

## **Character and Mission of Jesus: Bread and Wine (ZCC 10.27.13)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor 11:23-29**

***23 For I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread. 24 When he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "Take, eat. This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in memory of me." 25 In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink, in memory of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup in a way unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy way eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he doesn't discern the Lord's body.***

**Some time ago, I heard a comedian say that he was in trouble with his wife—because she made him a marble cake for his birthday and he took it for granite. [:]**

**This week I was thinking about how we, the Disciples of Christ Christian Church, observe communion every week—and how I want to be sure that we don't take it for granite [granted]**

**I know that you all know what a symbol is, but let me throw some out to you and you tell me what they symbolize.**

**Bald eagle [USA]**

**Star of David [Jews]**

**White dove or olive branch [peace]**

**Hawk [war]**

**Those are all VISUAL symbols. There are also actions that are symbolic. We've been watching the World Series. When a runner is trying to get on base, what does this mean? [Make the "safe" sign.] What does this mean? [Hold cupped hand to ear.] Right—"speak up" or "I can't hear you."**

**The point is that as a symbol takes shape and begins to represent the details—it also begins to take on the emotional characteristics of what it represents. A symbol can carry the power and the emotional connections of the thing or act or person.**

**When Jesus gave the cup and the bread to the disciples at the last supper, he told them to do the same after he was gone—and to do it in remembrance of him. As we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine, we focus on the work of Christ and on his suffering—and what it means to us as Christian people and individually.**

**The bread and the wine are a symbol of Christ's broken body and his blood but also a reminder of God's provision for reconciliation between perfect God and sinful human beings.**

**Today I want to look a little deeper into the symbolism we can find in the Lord's Supper. As we look at the objects and the actions I think we can find five ways they relate directly to the saving work of Jesus the Christ.**

## **1. Jesus as volunteer.**

**When I was a kid, we watched lots of old movies and short features like Tarzan and especially the three Stooges. I can remember when Curly Larry and Moe were in the army. Seems the general needed volunteers for a dangerous mission. He said, "If you want to volunteer for this mission, take one step forward..." Everyone else in the column stepped back and left Curly Larry and Moe standing along. The general thought they had volunteered so he sent them on the mission.**

**Clearly the Three Stooges didn't volunteer did they? Christ, on the other hand, was a volunteer. It was his choice to come to earth, take a human body, suffer, and die as a voluntary sacrifice for you and for me.**

**In verse 23 he says, "This is my body..." That bread represents the human body he took on when he came to the earth. Do you remember what "Immanuel" means? [God with us]**

**When Jesus came to earth as a human, he took on that human body prepared for him by the Father. In that human body, he had something to offer as an actual and tangible sacrifice.**

**For me the taking of the bread can be a symbol of his choosing—volunteering to come to this world, living and dying for us. Just as he took the bread at the table—when God the Father said, "who will go?"--he stepped forward and said, "here am I, send me."**

## **2. Symbol of thanksgiving for his work.**

**As Christians we are to give thanks to God in everything—sometimes it is difficult, but we are to give thanks in all circumstances. That's hard to do when our loved ones are sick and dying. That's hard to do when our world seems to be falling down around us.**

**That's where I like the idea of “Immanuel” or “God with us.” To me this is why its a wonderful thing that the Son came and lived walked with us—feeling what we feel, including our pain and grief—still thanking God. He has asked nothing more of us than he was willing to do.**

**In verse 24 we see that after he had taken the bread he gave thanks for it. If we remember the bread as symbol if the body—then we can see his thankfulness as also being for his body—thankfulness for the body that was bruised and broken on the cross. Thankfulness for the priviledge of dying for each of us.**

**In his giving thanks for the bread, let us see a symbol of Jesus' whole-hearted devotion to doing the work God the Father had given him to do. As he said in the garden--”not my will but yours...”**

## **3. Symbol of Jesus laying down his own life.**

**Also in verse 24, he broke the bread—and in that we can find symbols galore. Just as he took the body voluntarily, here, as he breaks the bread—he does so himself. He didn't ask Peter or John or Judas to do it.**

**If we use the bread as a symbol of his body, we could say that he broke himself for us. Symbolically he is saying, “no man is taking my life—I am laying it down myself.” Again, a choice. He chose to make himself an offering. His life was one of thanksgiving and his death was a voluntary sacrifice. He always had the power to stop the process. He always had the power to change his mind—to save himself. Broken and bruised for you and me.**

#### **4. Symbol of his substitution.**

**I like adventure movies. Always have. The hero is chasing the bad guy and the bad guy jumps from one building to another and old Clint Eastwood looks down and even though it is 20 stories he decides to run and jump too. If you didn't know what was going on, you'd think it was pretty stupid for a famous actor to risk his life and career making a jump like that just for a scene in a movie. Of course, we know how it works. Old Clint runs and they get a closeup and then he stops—and they bring in someone about his size and dressed like him to do the jump, filming from a distance. Then Clint goes to the other side and they film a closeup of him rolling and with a bit of editing it is done.**

**In verse 24 it says that his body was “broken for you” and there is some significance to that. In a sense, Jesus did what that double did. He took our place at the last moment, doing what we could not do for ourselves. Sometimes we kind of run over the words, “for you” and yet they are some of the most important words in the passage.**

**WHY did he volunteer to take on a human body? WHY was he thankful to God for the work he was about to do? WHY did he give up his life when no man could take it from him otherwise? “FOR YOU.”**

## **5. Symbol of his invitation to all.**

**I know you have heard the old saying, “you can take a horse to water but you can't make him drink.” This is the way it was when Andrea was growing up. Andrea didn't eat well—she hated most foods. When we talked to the doctor, he said she was clearly getting enough nutrition—that she was developing well and growing like she should. He said that we could give her vitamins but everything seemed OK. He said we shouldn't try to force her to eat what she hated,**

**When Jesus says, “take, eat...” he is inviting his disciples—but also every human being to come and receive the benefits of his sacrifice, the eternal life his body purchased for “whosoever will.”**

**“Take, eat...” Come and accept the salvation I have provided. We are called, one and all, to accept him as Savior and Lord. We are invited to come to eternal life through his work.**

**Note that in verse 24 we see the purpose of the supper. Though we certainly can find the presence of the Lord in our communion, Jesus says that we partake in order to remember what he did for us—giving his body and spilling his blood.**

**Verse 26 says we are to do this in proclamation of his death until he returns. His life and his ministry are important to us in many ways. He has shown us how to shape our relationships and many other things. BUT it is his DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION that provides a way back to the Father. All our hope is placed in the cross. Paul said, “God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

**In verse 26 we also see hope for his return. We are to observe these things,” until he come.” He WILL return and when he does, there will no longer be any need for communion.**

**We are currently between the cross and the throne. We sit at his table with sorrowful hearts—sorry for his suffering and pain and death. But also with hope and expectation and peace and triumph in our souls.**

**Because he took on sorrow and pain and shame—on our behalf—we can look up in hope, knowing he will return and receive us into his kingdom.**

**The symbols show us that he voluntarily took on human form and gave his own life with thanksgiving—in order to be a substitute for us, inviting all to come and be reunited with the Father.**