

The Highest Form of Worship This Side of Heaven

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

“So, did you have a great Thanksgiving?” It was just an innocent question to avoid hearing the “Hello, my name is Jamie and I’ll be your server today. Can I get you something to drink?” line. What was intended as a casual, small talk question was answered with the equally “ho hum” response cram packed with hidden emotion bordering on enough sarcasm to deaden the pain. The response was something like “Oh, it was pretty much as usual. The family got together and ate. Everyone had their issues; I tried to stay out of it, then took my kid home, played with her the rest of the day.” One didn’t have to be a psychiatrist to pick up on a deep wound in relationship, unity, and the genuine love expected in a family. The sad thing was that this young woman’s expectation of such a family had long ago been killed.

In contrast, a friend was quick to share his story. If I remember correctly, I didn’t even need to ask the question. He stated that before the traditional Thanksgiving prayer and dinner, each member of the family was asked to share what they were most thankful for. When it came time for the aging father to share, few expected much if anything. Sharing and verbalizing on an emotional level was certainly not characteristic of this father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, as with most from his generation. Perhaps he felt even more reserved this day, for it was about this time four years earlier that his wife of over 55 years had passed away. A deafening hush fell across the room when, with tears in his eyes, he broke the silence with “I’m so thankful for my family, that we can be here together, and that we love each other.” Nothing more needed to be said. Anything else would have been a distraction.

What a contrast! What made the difference? I’m sure there are a number of possibilities, but there is one glaring and obvious fact. The centrality of Jesus and His grace was at the heart of the second family gathered for Thanksgiving. It is so with any family experiencing intimacy, harmony, and unity—be it the nuclear family or the larger family of Christ, the Church.

Even before creation, central to the heart and purpose of God was unity, harmonious relationships, and the intimacy He desires us to have with Him and each other. As people who have been created in His likeness, we were designed to have the same heart and desire of God for intimacy with Him and each other. To say we don’t have that need is to say we are not created in His image. Not to pursue this level of intimacy and unconditional love is disobedience.

We all know, however, that intimacy doesn’t always happen. Many of us feel, as the young mother and waitress felt, that the expectation of intimacy, family, and unconditional love has been killed. But God has given us a “reminder” of his provision and promise that such a relationship is not only possible but should be expected and pursued by each. It is a reminder that in remembering, we might well experience the highest form of worship this side of heaven.

LIFE RESPONSE

1. This week **MEMORIZE** and **MEDITATE** on John 15:12-13, “*This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*”
What is the key phrase in this passage that presents the greatest challenge in keeping this “commandment”? See Luke 6:36; Eph 4:32; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 Peter 2:18-23; Eph 5:1-2
2. At the core of the Lord’s Supper, His table, Communion, we discovered the very heart of God. It is the intimacy He desires for us with Him and each other.
 - (a) What is the greatest barrier we have in experiencing His desire for us?
... How does that barrier express itself in your life?
... What has Christ done to remove that barrier? See Matt 18:18:11; Matt 20:28; Eph 2:13-16; Heb 10:19-25
 - (b) What if I become content or complacent with a fractured relationship with God or another believer?
... How would you define that complacency?
... What does it say about how I value the sacrifice of Christ?
3. Imagine the impact our church could have in our community as we begin to practice (see 1 Cor 11:11 “*proclaim*”) communion in Him and with each other.
 - (a) Do we have a right to proclaim in *speaking* if we fail to proclaim in *relationship* within the body/family of Christ?
 - (b) Review the following: (perhaps one passage per day)
Rom 12:1-2(context of Rom 12) 2 Cor 3:1-6 John 15:1-13 Col 3:1-17 Eph 4:17-32

Be prepared to share your observation at Mini Church next weekend.

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“The heart of Christian communion is spiritual. By the spirit man communes with God and Christ, and saints. The mystical tie of the Spirit permeates and unifies the Church.” -Dr. Merrill C. Tenney

Communion is perhaps the highest form of worship this side of heaven.

Two ordinances practiced by the church

A. _____

B. _____

Communion: Terminology

Communion: The Mark of Intimacy

Jesus' first reference

Jesus' first use

Paul's use

Communion: The Mark in History

Past

Present

Future

Communion: The Mark of Hope