

A LOOK IN THE CUP - PART 2

Dr. John Allan Lavender

Luke 22:19b

Last month we began a series of communion meditations around the theme

“A Look In The Cup.”

My text for this series is taken from that moment during the last supper where Jesus instructed his disciples to

“do this in remembrance of Me.”

In our first message, we discussed the reasons why we, as 20th century Christians, continue to observe communion. You'll remember we pointed out that first of all, we continue this memorial service because it was a specific request of our Lord. In fact, it was His last request. We noted there is something special about the dying wish of someone we love which causes us to bend every effort to see that it is fulfilled.

The second reason for keeping communion is that it provides a link with the Christians of the past and, at the same time, enables us to feel a comradeship with believers of our own day who live in other lands and under different mores.

Finally, we saw how our Lord asked that we worship “in remembrance of (Him)” because He knew that a symbol not only represents something real and vital, but can actually increase and strengthen the thing it represents.

Perhaps you remember the illustration we used of a person who buys a loved one a birthday present. That present not only represents her love for her friend, but because she has taken the time to think about her friend's needs and desires, she has actually strengthened the ties of love which bind them together.

These, then, were the three reasons we gave in answer to the question: Why do we, who live in the 20th century, continue a ceremony which was started nearly 2000 years ago? Why do we continue to meet

“in remembrance of (Him)?”

With that beginning, I want to move on to discuss some of the things we should remember when we *do* meet together around the Lord's table. Some of the things we should see when we pause for

“A Look In The Cup.”

There are several experiences in the life of our Lord which I think we should be calling to our memory when we meet around the table.

There is His incredible condescension. His ignominious birth. His exemplary life. And, of course, His cruel death upon a Roman rack.

We'll discuss various of these on future Sundays, but this morning let's spend our time thinking about

His Incredible Condescension.

To truly understand what this means, we must first take a look at

The Incalculable Wonder of His Home in Heaven.

We know so little of what heaven is really like. But of this one thing we can be sure, there is a world that swings out there, somewhere, a world that is the capital city of the universe. A place so grand in its appointments that writers' pen and artists' canvas have been unable to describe it.

It was there that Jesus lived throughout the eons of eternity until that fateful night, nearly 2000 years ago, when the angels sang their glory Oratorio heralding His arrival here on earth.

It is a place where tears have never fallen. A place where pain has never marred the celestial bodies of its inhabitants. Where words like frustration, anxiety and fear are never spoken. Where no hearses are never seen on its streets. Where the black veil of sorrow has never been worn, for this is a city in which there is no dying.

It is a place of eternal purity. If you could push aside the gates of pearl, make an entry, and go up to the brightest of the angels and ask:

“What is sin?”

the angels would fold their wings in wonder, and even though they pondered for 1000 years, they would fail to give a definition. For sin, and its curse, is something they have never known.

It is also a place of immeasurable wealth. They say Solomon had gold which was worth over \$3¼ billion dollars. Silver that was worth over \$5 billion dollars. But compared with the riches of heaven, Solomon was a pauper.

In Revelation, John tries to describe it. He says that its streets are paved with gold. That its walls are constructed of Jasper and its gates of pearl. But whatever the number of diamonds which bedecked His princely crown, or the vast array of fiery rubies which adorned His throne, we know from the wistful references which made to it, that heaven is a place of incalculable wonder

“with gardens of perpetual bloom and orchards of unending fruitage.”

It was from such a place as this that Jesus came to be born of a virgin in a borrowed bed. He who had flung the stars in space, who had called the worlds into being by the word of His power, was made to lie cradled on His Mother's breast. He who had never known hunger or thirst was found begging water of a woman in Samaria.

In all the eons of eternity He had never known weariness. But as a man, He became so tired in His earthly ministry he slept undisturbed through a storm which threatened to capsize the frail craft in which He was sailing.

In all of His celestial existence, He had known only love and adoration. But here on earth He was
“despised and rejected, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.”

He who had come to bring life was put to death. He who had come to give peace was cut down with a sword. He who had known all of the richness of heaven could find no place upon which to lay His head.

At the time of His death, His only possessions were the robe He wore on His back, and the sandals He wore on His feet. Stained by the dust of the highway and corroded by the salt of the sea, these few possessions in which He had slept by night and traveled by day, were the sum total of His earthly wealth.

No wonder the New Testament writer could find no other words to describe the incredible condescension of the Prince of Glory than to say in sublime simplicity:

“He who was rich for your sakes became poor“ (II Cor. 8:9).

In all of eternity there has never been a greater contrast. Never has there been a more overpowering demonstration of humility and humiliation than the contrast between

“the noon of Christ's celestial departure and the midnight of His earthly arrival.”

Remember that when you take communion this morning. As you look into the cup, keep a vision before you of the incredible condescension of our Lord.

Remember how this prince of heaven was born in another man's stable and buried in another man's grave.

Remember how He who had walked in the company of angels had cattle as His first companions and thieves as His last.

Remember how Jesus, who had worn the royal diadem of glory, was given a crown of thorns and

a throne of wood.

Remember how He who said:

“Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will
give you rest“ (Matt.11:28),

had, as His first resting place, a borrowed cradle and, as His last, a borrowed cross?

Remember that when you look into the cup.

As you taste its sweetness, let that sweetness remind you of the bitterness of Christ's humiliation who, through an act of incredible condescension, became poor so that *through* His poverty *you* might be rich

Excuse me folks, but that rates a quiet “hallelujah!” Don't you agree?