

A LOOK IN THE CUP - PART 1

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Luke 22:19b

In one of his later books, William Denney recalls a dream he could not forget. It seems that in his dream he was celebrating holy communion at a kind of cosmopolitan church. I call it that because, while it didn't particularly resemble any particular church he had served, it was strangely akin to every church he had served.

As is often the case with dreams, the faces of the people were blurred and yet he had a vague feeling he knew them all. When he stood behind the communion table and looked into the cup, instead of the usual sacramental wine, he saw tea.

He records his shock, and then goes on to tell how he asked a question in his dream. Was the symbol of blood shed upon a cross too strong for these people? Could they be more easily moved to sacrificial action and service by a cup of tea?

As he awoke to face the morning, he did so with a fresh understanding of the meaning of communion, and the deep demands the sacrifice of Christ imposed upon him.

Today, I want to begin a series of communion meditations based upon the text:

“This do in remembrance of Me“ (Luke 22:19b).

Because of time constraints, this morning we shall only be able to ask and give a brief answer to the introductory question:

“Why celebrate the Lord's supper at all?”

On future communion Sundays we shall more adequately explore the rich mine of truth which is this text.

“In remembrance of Me.”

There are many reasons why Jesus might have requested his disciples to meet together “in remembrance of (Him)“. But the mere fact he made the request at all was reason enough for Peter, James, and John to obey. And it's reason enough for us as well.

You see, there is something special about the dying wishes of someone we love. These requests have a sacredness about them which leads us to bend every effort to see that they are fulfilled. Thus, it is not hard to understand why Christians of every age and culture have tried to follow His wish. There is something special about this “ceremony“ which had its beginning so long ago -- in an upper room -- when Jesus said to his disciples:

“This do in remembrance of Me.“

In effect He was saying:

“Keep up this custom of 'breaking bread' together, which has come to mean so much to us. Let this meal of fellowship we have shared tonight become a sacred bond between you all and between you and me. And remember, while I will be unseen, even so I will be with you always. “As you meet together over the years ahead, let the meal mean even more to you than it does now. Let it remind you of my body which will soon be broken for you even as this bread is broken. Let the cup remind you of my life blood which will soon be poured out for your redemption even as is this outpoured wine.“

Certainly the fact that on the eve of His crucifixion, our Lord made this request is ample reason for our meeting together this morning “in remembrance of (Him).”

But more than that, the communion service is a link with the church of the past. How very little we know of that vast company of the redeemed we call The Church Invisible. We only know it is made up of all the saints of all the ages who have ever lived, worked, struggled and worshiped here on

earth.

As we look at our complex society and compare it with the world in which they lived so long ago, it seems as if we will have little or nothing in common about which to talk when we finally meet in heaven.

Even those who were here a generation or two ago would not be at home in our streamlined jet-propelled age. The automobile was still in its infancy then. The thought of flying across the United States in less than 5 hours would have been mere fancy. Radio was still a thing of the future. Television was just a dream in some engineer's mind. Unfortunately, that particular dream has become a nightmare to many present-day parents. Or so it seem to some of us.

At any rate, I'm sure you get the point I'm trying to make. As we think of our Christian brothers and sisters of other times and mores, it seems as though we have little in common. But there is one great link which binds us inseparably together: is our common Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are one in Him. He is the level ground upon which we all stand together. He is the common denominator which unites the cultured and the crude, the prince and the peasant, the pioneers of 1492 and the people of 1955.

It is safe to say the greatest bridge across the chasm of time and clime is the rite of communion. For in no other way can we so adequately express the unity that links us together "in remembrance of (Him)".

And then may I suggest this final reason why Jesus may have requested that we meet together in this way: He knew a symbol can be more than a symbol. It can not only be used to represent something, it can actually increase that which it represents. Let me show you what I mean.

We give a gift. Perhaps it's for a birthday, anniversary or wedding. That gift not only represents the love we have for the person to whom we give it, it actually increases that love. In many cases, it

prevents that love from dying from want of expression.

The mere fact we take the time to think about the needs of a friend or family member in and of itself is a stimulus to love. We can't think about her or him without being reminded of what that person has come to mean to us. It is in those thoughtful moments that our love for that friend or family member is rekindled and deepened.

Even so with our dear Lord. So often we become so busy with the doing of things we fail to take time to simply worship Him. To love Him. To cherish Him. And yes, enjoy Him. We get caught in the tentacles of a feverish activity, and sometimes we find the flame of our love for Him has burned low on the alter of our heart.

It is then, in an hour such as this when we gather around this sacred meal, that the devotion we really feel is expressed and, by that expression, is brought to life again. The spark of our love for Christ is fanned into a brighter flame and, in its warmth, we are reminded of how very special is our relationship with Him. We are taken back to Him. To the broken body on the cross. To the mighty soul agonizing over the sins of people. To the blood shed for the redemption of many. To the meal of fellowship when Christ drew His disciples to Him with bonds of love.

We are reminded of our first allegiance, and encouraged to renew our vows. For it is then, when we meet to worship like this, that we feel again the glory and the power of His presence, and we rejoice that, in His infinite wisdom, He made one last request:

“This do in remembrance of Me.”

“Our Lord, our life, our rest, our shield,

Our rock, our food, our light.

Each though of Thee doth constant yield

Unchanging fresh delight.”