

End of Strain?

1 Corinthians 11

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, this is the twelfth communion of this year now in 1980 and so it's an important communion for most of us here this night. So, will you take your Bible and turn to First Corinthians 11. Those words that we know so well but they're words that God gave to explain this communion service to us and so we need to read them I suppose till we die, trusting the Holy Spirit to help us to understand them.

First Corinthians 11:23, "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, 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 also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Would you look at that verse 29, "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." It is very difficult to tell what that verse means and if you look up the common phrase, you'll see that they had the same trouble. The most obvious meaning of it, is of course, that if you take part in communion this evening without discerning the rest of us as belonging to you and belonging to Christ together then you in fact, eat and drink damnation onto yourself. Because of course the problem in the New Testament was that the people were coming bringing their own lunches almost and having their own private feasts. So some people in one part of the church were left with no food to eat while others were drinking and drunk and so that's perhaps a very obvious meaning for it in that time.

But loved ones I think it does mean even something deeper in a sense than that. Discerning the body of Jesus means discerning tonight that his body includes you and has always included you, has always included you. That you have always been a part of Jesus. That when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a sense, you were part of that body, because God put you into his son Jesus before the foundation of world.

That when Jesus walked the roads of Galilee in a sense you walked inside him also. And most of all, when Jesus died on Calvary you were in his body. So tonight when you drink the wine and you eat the bread, you're failing to discern the body of Jesus. Discern means to perceive, to understand, to see into the heart of. You're failing to discern his body this evening. If you think, "Oh, well we're remembering how he died and we're remembering how he gave his life for us all and we're remembering how he sacrificed so that our sins could be forgiven." Loved ones, you're regarding his body as

something apart from you and you're failing therefore to discern it.

Actually tonight if you're going to take the wine and the bread and not drink judgment to yourself, it will mean seeing and discerning tonight that when Jesus died on Calvary, you died. And you were raised again. And as you were raised with him, there came a new you that is at the right hand of God and is pure and holy and clean. And that when the wrath of God burned into Jesus to cause him to cry, "My God, my God why has thou forsaken me," it was not the pain of his own soul that was hurting him. It was the pain of all our little sins. All our little uncleannesses, all our little selfishnesses and pettinesses. All our little sicknesses and our pains and our strains, all our little pressures and tensions. All of those were in him and he was allowing his Father to burn those out in him so that we were literally destroyed and remade there on Calvary.

So, there is tonight, in Jesus, for he is perfect at this moment before his Father, there is a you, there is, there is a me. There's in each one of us in Jesus body tonight that is perfect and whole and clean and powerful, really. That's the real us, the other us was destroyed because God cannot brook it in his presence and that old self of ours was destroyed.

But there is a new you that can say to the fig tree, "wither" and it will wither, that can touch bread and make it enough to feed 5,000, that can touch another sick body and make it whole. There is a you that is perfect and whole like that, there is. Tonight, discerning the body of Jesus means receiving that by faith into yourself. Now you may say, "Do you mean I could work miracles?" Yes, all that Jesus can do because you are in him you can do.

There's a perfect you that is filled with peace. There's a perfect you that is filled with delight and wholeness and joy, there is. There's a perfect you that lives above pettinesses. There's a perfect you that loves people with a generous and magnanimous heart, there is. There's a perfect you that exists. Tonight the Holy Spirit wants to tell you what part of that perfect you, you are to receive this night, by faith, that's it.

So, at a communion service like this I always go before Jesus and I say, "Lord, I want to discern, which part of me that you have changed completely on Calvary and that is completely made whole. Which part of me you want me to receive tonight the benefits of in my own person here in this life." Loved ones, that's what it means discerning the body.

So it is a joyous thing, you know for children of God. Communion is not a sad thing. It is not a hard convicting thing. It is a joyous thing. It is as running to the father and saying, "Look, look what Jesus cleaned up in me, look I didn't know it, look what weakness He took from me, I didn't know it but now I know it tonight. Look what power He gave me which I didn't know until tonight, I have it now". That's what communion is for God's children. It's a celebration time, it's not a grinding, grinding time as it is with loved ones who aren't God's children and who resist every inch of conviction of the Holy Spirit. No, it's a celebration time for God's children. It's a receiving into our own lives by faith the very benefits that Jesus has wrought for us.

