

## **In Remembrance of Me – 1 Corinthians 11:23-25**

**Introduction:** How would you react if I told you that the Sonoraville Baptist Church was going to have a day to celebrate the life of Robert Raikes? How many of you would come? If you came, would you know why and how we were going to celebrate his life? Probably not.

For your information, In July of 1780 Raikes began promoting a school for poor and troubled boys who lived in the slums of Gloucester, England as a means of preventing them from returning to a life of crime. The best time for them to meet was on Sundays, since the government forced these boys to work during the week. The best textbook Raikes knew of was the Bible. So, Robert Raikes is credited in history as the initiator of the modern Sunday School movement.

Jesus asked all His followers to participate in a meal that was to be in remembrance of Him. And when these words were passed down to the people of the Church at Corinth, they probably sounded as foreign to the Corinthians as it did for you to hear that we were going to remember the life of Robert Raikes.

Think about it: How could they remember someone they'd never seen? How could they remember someone they'd never talked with or listened to? You see, Jesus never made it to Corinth. The Christians there had only heard of Him. What did Jesus mean when He said, "*Do this in remembrance of me?*"

The Christians at Corinth had a lot of problems. They were divided in their loyalty. Some of them liked a pastor named Apollos better than Paul. A few of them favored Peter over Paul or Apollos. Another problem was that they weren't sure what to do with food that had been offered to idols. Was it safe to eat or not? And then there was a major problem with Spiritual gifts! Some of them felt that certain demonstrative gifts were more important than others. They even had problems with their fellowship meals! Can you imagine that? I wonder if their ladies gossiped in the kitchen? I wonder if the men huddled in little groups talking about other men who were huddled in another group? I don't know if that was the case or not, but I do know that one of the problems they had was that some folks arrived early at these fellowship meals and ate all the food! I know that some folks got there and drank too much wine and had to get a designated driver to get them home! It's a good thing that none of these problems exist in today's church!

In chapter 11 Paul is addressing the problem of table fellowship. He tells the Corinthians of a revelation he had from Jesus. Listen to what he wrote.

*"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"* **1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (NIV)**

I ask you the question again, how do you remember someone you've never seen, talked with, or listened to?

The best way to discover the answer to this question is to take a look at the symbols that Jesus used: body and the bread, the blood and the cup.

As we look more closely at these symbols, we need to remember the context in which Jesus first used these words. When Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper, He was celebrating the Passover Feast with His disciples. In a nutshell, Passover was a meal which commemorated the deliverance of God's people out of Egypt. Every type of food on the table had symbolic meaning, especially the roasted lamb. It reminded them of the lambs' blood that was smeared on the doorposts of the homes of the Hebrews so that when the death angel saw the blood, he would pass over them and enter only the homes of the Egyptians and kill the firstborn son in that household.

The Passover meal was almost entirely a ritual. There were elements of it that was done the same way every year for centuries. For example, the children would ask the father certain questions and he would answer their questions by using the elements to tell them the story of how God delivered them from Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land. In short, the Passover meal reminded them of God's salvation.

When Jesus began talking about the bread being His body and the cup being His blood, the disciples knew Jesus was giving new meaning to the Passover Meal. Let's look at what Jesus was asking them and us to remember as we look closely at the two symbols of the Lord's Supper

**The Bread:** Just before Moses' death, he delivered a series of messages that we have recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. He was preparing the Israelites to enter Canaan, the Promised Land. In 8:3 he told them, "*He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*" **Deuteronomy 8:3 (NIV)**

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He quoted the last phrase of this verse to resist the devil. Jesus hadn't eaten in 40 days and He was hungry. Yet, He knew what we either don't know or fail to remember – that God will supply all our needs, including food. So one thing we should remember when we partake of the bread is God's provision.

More importantly, we remember that God's Word is more important than bread. God's Word feeds our soul, while bread only feeds the physical body. Doctors and psychologists are validating what Jesus and Moses knew thousands of years ago, that the health of the soul vitally affects the health of the body. That is why our Gideon brothers faithfully and diligently place copies of God's Word in hospital rooms. That is why more and more doctors don't mind their patients being prayed over and prayed for. Those who are prayed for recover more quickly and completely, in general, than those who are not prayed for. So, every time you eat bread, you are to remember to feed your soul on God's Word.

