Text: I Corinthians 11:17-34
Title: "Meaningless Meetings" Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

Let's open our Bibles together to I Corinthians 11:17.

ILLUSTRATION – A few years ago there was a movie that came out entitled "Men Behaving Badly." I didn't see it, but just reading the title tells me it's not something I'd care to see (or be). Well if someone were to produce a movie called "Christians Behaving Badly," then the book of I Corinthians would be the screen play for that movie.

> Here is a church that had problems with division, with open immorality, suing one another in court, disregard of marriage vows, and more. And one of the reasons we have this book in the Bible is that God wants us to learn from their mistakes.

You see, God takes seriously what goes on when His people come together. In fact you need to know this (see outline):

> **God is vitally <u>interested</u> in our lives … perfectly <u>informed</u> about the condition of our lives … actively <u>involved</u> in the formation of our lives.**

And we see all of that here in the matter that is before us in I Corinthians 11. Let me just remind you of …

1. THE SHAMEFUL <u>SITUATION</u> (vv.17-22)

Let me just read these verses again and remind you of what was happening. Read vv.17-22. The first verse tells us that they were really just having meaningless meetings.

We saw last week how the situation in the church at Corinth involved…

- Disunity in the fellowship of the church (v.18)
- Disregard for the needs of people (v.21)

All of this is so very inconsistent with what should be the main purpose and the real meaning of their meetings … to worship and remember the Lord and His love displayed for us on the Cross … and to live out that love in their relationships with other believers. And that is seen in…

2. A FAITHFUL <u>PROCLAMATION</u> (vv.23-27)

This faithful proclamation that Jesus instituted before He was crucified is what we call the Lord's Supper. It was a very important part of the gatherings of the church in NT times, and remains the highest public worship we do as a church.

Read vv.23-27.

Now this is the first time that I remember ever preaching on this passage of Scripture except as a devotional thought when we are preparing to observe the Lord's Supper. But we're not having the Lord's Supper this morning, so I want to dig into this a little bit more.

I really don't think that most of us take the matter of the Lord's Supper as seriously as we ought. Do you realize that there have been times in the history of the church when people literally died defending the truth about the Lord's Supper.

> **ILLUSTRATION** – Last summer I stood on the spot in the middle of a street in Oxford, England that commemorates the death of three men whose names are not familiar to most of us: Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and Thomas Cranmer. In the 1500s in England, Edward the King of England was a strong Protestant and resisted the influence of the Roman Catholic church in his country. But when he died and his daughter Mary came to the throne, she wanted to turn the country toward Catholicism. Of course this would put pressure on the churches in England to change their worship, and more importantly, their theology in two very important areas … the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
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> Baptism, Roman Catholics believe, was a sacrament performed by a priest upon a child when they were just a baby. With sprinkling that infant was considered "saved," if of course, when they grow up they did other things to maintain that salvation. So what could happen is that a person could be forced to be baptized by the government, and thus potentially make everyone in the country a "Christian." Well the people called "Baptists" resisted this because they believed that baptism was to be embraced by a person who had put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. It was a choice. And if it was a choice then the government could not mandate it. And so for churches to practice this was seen as treason against the government authorities.
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> When it comes to the Lord's Supper, Catholics believed (and believe) that when the elements of the Lord's Supper are consecrated by the priest that they literally become the physical body and blood of Jesus. So Jesus was physically present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. And this was the heart of the Catholic Mass. Now the Protestant reformers saw the danger here. If the Mass was true and that Christ's literal physical presence was there in the elements, then what was happening is that Jesus was being crucified again and again when the priest consecrated the sacraments. And this was a problem because it went against the Gospel that teaches that Christ was crucified once for all for all sins. It denied the finished work of Christ on the Cross.
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> And so under Bloody Mary (as she was called), the leaders of the church were arrested and questioned about their views of baptism and the Lord's Supper. And if they held to the practice of believers baptism, and that the Lord's Supper was a timeless proclamation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins, then they were burned at the stake.
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> And there in the middle of the street in Oxford there's a star marking the spot where Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer were martyred for their convictions.

That's how strongly our forefathers in the faith believed in the powerful doctrines of baptism and the Lord's Supper. That's why we ought to take it seriously. If our forefathers died in the struggle to defend that doctrine, how serious should our efforts be to participate in the Lord's Supper whenever we observe it?

> By the way, just so you can plan ahead, our next observance of the Lord's Supper is Sunday evening, August 19 in the South Complex. Please join us.

Now the heresy about the Lord's Supper doesn't appear to be the case here in Corinth. But what they were doing was so disrespecting the worship that happens in the Lord's Supper because of their loveless treatment of others in the church. And as we'll see in just a moment, God took this seriously, and apparently people where sick and even dying because they were disrespecting the Lord.

The Lord's Supper is the ultimate in Christian worship. It proclaims a love that is the exact opposite of the behavior that the church was exhibiting.

There are many things that have changed about worship through the years: the kind of music that is sung, the time that worship services are held, the types of instruments that are used, the places where worship happens, just to name of few.

> But here is one physical act of worship that has not changed. We have not been given permission to leave this off of the life of the church.

The reason Jesus instituted this timeless memorial is to remind us of what love looks like. The Lord's Supper has selfless love written all over it. Every time we share the Lord's Supper we reenact the passion of Jesus … the way that He loved us.

It's as if Paul is saying, "You treat other people this way, then you have the audacity to partake of the Lord's Supper that proclaims the Lord's selfless sacrifice.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV) - For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So whenever we observe the Lord's Supper we are to see it like this: God is holding up the perfect picture of love in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Now take a look at your own life. Are you loving others that way? Have you taken up your cross and followed Christ? If this is what Jesus thinks of people, and if this is what Jesus did for people, then how should I treat them?

