

Why Do We Observe Communion?

1 Corinthians 11:24-26

One minister in Texas named Tom used to go down to the homeless shelter once a month to work in the soup kitchen. After the homeless people were fed, he would then invite them to join him in a service of Holy Communion and many of them will come with him to the little chapel in the homeless shelter. One day as he was moving down the altar serving communion, he came to a man kneeling there who looked like he had been out on the streets for quite some time.

The man looked up at Tom and whispered: "Skip me." "What?" Tom said. In a louder whisper, the man said again, "Skip me." "Why?" Tom asked. "Because," the man said, "I'm not worthy." Tom said: "Neither am I."

Then he said: "I'll tell you what. I'm going to serve communion to these other people. Then, I'm going to come back and serve communion to you and then I would like you to serve it to me." The man blinked and said to Tom: "Father, is that legal?" "Yes, it's legal; it's beautiful and that's what we are going to do!" Tom answered.

So that's what he did, and when he came back to the reluctant man, he asked him, "What's your name?" And the man said, "Josh." Tom placed the elements of the Lord's Supper before him and said:

"Josh, here is the Body of Christ and here is the Blood of Christ given for you. Eat this and drink this in the remembrance that Christ came for you and Christ died for you. Amen."

Josh blinked back the tears in his eyes, and he received Holy Communion. Then, Tom knelt and said, "Now, you serve me." Josh nervously took the trays and again he said, "Father, are you sure this is legal?" "Yes, it's legal. Just do it."

Josh's eyes were darting from side to side as he looked over this shoulder and then the other, as if he expected at any moment to see the police, the FBI, the CIA or even all of them to come rushing in to arrest him.

Finally, he held the trays toward Tom and as Tom received the elements Josh muttered: "Body ó Blood ó for you, Hang in There!"

Tom said later: "Of all the communion rituals I have ever heard, I don't recall the words 'Hang in There' in any of them" but at that moment for me, Holy Communion had never been more 'Holy'.

Well, why do we observe Holy Communion? When we look at what the Bible says, we quickly learn that we observe Communion

1 Because it is an act of Remembrance

This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

Two older men were sitting on a park bench, enjoying the sunshine. They had often visited this way over the years, and enjoyed each other's company. One morning, one of the men turned to the other and said, "I'm embarrassed to tell you that after all these years I just can't remember your name. I wrote my son the other day, and made mention of you. But I couldn't remember who you are. Please, tell me again, what's your name?"

The other man turned and stared at him. After a moment a blank look, then a look of despair came across his face. After two full minutes of silence, he replied, "How soon do you have to know?"

We may not be *that* bad, but we are so prone to forget things, even very important things. We are especially prone to forget the little things people do for us, the things that make life so much easier, so much more pleasant. We are prone to forget important things as well, and you may be one of those people who tie a string around your finger to remind him of something. If you are like me, you write down on paper the things you want to remember.

One man was deeply impressed by his mother's love for the Communion Service. One day he finally asked her why it meant so much to her. He wrote, "She looked at me frankly and said, seriously and determinedly, 'Our Lord asked his friends not to forget him, I am one of his friends. I do not forget him.'"

Jesus knew we might forget what the Supper was to be about, the meaning behind it. He knew that even if we remembered to observe it, that it could become nothing more than a time when we would simply observe a ritual, without looking beyond

the ritual and remembering what it really is all about. So He said, "When you eat this bread, and when you drink this cup, do it in remembrance of Me."

2 Because it is an act of Testimony

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26

Just as baptism is a testimony before the world of our new relationship with Christ, that we have died, have been buried with Christ and have been raised to walk in a brand-new life, even so when we are partaking of Holy Communion, we are proclaiming the Lord's death. This is His Body which was broken for our sins, which hung on the Cross and died a cruel death so we might have forgiveness. This is His Blood, which was shed for the remission, for the taking away, of our sin. This supper has special significance in this respect. It is more than just a meal that we share together.

It is rich in meaning and symbolism, and it proclaims to the world that we are partakers in that death of Christ, that Jesus died, really, actually died for us that we might be free and might have forgiveness— deep, eternal forgiveness.

3 Because it is an act of Expectation

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26

When I read the Bible about the Return of Christ, there is one thing that just jumps out at me: The Bible never one times argues that He is returning; It **assumes** that He is. It's not **if** He comes, but **until** He comes. We are to do this in remembrance of Christ, as an act of testimony before the world, until the time when Christ comes back. And as we look forward to the time when Christ will return, we are to be working, and watching and waiting in an air of expectancy, eagerly awaiting the day when Jesus will return.