Jesus did an amazing thing during the Passover Meal when He equated the bread with His body. First of all, eating someone's flesh is a repulsive thought to anyone, even if you consider it symbolically. So what was Jesus saying to them?

John's Gospel begins with these words in **John 1:1 (NIV)** "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" And in **John 1:14 (NIV)**, it says, "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...*"

The Word of God, Jesus Christ, became flesh and blood so that we could know Him and experience Him. The Word of God became human so that God could give Himself for us.

There is great mystery here. No one fully understands everything Jesus meant by these words. Even though they didn't understand, the disciples obeyed Him and ate the bread.

When we eat the bread, we are reminded of the life and teachings of Jesus. We remember the example He lived for us. He shows us how to live in a relationship with God. We remember the miracles of the blind receiving sight, the storms being calmed, the deaf being made to hear, and the lame walking. When we eat the bread, we remember all that Jesus has done for us.

There was another important symbol in the Passover Meal:

**The Cup:** The fruit of the vine reminded the Israelites of two things: the blood that was shed every year to atone for their sins and the blood of the lamb that saved them from death in Egypt.

Once again, Jesus made an amazing statement. He equated the cup with His blood. He told them that His blood would seal a new covenant between God and His people. Then He told them to drink it. Now why would He say that? He said it to mean that we are to take the meaning of His blood internally.

You see, first and foremost Jesus' blood was **Pure and Perfect**. In our humanity, our sin nature has been passed down to us through our fatherly ancestor Adam. But Jesus had no earthly father. He had no impure or imperfect bloodline passed down to Him. He was born of the virgin. Everything about Christ was perfect and pure including His blood.

One of reasons we use grape juice in our Lord's Supper Service instead of wine is because wine has to go through a process of fermentation. The process of fermentation is actually bacteria working in the juice. It is a rotting process. This could never give a proper picture of the sinless blood of Christ. For all that is holy, Satan has his counterfeit...and the Lord's Supper is no exception! Pure grape juice is the true symbol of the pure blood of Jesus, just as the bread is to be without leaven.

When the pure blood of the Savior is applied to the sinner, it provides cleansing. John explained, "*The blood of Jesus, His Son purifies us from all sin.*" **I John 1:7b (NIV)**.

*"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the Blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the Blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow  
No other fount I know nothing but the blood of Jesus."*

Secondly, the blood of Jesus is **Perpetual**. The Old Testament animal sacrifices were continuous year after year. The blood of bulls and goats provided only a temporary pardon. The sacrifices had to be repeated year

after year. In effect, they only pointed to the sacrifice of Christ and His blood being shed for the covering of our sin.

But the writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ as one who, *“Unlike the other high priests He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all, when he offered Himself.”* **Hebrews 7:27 NIV.**

He goes on to tell us that, *“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.”* **Hebrews 9:12 NIV**

And he also said, *“But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”* **Hebrews 10:12 (NIV).**

The death of Christ set into motion a continuous cleansing for those who trust in Him. We are given the gift of eternal life that He purchased with His blood. Thank God we are washed once and for all, forever. Our faith in His blood is all it takes to settle it forever and ever.

Finally, the blood of Christ is Powerful! The song writer wrote: *“Would you be free from the burden of sin?*

*There is power in the blood, power in the blood.*

*Would you ever win a victory over evil? There’s wonderful power in the Blood. There is power, power wonder working power in the Blood of the Lamb. There is power, power wonder working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.”*

**Revelation 5:9 (NIV)** says, *“...with your blood you purchased men for God...”* And **Revelation 12:11 (NIV)** says, *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb...”* It takes power to do those things.

I know it’s hard to understand all the implications and meaning of the blood of Christ. But here is all you need to understand: Jesus promised us forgiveness for our sin through His blood, and when we trust in His work of salvation instead of ours, we are cleansed from the guilt and power of sin.

So when we drink this juice, we remember that Jesus has already paid a debt that we could never pay. We remember that God loves us so much that He allowed His Son to die in our place. When we drink this juice, we remember that Jesus literally shed His blood so that we could have life and have it more abundantly.

What do you remember when you come to the Lord’s table? Do you just go through the motions? Do you fret because when you see the table prepared, you know that you probably won’t get out on time? Or would you receive the bread and juice joyfully? Do you come to this table expecting to experience the risen Christ?