

Communion Service

#0106

Study Given by W.D. Frazee – October 6, 1973

Paul tells us repeatedly that the church is Christ's body. What a wonderful symbol! Jesus is the head; His church is the body. That means that He is joined with His church in a union as close as the head and the body are. That's pretty close, isn't it?

What do we mean by "the church"? We mean the church *universal*. We are told that the church in heaven and on earth constitutes one body.

Maybe we can think of this church here this morning as a tiny little finger of the great body, but we are joined with the head. Aren't we? Not that the finger is stuck unto the head at such an angle, but we are a part of the body.

The church here on earth is organized as the General Conference with headquarters in Washington, DC. That's broken down into a dozen world divisions. There is one for South America. There is one for Inter-America. There is one for Austral-Asia. There is one for North America; that's the one we're in.

The North American division is broken down into 10 unions. There is the Canadian Union that takes in all of Canada. There is the Northern Union that takes in Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. The Atlantic Union, the New England states. The Pacific Union is out in California and Nevada and Arizona and Utah. We are here in the Southern Union. That takes in the southeastern states: Tennessee, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and so on. It's quite a large union. It's one of the biggest unions in North America.

The unions are, in turn, made up of conferences. There is the Alabama and Mississippi Conference that takes in the churches in those states. There is the Kentucky Tennessee Conference, the Carolina Conference, and so on. We are a part of the Georgia Cumberland Conference which takes in the churches in Georgia, the eastern part of Tennessee, and a little bit of western North Carolina.

But the Georgia Cumberland Conference, like all the conferences of the world, is made up of districts. We are a part of the Wildwood District. There is the Chattanooga District, the Collegedale District, and so on. There are quite a number of districts all through this conference. Some of those districts are made up of one local church. Some of them have more than one, we do here in this district, we are glad for that.

So we are meeting this morning as one unit of a district, which in turn is one unit of a conference, which in turn is one unit of a union, which in turn is one unit of a division, which in turn is one unit of the General Conference. And that is a part of the universal church which has its headquarters in heaven.

Here this morning, we are met as a part of the body of Christ to celebrate the ordinances which He gave His church. I invite you to turn to 1st Corinthians the 11th chapter:

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” 1 Corinthians 11:23–31.

So this is judgment day. This is examination day. Tell me, in the light of this Scripture, when should we do the examining? *Before* the supper or *after*? *Before*. Who should do the examining? What does the text tell us? Each one should do it. The 28th verse: “...let a man examine himself...”

Well, you can’t do that when you take a driver’s examination, can you? No, somebody else does that. And at an examination in school, you don’t examine yourself. The teacher does that. But this is an examination in which each one is to do what? Examine himself. And we are to do this before we eat.

Now notice why we’re to do this, in the 27th verse:

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so...”
1 Corinthians 11:27.

Decline to eat, refuse to eat, excuse himself from the supper. Is that what the text says?

Well, when I examine myself, I don’t think I’m worthy, so I better not eat. I better be on the safe side. Is that what Paul is saying? Now, what is He saying? Is there really danger in eating and drinking unworthily? Yes. Notice what he says in the 29th verse:

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” 1 Corinthians 11:29.

Now I want to ask you something. Can I partake of these emblems this morning and get harm instead of blessing? Can I? Could it happen? Did it ever happen? Did it happen that night in the upper room? Who was it that got a curse instead of a blessing? Judas. And he went out to sell the Lord of glory, whose body symbolically he had partaken of. He went out to sell that very body for 30 pieces of silver. My friends, it is a terrible thing to come to the house of God and partake of the body of Christ and then go out to sell the Lord for money, pleasure, fun, lust, covetousness, or for whatever. A terrible thing.

You see it says there in the 27th verse:

“Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” 1 Corinthians 11:27.

I can take this bread which represents His body. I can take this wine which represents His blood. But if I partake unworthily, I am (don’t miss it) aligning myself with the murderers of Jesus Christ. I’m joining with the men who pressed the crown of thorns deep into His brow, who spit in His face, who took the hammer and drove those spikes through His hands and feet. This is what I am doing, my friends, when I, in an attitude of rebellion, in an attitude of indifference, in an attitude of clinging to sin, partake of these emblems, this is what I’m doing. And God says I’m guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Notice in the 29th verse:

“... he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself...” 1 Corinthians 11:29.

What are those next 5 words?

“...not discerning the Lord’s body” 1 Corinthians 11:29.

What does ‘discern’ mean? See, recognize. Is this the Lord’s body? *Symbolically* yes.

“...not discerning the Lord’s body” 1 Corinthians 11:29.

