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HCC Sermon
1 Cor 11:17-34

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: The use of an incorrect oil filter in my car resulted in disorder in my engine.
2. Need: Unaddressed division leads to disorder within the church.
3. Subject: How does the Lord's supper help us to guard against such division?
4. Text: 1 Cor 11:17-34
5. Preview:

BODY

- I. Divisions reveal a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper (11:17-22)
 - A. The divisive conduct of the Corinthians during meals revealed a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper (11:17-22).
 - B. Think about the divisiveness that might be found in our church.
- II. The Lord's supper reminds us of the unity that we have in Christ (11:23-26)
 - A. The Lord's supper reminds us of what Christ did to unite us (11:23-26)
 1. Christ established a new covenant between us and God.
 2. Christ established a new covenant between us other believers.
 - B. Unity in the church requires a regular remembrance of Christ's redemptive work.
- III. An improper participation in the Lord's supper will result in God's discipline (11:27-32)
 - A. Paul warns the Corinthians that God's discipline awaits those who participate in the Lord's supper improperly.
 - B. Consider if you are currently under God's discipline.
- IV. Prepare for the Lord's supper by caring for one another (11:33-34)
 - A. Paul encourages the Corinthians to care for one another so that they would not experience God's judgment at the Lord's supper.
 - B. Care for others in the church to cultivate unity.

CONCLUSION

1. Summary: The Lord's supper reminds us of the unity that we have in Christ. Prepare for the Lord's supper by caring for one another.
2. Closing Image: One dish of ratatouille reminded Anton Ego of his mother's cooking.

MANUSCRIPT

My first car was a white 1994 two door Acura Integra. I remember taking it on a cross country trip from California to Dallas for my summer internship at Lockheed Martin. I drove 2500 miles. This meant that shortly after I arrived in Dallas, I needed to change the oil.

I went to the auto parts store and bought the parts. An oil filter. The appropriate oil. I took it over to my friend's house. Jacked it up. Drained the oil. Changed the filter. Topped off the oil. Done.

A few weeks later, my low oil light goes off on my dashboard. Thankfully, I was almost home. I check underneath the car. Oil. Oh no. I must have botched something up. I took it to the mechanic. They discovered that I had installed the wrong oil filter. I installed an oil filter for an EX-model rather than an LX model. The oil filter failed to seal properly.

This incorrect oil filter caused disharmony. It failed to work with the rest of my Acura's engine to ensure proper lubrication. The lubricating oil leaked out. A lack of oil in the engine could wrack potential damage to the car. When an engine fails to have the right parts working together, it leads to disorder. Disaster.

Another word for disharmony is division. When there exists division within a machine, it will eventually stop working. When there is a bug that causes disharmony within a piece of code, the program crashes. Disharmony not only affects machine and computer code, but it also affects organizations. Can you imagine what would happen if two pilots in an airplane wanted to travel in opposite directions? What would happen if two chefs cannot agree on a menu for their guest? One wants to serve salmon. The other wants to serve steak. Disorder. What

happens if a CEO wants to take the company in one direction, but the board wants to go another? Disorder. More specifically, the board votes the CEO out. Or the board resigns.

Division can also affect a church. Some split on what to wear. I know of a church where people left because they were not allowed to wear jeans when they served on stage. Some people divide over the translation of the Bible used. Some prefer to use NIV. Others ESV. Some even KJV. Some people split because of interpersonal conflict. I can't come to this church if it continues to allow so and so to attend. Divisions happen because we choose to live according to our flesh. If our flesh remains, divisions will continue to be a problem.

Jesus knew that the church would be susceptible to division. To guard against division, he gives us a way to remember the unity that we have in Him. A meal. A family meal. Communion. The Lord's supper.

How does the Lord's supper help believers guard against division? How does partaking in a wafer and a cup of grape juice unite us? How does it promote harmony? How does this practice of the Lord's supper help to bring us together?

To answer this question, we'll turn once again to Paul's letter to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. If you're not there already, then I would invite you to turn there with me. 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. Thank you, Dena, for this morning's Scripture reading. I'm glad you have a chance to read a passage without complicated names of people or cities. 1 Corinthians, chapter 11.

Previously in 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed the topic of head coverings in a church's worship service. If you missed Jason's excellent message on this passage, then I would

encourage you to find the sermon on our church's website – hcchome.org. Paul now turns his attention to how the Lord's supper is conducted within the Corinthian church.

