ loved us and gave himself for us that is in view. Verse 31.

If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. What sort of judging of ourselves should we do as we contemplate and concentrate on the body and blood of Christ at the cross? How do we treat the body of Christ? What is our level of love? What is our level of the very definition of love? It is sacrificial towards self and beneficial toward others. That is the emblem, the very emblem of selfless love is the upper room meal.

This is my body which is broken for you. This is my blood, the covenant in my blood that is shed for many. Remember me as you do this.

What is the motivation for love for one another? Because many times we are not worthy of love. The kind of love that we need is the love that is based in the integrity and character of the lover and not the lovee because we are poor objects and poor beneficiaries. Heaven help us if we had to earn the love of God.

We have no way to earn it. We have no attributes that God should love us. God's love for us is based on who and what He is.

And our love for one another should be based on who and what we are. And it is a divinely enabled love. It is the love of Romans 5.5. The love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

And so as we contemplate, as we partake of the elements of the Lord's table, it is not enough to simply sit there and kick ourselves and say, Oh, what a sinner am I? To consider the body of Christ is to consider the outworking of our love for God. If we love God, we will love one another for His sake. The motivation in loving one another is to reflect the love of God for us.

How many parables did Jesus tell you? Remember the parable of the master that forgave the servant a large debt? He had an underling servant who owed him a small debt, and he would not forgive him that small debt. And when the master heard about it, he said, You remember how I forgave you that big debt? Well, the deal's off. I'm reinstituting that debt.

I'm throwing you into debtor's prison until you pay every farthing. God cares about how we treat one another and the level of our love for one another. So if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord so that we may not be condemned with the world. What is the problem in the world? It is all about number one. It is all about getting ahead.

It is all about me, myself, and I, the great trinity of the unbeliever that is worshipped and that is made into a religion. If I like it, if it makes me feel good, then it's okay. This is my standard of morality.

This is my standard of ethics. And we do not want to be condemned with the world on that basis. We have to have a standard that revolves around God and His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Therefore, verse 33, My brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. Consider others better than yourselves. Look out for one another.

Put the interests of others ahead of yourself. This is the very definition of love. It is not a warm, gushy feeling.

It is not a smile and a sort of happiness that comes at the very thought of another person. It is a policy. And we can establish a policy that has nothing to do with the object.

Hopefully, we have people that we love because of their characteristics and qualities. And it doesn't mean that we are completely blind to whatever attributes and wonderful things there are about a person. But the policy that we have of love does not depend on those things any more than love ought to depend on someone's appearance.

You see Barbie and Ken get married when they are 21. And then the lady gets some kind of flesh-eating bacteria and her face goes away. And the guy says, oh, I can't handle it.

And he divorces her because the attraction was, I love you for what you look like. Or you got to go to extreme makeover because things started kind of shifting and moving and bulging and all teeth got loose and so on. And so what is the great motivation for that? In many cases, it is I

want to recapture the look and those qualities that attracted my wife or my husband in the first place.

And it is a love based on this superficial thing. God says there is a greater love. There is a love that is a policy that is based on who and what you are as a lover.

And the great thing about that love is it's just like God's love for us. God's love for us does not change whether we are faithful or faithless. God's policy toward us can change.

And his love may be expressed in discipline rather than in blessing. But God never stops loving us. He loves us because of Christ.

And we should love one another because we love God, because we love the Lord Jesus, because love is sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others. We do not lose the obligation to love because someone fails or because someone becomes unlovely. We love, the scripture says, because he first loved us.

And if you have the word him in your Bible there, you can scratch it out. It's in italics and most good translations anyway. It doesn't say we love him because he first loved us.

It says we love because he first loved us. So, therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment.

Well, we're going to celebrate the Lord's table today. And this is a healthy thing to remember. Skip down, if you will, to chapter 12, verse 12.

As the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For if by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit. For in fact, the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor.

And our unpresentable parts have greater modesty. Our presentable parts have no need. But

God composed the body having given greater honor to that part which lacked it, that there should be no schism in the body.

This is the point, verse 25. But the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.

If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members individually. This extended discussion in chapter 12 is juxtaposed with the reminder of the upper room meal in chapter 11 for a reason.

You remember in his original letter, Paul didn't stop and put chapter 12. This was all one letter. And Paul says, the reason I'm giving you this upper room reminder is because your fellowship is the body of Christ.

The reverence and the solemnity with which we treat our ritual observance of the Lord's Supper, the concentration and the care that we take to be sure that we do not partake of that in an unworthy manner, we ought to have at least that level of concern every time we are with fellow believers. One or more, because a fellow believer is a member of the body of Christ. And Paul says, this is a perspective that will help you not commit the sins that you commit, is to remember you're dealing with the body of Christ.

And what you do with and for your fellow believers, you do for Christ's sake. In the same way that if you were one of those who took his body down from the cross and was going to prepare it for burial, you can imagine the care and the concern. Even before he died, the lady who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, her care and concern for the Lord Jesus.

This is the level of care and concern that we should have for one another because we belong to Christ. It is for Christ's sake that we express love toward one another. That's the point of the Lord's table as it is applied to our thinking in the church today.

So it's a tremendous picture. It is a great convicting reminder of how easily we can slip into the kind of selfishness that is portrayed as the Corinthians came together and just thought of it as another feast. You know, in Corinth in the Greek world, it's kind of like they say in the Marine Corps, every day is a holiday and every meal is a feast.

You know, Greeks would use any excuse for a feast and they thought, hey, Lord's Supper, the church is getting together, let's have a feast. It's revelry and eat all you can, drink all you can, stagger home. And completely forgot that this is a different kind of assembly.

This is a different kind of fellowship. This is a fellowship that looks outward and looks toward Christ. Well, we easily get caught up in the same kind of thing in our daily life and in our pursuit of completing the tasks that are on our list and so on.

And we lose sight of the fact that there is a body of Christ on this earth. Well, I said there are

two things we're going to cover this morning and I've covered the Lord's table first. It gives us a chance to meditate and incorporate those reminders into our thinking before we celebrate that after our second session this morning.

But the second thing that we're going to cover at first may seem to be unrelated and yet I think you'll find that it is a very essential second idea to the first. And that is the calendar and the feast schedule of the nation of Israel. This celebration, this death, burial and resurrection of the Lord was no happenstance.

It was orchestrated. It was timed. It was foretold.

It was very carefully scheduled by the Lord God as a part of His perfect plan. And there is no better way to see the careful construction of the plan of God than to see the map of human history that is laid out in the feast observances of Israel. So we're going to pause here and take our break and mingle with one another in fellowship and be very careful to respect the body of Christ.

And then when we return, we're going to take a look at the calendar of Israel, the feast days of Israel, culminating with taking a look at the coordination of the events of the week of the crucifixion and the resurrection with the feasts in Israel. That's what we'll see when we come back.