Not understanding that this represents the gift of Jesus for my salvation, not accepting it as the agency through which He gives His life to cover my life. This isn’t just a *ritual*. This isn’t just a *symbol*, it is a symbol, but it’s *more* than a symbol.

You know various societies, they have certain things that they go through. If we were someplace, sometime, where certain organizations were meeting, there would be certain things that we would go through, for instance, the salute to the flag.

That's an example of a ritual that's gone through. But Jesus here points out this fact, dear friends, that you and I are in danger of going through this just as a ritual, just as something to do.

Why do we do it? Somebody says, "It's just a custom in the church. Jesus told us to do it, so we do it. We remember that He died for us."

That's all true. It's all that, friends. We do it because He died. We do it because He told us to. We do it in memorial of His death for us. But do you see in what we're reading here that it's *more* than that? This is a living, active experience that's taking place here this morning.

If I eat and drink of this unworthily, I am guilty of the body and blood of Christ. How can that be when it took place 2,000 years ago? Well, the apostle tells us in Hebrews 6:6 that when we keep on sinning after we know better, we crucify unto ourselves the Son of God afresh. What does that mean? All over again, new, happening here this morning.

Is there someone here this morning who is going to take that hammer and drive those spikes through the Savior's hands? Somebody will, if they partake of these emblems *unworthily*, not discerning the Lord's body.

Let me say a word on "not discerning the Lord's body." Why in the opening of our study, I referred to the fact that the church is Christ's body. He says that:

"And He is the head of the body, the church..." Colossians 1:18.

Do you discern the body? Do you recognize that this is the church of God? Are you in union with it, or has some off-shoot gotten you unsettled? If I were you, my dear friend, I would get that all settled and out of the way before I would dare to partake of these emblems. I would get that all settled and out of the way. I wouldn't come to this table with doubts in my heart, or rebellion in my spirit, or off-shoot ideas in my mind. I wouldn't dare do it.

If this is not the body of Christ, then perhaps somewhere else, Christ has a body, and there is where I'd want to be in union. There is where I'd want to go to find communion. But I know that's not so, friends. I know that Christ has an *organized* body on earth. He says so. And what we are celebrating here is not the union of a body that includes all the good people over the earth. Oh, no. The church is not some invisible, intangible, mystical thing. Oh no. The church that Jesus established according to Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 is an organized body that can receive members or disfellowship members. What it binds on earth, the Bible says, is bound in heaven. And what it looses on earth is loosed in heaven. To that church, Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Some people don't know that. They think they can just take their Bible under their arms and say, "I'm going to heaven. And what the church does is *its* business. And what I do is *my* business. Ah friends, what a blessing dear ones like that are missing. They do not discern the body. They do not understand that Christ has an organized church on earth which is His body joined with Him.

Somebody says, "Brother Frazee, do you think that all the children of God are in this church?"

No. I know different. Do you know why I know it? Jesus said so. Turn to the 10th chapter of John. I want you to read it.

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold:"
John 10:16.

Who's talking? Jesus. Are all His sheep in one fold? Not yet. Is He satisfied with that arrangement? How do you know? The rest of the verse says:

"Them also I must bring. They shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" John 10:16.

Eventually, Christ will have all His sheep in one fold, all His children in one church. God has children scattered through all the churches today. He has some who aren't in any church. But I want to ask you something. If a true sheep is in the wrong fold, does that make the wrong fold the right fold? Why no. If it did, there would be no point in Jesus trying to bring them all together. Not a bit of it. So let's get it clear and keep it clear. Jesus has true children of His all over the world. Jesus knows who they are. You and I can't read hearts. That's why we are examining *ourselves* this morning. And every person who is following the light as best he knows is a child of God and is recognized in heaven. But God is in the business, Christ is in the business, the Holy Spirit is in the business, and all the angels are in the business of gathering those true children of God into one church – all those true sheep into one fold.

Am I working with Them? If I discern the body, I am. I want to be a part of that body, and I want to contribute to the *unity* of that body. I want to help answer the prayer of Jesus that His followers may all be one, just as Jesus and the Father are one.

So let a man examine himself, and thus in this way, let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup.

Well, let's think a minute of that expression again:

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body"
1 Corinthians 11:29.

Maybe I better not eat; maybe that's the safe thing to do. Which is such a *terrible* thing. To eat of bread and drink of the wine unworthily, maybe I'd better play it safe and not do it.

Now turn to John the 6th chapter and see the other side of this coin:

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at

the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” John 6:53–55.

Christ is speaking of the gift of Himself to the world, and particularly of that gift as revealed through the Holy Communion. He is speaking particularly of the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. That is why at the Last Supper, when He took these emblems, He said, “Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you.”