We'll cover this morning's passage under four questions concerning the Lord's supper. First, **what do divisions reveal?** What does divisiveness disclose about us? What does disharmony show about us? Second, **what does the Lord's supper remind us of?** What memory should the supper invoke? What should it help us recall? Third, **what happens when we take the Lord's supper improperly?** What is the consequence of taking the Lord's supper inappropriately? Lastly, **what can we do to prepare for the Lord's supper?** What can we do to ready ourselves for taking the Lord's supper.

First question. What do divisions reveal? **Divisions reveal a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper.** The existence of division within the church means that we don't comprehend the significance of the Lord's supper. We don't grasp what the supper is supposed to do. **Divisions reveal a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper.**

We see this in the Corinthian church. The divisive conduct of the Corinthians during meals revealed a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper. Their disharmony. Disunity. Sectarian behavior. Partisan actions. Their inability to get along shows that they don't understand the point of the Lord's supper.

Look at verse 18. *For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.* Look at verse 20. *When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat.*

The Corinthians thought they gathered to partake in the Lord's supper. But Paul says: "Whatever you're gathering to eat, it's not the Lord's supper. There may be bread. There may be wine. But it's not the Lord's supper."

What is going on here? Now the Corinthians came from a culture where they feasted together to celebrate religious rituals. They imported the practices of feasting into their practice of the Lord's supper.

When this festive meal occurs during a church service, it's not clear. Some think it occurred before partaking the bread and the cup. Eat the Feast. Celebrate the Lord's supper. Others think that it occurs between the bread and the cup. You first partake the bread. Feast. Partake in the cup. Now it doesn't matter when the meal occurs. Paul confronts how they conduct the meal.

There are two problems. There are two groups within the church. The wealthy. The poor. First problem, **the wealthy ate well while the poor ate simply**. When the church came together, the wealthy brought a nice sumptuous private meal. The poor brought a simple meal if anything. Imagine the wealthy eating a ribeye steak with potatoes and green beans. The poor have rice porridge. It's a stark difference. Look at verse 21. *For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.*

The image of hunger and drunkenness show the quantity each ate. The poor didn't have enough to eat. They might even go hungry. The wealthy had so much wine to drink that they drank themselves drunk. First problem, the wealthy ate well and the poor ate simply. Let's talk about the second problem.

Second problem. **The wealthy and the poor ate separately.** Remember that churches didn't gather in buildings like ours. They gathered in homes. The homes of wealthy members of the church. Some of these homes could house about 30-50 people. There are two places where people could eat. The dining room. The courtyard.

Here's the rub. The wealthy believers ate their lavish meal in the dining room. The smaller area. The not so wealthy believers ate their simple meals in the courtyard. The larger area. Look at verse 22. *What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*

The division within the Corinthian church means that they didn't practice the Lord's supper. They failed to understand its significance.

Now it's easy to think. Tsk Tsk. Those Corinthians. This passage challenges us to examine ourselves. It causes us to think. Do divisions exist within our church? What do I do that contributes to disunity?

Maybe you unconsciously maintain cliques. We work in this industry. We enjoy this type of music. We read this type of books. We partake in this type of food. We prefer to spend time with people like us. We refuse to allow others to join us for lunch. Participate in our hang outs. Division. Are we truly partaking in the Lord's supper?

Divisions reveal a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper. This prompts us to wonder. So... what is the purpose of the Lord's supper? What is it supposed to remind us of?

The Lord's supper reminds us of the unity that we have in Christ. When we partake in the supper it directs our minds to what Christ did to bring us together. It causes us to reflect on

how we are all one in Christ. The Lord's supper prompts us to think about our oneness in Him.

The Lord's supper reminds us of the unity that we have in Christ.

What did Christ do to bring us together? How did he unite us? **The Lord's supper reminds us of what Christ did to bring us together.** How does this meal remind us of what Christ did?

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the words of the institution of the Lord's supper. First, the meal highlights how Jesus would be handed over to the Roman authorities to be crucified. Look at verse 23. *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.* Note the time reference. Night when he was betrayed. The meal doesn't remind us of Jesus' birth. The meal doesn't remind us of Jesus feeding the five thousand. We think about the night before he dies on the cross.

Now there are two elements. The bread and the cup. Both elements remind us of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Look at verse 24. *This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.* Look at verse 25. *This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*

Note the word new covenant in verse 25. What is this new covenant? When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper he co-opted or recast the Passover meal. The Jews celebrated the Passover meal to commemorate the Lord delivering them from Egypt. This also marks the establishment of a covenant between God and Israel. But in the Lord's supper, Jesus uses Passover elements to remind his followers that this covenant now commemorates your deliverance from sin. This marks a new covenant between God and all who believe in Christ's redeeming work on the cross.