So loved ones, I'd ask you, is there anywhere in your own life where there's strain? That's maybe the easiest way, you know, to find it. Is there anywhere in your own life where there's strain tonight, is there, really? I mean strain of any kind, you know worry -- worry about money or about the job or about family or about a relationship. Is there anywhere where there's strain? See that's sin too, that's sin. Because if there's strain in you, it's because there isn't complete faith, complete resting in God. And if there's not complete resting in God about something, it's

either because you doubt His love, which you probably don't do, or because you're not ready and yielded for him to run it whatever way He wants.

So, loved ones what I do is I come to communion to hunger and thirst after righteousness and say, "Lord Jesus show me, what new liberty you have for me to enter into tonight. Show me what part of myself you destroyed and made anew on Calvary". I would ask you loved ones to do that you know. You have to want it, you have to want it and you have to have a real idea in yourself that you are meant to be perfect. That's it, you're meant to be perfect. You're meant to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, not through your effort but perfect as the Son is perfect and you are in the Son and he has something for you to receive tonight.

What about the million things where you're not perfect? That's not your business. That's not what God's troubled about tonight. What about the stuff tomorrow that somebody will criticize you for, that doesn't matter. It's what the Holy Spirit wants you to receive in your own person tonight that Jesus has won for you, that's what's precious.

The Savior has something to give you tonight. You want to find out what that is. Usually to find it out you need to look at some of the places in your life where you have already sensed this gut said, just a little uneasiness. Those are the places where the Holy Spirit is wanting to give you more of the Savior and more of salvation.

So, it's the end of 1980 you know it's 12 months and now have you any old sores, are there any old sores, any old sins, any old feelings, any old problem spots in your life? Well, why not start with the obvious you know? Why not just as we go to prayer for a little time here before I give the invitation? Why not look at those obvious places first? Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we see in your life, joy and delight. You have a delightful heart. The heart that is filled with light and delight and Lord we see that heart is like that all the time, greatly at peace in Gethsemane when they come to arrest you. Greatly at rest, when they slap you on the face during the judgment hall scene. The only one that seems at peace at the moment of your death when you say, "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

Lord we see you and we see what life is meant to be. Savior we've seen in others lives too, some beauty that we ourselves want to have. Then Lord we have seen in our own lives some ugliness, some pettiness, some critical spirit that keeps coming up like a sour fountain from the heart of our beating.

Some jealousy of other people thinking they're not really so good as they think they are. Some meanness in our hearts, some lack of a generous spirit. Some annoyance when somebody asked us to do something and it wasn't convenient for us. Some feeling of resentment when you wanted us to do something but cut across our own plans. We see Lord this burgeoning mass of egotism that so often seems to splurge itself all over our lives, we find ourselves so much asking what we want to do, what we feel like doing.

We have felt Lord more and more prisoners of this dominating self. Savior we feel there is a freer place to be there is a place that is broader. We've seen ourselves driven more and more into straighten places, narrow places, tight places, corners instead of our lives broadening out and growing, so often we find them retreating, growing smaller.

Sometimes we look at our faces in the mirror and think; we're withering Lord, instead of blossoming. Lord Jesus we see that it's due to the disease in the blight of independence of our dear Father for whatever things depends on him they blossom and grow and become more beautiful. So Lord we know without being told that it is because we're depending more and more on ourselves.

O Savior, we need to be changed completely. We need to be made in a kind of joyful, delightful son of the Father that you were, daughter of the Father. Lord Jesus we ask that by your Holy Spirit tonight, you would give us light and revelation. Enable us to see that we don't need to commit ourselves to trying hard again. We simply need to accept that, yes we were, we were crucified with you, we were destroyed and remade and that's what we want to be, we want to be remade from the tip of our toe to the top of our head. Lord, we want to be remade inside and out, completely changed and cleansed and made whole and well.

So Savior, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we eat this bread and drink this wine and as we begin to discern your body, Lord will you bring that judgment upon us? But will you bring deep conviction and revelation that we are already changed by faith in what you have done. Dear Lord, dear Savior, help each one of us to see that the old broken narrow self that we've been carrying around on our shoulders has already been condemned to death by you in Jesus. In your eyes it has no reality or existence and the only one that has any existence is the perfect version of ourselves that has been raised with your son and sits at your right hand.

Oh Lord, we would receive that dear being into us by faith tonight. Wherever he wants to be made real and to express himself, dear Savior. Dear Lord, we would take seriously these words.

"You that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins and are in love and charity with your neighbors and intend to lead a new life following the commandments of God and walking from henceforth in His Holy ways, draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to your comfort and make your humble confession unto Almighty God."