In other words, He’s saying, “Do you remember that sermon I preached about how you must eat My body and drink My blood in order to have life? Here it is. Here is the bread. Eat of it, and you will live forever. Here is My blood. Drink of it and you will live forever.” Back to that 53rd verse—unless you do eat of this flesh and drink of this blood, you have no life in you.

Well, does that mean that if I do not receive these emblems, I will suffer a loss? Indeed. That’s what Jesus is saying. That’s what we need to get clear. Too many people have the idea that they can take this at will or let it alone at pleasure. I see some of you are thinking. That’s good. Let us all think this through.

Here is a patient. He goes to the table. He looks at the food, and he says, “Oh, my! I’m afraid that if I eat, it will make me sick.”

So he leaves the table. He goes back to his room. The next meal comes. He comes to the table, and he says, “Oh, my! I can’t eat. It will make me sick.”

What had he better do? Well, if he eats, he thinks it will make him sick. If he doesn’t eat, what will happen? He will eventually starve to death, and on the way, he will be weak.

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you”
1 Corinthians 11:30

You see, friends, there are two ways to die. According to what we have read, one is to eat and drink unworthily, and the other is to fail to eat. Which would you like to choose? Bless the Lord, there’s a third choice, friends. There’s a third choice.

I don’t like to be caught on the horns of the devil’s dilemma. I don’t like to have to sit in a meeting and decide whether I’m going to brazenly eat of those emblems that identifies me as one of the murderers of the Lord and suffer in judgment, or to say, “I guess I won’t eat. I’m afraid I’m not worthy.” And so I go home. And I have missed the life that God has put in this bread and in this wine for me. Do you see, friends? Thank God I don’t have to be caught on the horns of that dilemma. There’s a third choice.

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat...”
1 Corinthians 11:28.

It doesn’t say, “Let a man examine himself and so let him *refrain* from eating.” It doesn’t say, “Let a man examine himself and brazenly go ahead.’ No, no.

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup” 1 Corinthians 11:28.

We should turn back to 1 Corinthians 11 because sometimes the meaning of a text depends upon a syllable of a word, and it does in this verse. The whole thing hangs there on one syllable, a tiny little syllable. Notice in the 27th verse and 29th verse, what is it that a man must not do? Eat and drink what? *Unworthily*.

Now to bring out the thought, let me tell you what it doesn't say. It doesn't say *unworthy*. It says what? Look at it yourself. *Unworthily*. What part of speech is *unworthy*? It's an adjective. What's an adjective? It's a word that describes a noun. *Unworthy* is the adjective that describes *me*, friends. I am *unworthy*. Anyone else here *unworthy*? But that isn't the word that's in this text. A lot of people think it is, but it isn't there at all.

The word is “*unworthily*.” What part of speech is “*unworthily*”? It's an *adverb*. An adverb isn't a word that describes a noun (and I am a noun). An adverb is a word that modifies a verb or an adjective. Right now, it's modifying a verb. “*Unworthily*” is describing *how* a man eats of this supper in an *unworthy* manner, in an *unworthy* attitude. That's what Jesus is talking about. God never expected that you and I would be *worthy*. That is why He sent Jesus down here. And all through eternal ages, we are going to sing, “*Worthy, worthy, is the Lamb that was slain and redeemed us to God by His most precious blood.*”

Now, friends, I'm planning to eat of this supper. I need it. I know that, unless I receive this life, I have no life in me. This is the renewal of my baptismal vows. This is the continuance of that life I received when I first gave my heart to God. I need this blessing that comes as I eat of that bread and drink of this cup. I've got to have it, friends, to survive. I can't afford to be weak and sickly in my spiritual experience by missing it. I must have it.

But, oh friends, I thank God for the provision He has made that I can partake of it in a *worthy* manner instead of an *unworthy* manner. Not that it will make *me* *worthy*. Not a bit of it. I wasn't *worthy* yesterday. I'm not *worthy* this morning. I won't be *worthy* next week. No, no. *Jesus* is *worthy*.

What does it mean to partake of it in a *worthy* manner? *Worthily*, instead of *unworthily*? It means simply this, my dear friends—which side of the cross am I on? Which side of the cross am I on? Do you remember that there was somebody who was crucified with Jesus that Friday morning there on Golgotha? How many? Two. What does the Bible call them? Thieves, malifactors. What were they *worthy* of? Death. Were they getting it? Yes, they were getting exactly what they deserved.

Do you remember that, under their suffering, at first, they were cursing, and they were calling on Christ to save themselves and Him? But under the suffering, something happened in those two men. One of them got harder, hard as nails. The other man's heart became tender. He cried out on that tree of crucifixion, “Oh, Lord, remember me!”