Let's think about this new covenant. I was us to think about two things. First, **Christ established a covenant between us in God**. This means that when we believe in Christ's redeeming work on the cross, we can now experience a relationship with God. Sin that once prevented us from relating to God no longer bars the way. We have been forgiven. Second, **it establishes a new relationship between us and other believers**. We have more in common with other Christians because of our faith in Christ than with others. Not only do we have connection with one another, but we also have the resources to maintain the harmony. The connection. Think about it. God forgave us for our sin, then we can now in turn forgive those who wrong us especially other believers. It also gives us the ability to confront without desire for revenge because we confront people for their good.

Our actions proclaim the efficacy of what Christ did. The way that we speak and interact with other believers proclaims that Christ's work on the cross did achieve a new covenant with God. It did establish a new relationship between us and other believers. Look at verse 26. *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* If Christ's death achieved these things, then why does divisiveness still exist? Why is there disharmony? We forget easily. We have spiritual amnesia. We don't remember what Christ accomplished on the cross for us.

But if we want to pursue unity, then we need to remember. We need to recall. We need to recollect. Unity in the church requires a regular remembrance of Christ's redemptive work. Can such remembrance work? Does a memory give us power to live differently?

Thinking about the Lord's supper reminded me of another meal. When dad received chemotherapy during his battle with cancer, he would always want to eat at one place. In N Out.

To be honest, before my dad's battle with cancer, I didn't care much for In N Out. I thought it was bleh. Don't crucify me Californians. But after my dad passed away, I enjoy going to In N Out. Not necessarily because of the food. It's because it reminds me of my father. But it also reminds me of the brevity of life. Whenever I eat there, it reminds me that life is brief. Cherish your moments with family. You never know how long you have with them. Hopefully, I've been able live that out. Now if God can use a burger joint to remind me of this, then how much more can God use a simple meal of a wafer and a cup of grape juice to remind us of Christ's work on the cross so that we can live in a way that represents him.

Now if the Lord's supper reminds us of the unity that we have in Christ, then what happens if we don't adopt this mindset when we observe the Lord's supper. That brings us to the third question. What happens when we take the Lord's supper improperly?

An improper participation in the Lord's supper will result in God's discipline. If we fail to adopt the right mindset. The right heart attitudes. The right perspective. When we partake in the Lord's supper, then we incur God's correction. And God's correction might be painful. But he will intervene to bring us back into line. **An improper participation in the Lord's supper will result in God's discipline.**

We see this in the Corinthian church. **Paul warns the Corinthians that God's discipline awaits those who participate in the Lord's supper improperly.**

When we partake in the Lord's supper, it identifies us a type of people. If we take the Lord's supper properly, then we are identified with God's people. But when we take it in an improper manner, it identifies us with another type of people. Those who rebel against God.

Look at verse 27. *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.*

Note the phrase: *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*. What does that mean? When we take the Lord's supper improperly, we identify ourselves with those who crucified Christ. We resemble the ones who rejected God's rule and killed his king. That's what happens when you fail to take the Lord's supper properly.

What happens when we choose to identify with rebels? Those who are far from the Lord? It incurs God's discipline. Look at verse 29. *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drink judgment on himself*. The phrase: *discerning the body* refers to a believer's failure to recognize that the elements represent Christ's body and blood broken and shed to redeem us. This results in judgment. What kind of judgment?

In the Corinthian church, people fell ill and died. Look at verse 30. *That's why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died*. Now you may be wondering: Did people really drop dead in the church? I don't think it's outside the realm of possibility. Remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Their lie about the proceeds of selling their land cost them their lives. It served as an act of discipline.

This causes one to wonder: "It's kind of hard to receive correction when you're dead. Who is the discipline for? Is it for the person who died?" This reminds me of a discussion I had with our college students on Friday. In another story within the Old Testament, God struck Uzzah died for touching the ark of the covenant. Maybe the discipline isn't for the person who died but for the community. The intent of the discipline is meant to teach God's people. Don't do that. If you do, then there will be dire consequences.

Why does God discipline us? He disciplines us so that we would not be like the world. The purpose of God's discipline is to make us set apart. Distinct. Holy. Look at verse 32. *But when we are judged by the LORD, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the Lord.*

What does this mean? It means that we need to examine ourselves. Look at verse 28. *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and of the cup.*

What does it mean to examine oneself? Does this mean that we need to remind ourselves of how unworthy we are? Do we need to confess every sin we've committed this last week to partake in the Lord's supper? What about the sins that I did unconsciously? No. To examine oneself doesn't mean beating oneself up for how much you failed. To do so, would put the focus on you. The focus at the Lord's supper is on what Christ has done on the cross. Do you believe this? If you do, then it means that you work toward reconciling with those whom you have wronged? You talk again to those you give the silent treatment. You forgive those who have committed a wrong against you. You rebuild relational bridges that you burned down.