Did he get an answer? When? After he had proved himself for a week? No. When did he get an answer? Immediately, friend. No delay. Jesus said, "Truly, I tell you today, this very hour as I hang here suffering on this cross, you will be with Me in paradise." He was accepted. He was justified. He was saved. Am I right? Who said so? Jesus.

Thank God, friends, the thief got salvation, and he got it right then. And he went down into death with the bright hope of eternal life shining in his soul. Why? Because he was on the *right* side of Jesus instead of the *wrong* side, he was on the *right* side of the cross instead of the *wrong* side. I don't mean that geographically. I'm talking about the attitude.

The rebellious thief, in his attitude, identified himself with the murderers of the Lord. That repentant thief recognized that he was guilty, but he pled for mercy. The rebellious thief held on to his rebellion. The repentant thief gave up his rebellion. Do you see?

Is there anyone here this morning who needs the change of heart attitude that the repentant thief had? Bless God, friends, you don't have to wait for six months or six days or six minutes. You can have it right now. The blessed Christ wants to get you ready. For death or for life, it's the same preparation this morning. When we partake of these emblems of death, we are receiving emblems of life.

Now let's in our imagination go to that upper room when this supper was first celebrated. Here's Jesus and the disciples come filing in. They've met for the Passover supper. They don't know that Christ was going to give them this supper. This is the last time on earth that the Passover is to be celebrated in a meaningful way. It's the first time that this supper is to be celebrated. There those two things meet. Jesus knows, but they don't know.

As the disciples come, Christ longed to impart to them the blessing, but He sees that they are unprepared. What's the matter with them? There is sin in the heart. There is strife in the soul. Each one of them wants to what? Be first. Well, that's natural. You take even a little child; when they get a chance, it's "me first." And here it had blossomed and born fruit, and gone to seed in the lives of Peter and John and Judas and Matthew and all the rest. Every one of them, if there had been an election by ballot there, every man would have gotten one vote. Do you know whose vote he would have gotten? His own.

Jesus saw that they were unprepared. He saw that if He gave them these emblems, they would eat and drink unworthily. Do you see? They would eat and drink damnation to themselves. So, in love and pity, He thought, "What shall I do to help these?" What shall I do to wash away the sins in their lives?"

Some people would have thought that what those disciples needed was to be rebaptized. Jesus didn't think so. Some people get the idea that every time we make a mistake, or every time we awaken to a new consciousness or to closer fellowship with Christ, we need to be rebaptized. Jesus didn't think so.

Don't misunderstand me. There's a place and a time for rebaptism. When people have departed from God—gotten a divorce from their lawful Husband Jesus. But what I'm studying with you this morning is something very important.

You've read it there in John 13. How did Christ solve the problem? Did He say, "Before you can partake of the supper that I now want to give you, we must go down to the Jordan, and all of you be baptized again"? Did He? They had been baptized. But, oh friends, Jesus, looking into their hearts, saw that they were as carnal as they could be, as *selfish* as could be. Am I correct? Yes. What did He do? Ah, friends, words are powerless. Even the words of the divine Lord were stopped on His lips. He sat there in silence. Then He took off His outer garment, took the pitcher, poured water into the basin, and started to wash the disciple's feet.

Whose feet did He wash first? Judas. He washed first the feet of Judas. Do you know why? Well, friends, first of all, Judas *needed* it more than anyone there. Second, Judas was the one who was so hateful in his own soul and in his attitude toward Jesus. And the heart of love went out most after the man that *needed* Him the most. That's love.

We want to love someone who is *nice* to us, who brings us flowers, who writes us nice little notes, who remembers our birthday. But Jesus knelt down first of all to wash the feet of the man that had already bargained with the priests to betray Him and was soon going out to do it. That's love, friends.

And before Christ got through, and don't miss it, that kind of love won eleven out of the twelve. Isn't that precious? When Jesus, looking upon them after washing their feet, looked into their faces and looking deeper, as only God could look into their heart, He said, "You are all clean." They came in dirty, but bless God when they took of these emblems, they were clean. Who said so? Jesus.

If there is anyone dirty here this morning, let's get clean. What do you say?

My brother, when you yield yourself to be washed by your brother, remember your brother who is washing your feet is kneeling there representing Jesus. My sister, when your feet are washed by your fellow sister, remember she is there as an ambassador of Christ. She is there acting in Jesus' place. And all your sins can be washed away this morning. The same water that, in baptism, flowed over you this morning bathes your feet, and the word of the Living Christ is, "You are clean."

Then we can come in a worthy manner, *not* worthy in *ourselves* but in an *appropriate* manner. We come not as worthy; we come knowing that the blood of Jesus has cleansed us and that we are accepted in the beloved. May He bless us as we enter into this preparatory service and come back to this table.

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