Consider the state of your relationship with other believers.

Someone might wonder: "If I partake in the Lord's supper improperly today, then will God take someone out? Will I experience heart attack on the way out of service? Will I have a stroke that instantaneously paralyzes me when I get up from the pew at the conclusion of service?" I don't know. God could possibly discipline us in that way.

But I think that God disciplines us through the natural consequences of our actions. If you fail to realize the significance of the Lord's supper by refusing to restore relationships, then you will experience consequences. You might experience loneliness because you continue to

alienate people. Loneliness affects the mind and the heart. Your unwillingness to reconcile with people makes it unpleasant to spend time with you. People watch what they say around you because they fear unexpectedly upsetting you. This means that you will never have friends who tell you the truth. You will never have believers who will point out the sin in your life so that you can grow in Christlikeness. These things can cause stress and anxiety. This makes you more susceptible to illness. One might say it could even kill you.

Why do these things happen to you? God wants you to change. He wants you return to him. He wants you to confess: Yes. Lord, I'm bitter. I feel angry. I feel upset at people. They say that they're Christian. But they act unchristian like. But I realize that the same things I accuse people of, I am guilty of too. I need forgiveness offered to me in Christ. Help me to understand the power of the gospel in my life so that I can live in harmony with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

God's discipline awaits those who partake in the Lord's supper improperly. This sets us up for the last question. What can we do to prepare for the Lord's supper?

Prepare for the Lord's supper by caring for one another. To get yourself ready to participate in the Lord's supper, show concern for others. Find ways to assist other believers. Think about how to support one another. Support one another. **Prepare for the Lord's supper by caring for one another.**

This is Paul's encouragement to the Corinthians. **Paul encourages the Corinthians to care for one another so that they would not experience God's judgment at the Lord's supper.**

Look at verse 33. *So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another – if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home – so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.*

When you heard that verse read, you probably thought to yourself: I didn't hear anything about caring. And you're right. But look at the verse. This is where it's helpful to have a paper, Bible. There is a foot note for the phrase: wait for. If you look at the bottom of your ESV Bible, the alternate reading is "share with". And we all know sharing is caring. But the word has a broad number of meanings. Another meaning would be receive. Receive one another. That sounds like hospitality. Which is another form of caring.

Paul instructs the church to care for another. Show hospitality to one another. Share. The wealthy should not reserve their fine food for themselves. They should share with the poor. Eat together. Don't eat separately.

What does this mean for us? Care for one another. Care for one another in church to cultivate unity. How? One of the benefits of attending church is that there is lunch offered. Now some might argue. The food is low quality. I'm going to go out to find better food because I can afford it. But some people can't afford better food. All they can afford per their meager budget is church lunch. That's why we used to find people stocking up on church lunch because it was so affordable. I think some still do that.

Maybe one of the ways we care for one another is to stay for church lunch. We all eat the same simple meal. The same \$4.50 box lunch. But it's not just sharing the same meal. But it's also inviting people to join us. If you see someone eating alone in the chapel, then invite them to join you. You might say: "Hi! I don't think we've met before. My name is Henry. What's

your name? Wait for their name. Would you like to join some of us for lunch?" You don't need to schedule a time in your calendar. You don't need to invite them over. You simply share the same meal with people. Receive people. Share with them.

Let's review. Divisions reveal a misunderstanding of the Lord's supper. So... what do we need to understand about the Lord's supper? The Lord's supper reminds us of the unity that we have in Christ. What if we fail to take the Lord's supper properly? An improper participation in the Lord's supper will result in God's discipline. So how do we prepare for the Lord's supper? Prepare for the Lord's supper by caring for one another.

Let me close with this. This passage reminded me of the Pixar film *Ratatouille*. For those of you who have not seen the film, it's about a rat named Remy cooking gourmet food. At the end of the film, Remy must cook for a food critic Anton Ego. Remy cooks for him a dish called ratatouille. This dish transports Anton Ego back to his childhood eating his mom's cooking. The dish reminded him of something that comforted him. His mom's cooking. May the Lord do the same whenever we partake in the Lord's supper. May it transport our minds to the sacrificial work of Christ so that we might pursue unity in our church by caring for one another.