> Do you see what's happening here? Most of the time when we come to the Lord's Supper, we are thinking about what Jesus did for me. And we should do that. But what these verses before us tell us is that I also need to think about the fact that this is not just what Jesus did for me … it's what Jesus did for others. It shows me the way Jesus feels about the other people in my church, and how I need to feel about them. It shows me what Jesus did for the other people in my church, and what I need to be doing for them.

So you see…

1 Corinthians 11:27 (NIV) - Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

What does it mean to eat the bread and drink the cup in an unworthy fashion? It means that I am treating other people in a way that is inconsistent with the way Jesus treats people. And in so doing I am sinning against the body and the blood of Jesus.

- I'm sinning against the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the Cross, and…
- I'm sinning against the Body of Christ, the church, for whom Jesus died.

So this is serious business … what happens in our meetings together as the people of God. And if we're guilty of sinning against Christ and His people in this way, then we must see…

3. THE PAINFUL <u>CORRECTION</u> (vv.28-34)

Note: If you are to understand these verses you need to see a word that is used repeatedly here. It is the verb that is translated "judge" and the noun that is translated "judgment." And it is used seven times here in the next few verses.

Let me show you how it is used as I read vv.28-34 again.

> **1 Corinthians 11:29 (NIV) - For anyone who eats and drinks without <u>recognizing</u>** (διακρίνων – speaks of our judging and discerning a situation; to evaluate something carefully and make a distinction) **the body of the Lord eats and drinks <u>judgment</u>** (κρίμα – speaks of the Lord's judging and rendering a verdict about something or someone, and taking appropriate action) **on himself.**
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> **1 Corinthians 11:31 (NIV) - But if we <u>judged</u>** (διεκρίνομεν – again, to evaluate ourselves carefully) **ourselves, we would not come under <u>judgment</u>** (ἐκρινόμεθα – judged by God as guilty)**.**
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> **1 Corinthians 11:32 (NIV) - When we are <u>judged</u>** (κρινόμενοι – judged as guilty) **by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be <u>condemned</u>** (κατακριθῶμεν – judged and ultimately condemned for eternity) **with the world.**
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> **1 Corinthians 11:34 (NIV) - If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in <u>judgment</u>** (κρίμα – speaks of the Lord's judging and rendering a verdict about something or someone, and taking appropriate action)**. And when I come I will give further directions.**

You see, God is actively involved in the lives of His people, as individuals and as a church. He rebukes us, and if we receive that rebuke with humility we grow and mature. If we don't receive God's instruction then He has to discipline us.

This comes either by …

- **OUR SELF-<u>EXAMINATION</u> (v.28,31)**

  This is where we examine ourselves in order to give a verdict.

  1 Corinthians 11:28 (NIV) - A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

  "Examine" means to test or to try out something.

  So I ask myself and weigh my attitudes and my motives, "Am I treating anyone in any way other than the way the Lord would treat them? Am I reconciled to the people around me?"

  CROSS-REFERNCE - Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) - "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

  1 Corinthians 11:31 (NIV) - But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

  Note: We do this with the help of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

  Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) - For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it <u>judges</u> the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

  So God wants us to examine and to judge ourselves. But if we don't do that, God will have to do the work for us. And believe me, that is no fun at all.

  So let's look at the second way that "judgment" comes into the picture. It comes by …

- **GOD'S <u>DISCIPLINE</u> (v.29-30,32)**

  Now remember, we said earlier that God judges perfectly. He observes, weighs, decides, renders a verdict and takes the appropriate action. That's what it means when God judges.

  1 Corinthians 11:29 (NIV) - For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

  So if we don't "recognize" the body of the Lord, if we don't properly discern and size up our attitudes toward the body of the Lord (the church), we are inviting God to do that. And it can get pretty painful.

Now look at v.30.

1 Corinthians 11:30 (NIV) - That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

In other words, there were some physical consequences that some of them were living with because they had been disobedient to the Lord. Do you think God takes this seriously?

> "Fallen asleep" is a way that the Bible sometimes refers to Christians who die. They are said to have "fallen asleep" because the resurrection will come some day and they will be raised from the dead. They are not eternally condemned. This is what Paul talks about in the next verse.

1 Corinthians 11:32 (NIV) - When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

> Notice that discipline is not "punishment." It is purging so that we will not be condemned with the world.

Now I want you to listen very carefully to what I'm about to say. If you misunderstand this point you will have tremendous confusion in your life.

> It is not correct for us to think that anytime something bad happens to us that we are being punished by God for something bad we did. Nor should we assume that if something bad is happening to someone else that God is "getting them back" for something bad they did.
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> But there are times when God says to us, "Alright, you are dead set on holding on to that attitude, persisting in that sin, and in continuing in your rebellion and disobedience. So here's what I'm going to do … I'm not going to shield you from the consequences of that sin and disobedience. I'm going to let those consequences fall like a heavy weight on you until you see what I'm after in your life."

Again, God is <u>vitally interested</u> in what is going on in the lives of His people, individually and as a church. God is <u>perfectly informed</u> of what is going on in the lives of His people. God is <u>actively involved</u> in our lives by taking the appropriate actions to bring about change in us. And sometimes that action takes the form of discipline.

Now what God wants from us is for us to get on our faces before him and repent. Repent of our attitudes toward other people … repent of our indifference to the needs of others … repent of not loving others like Christ loves them.

What is the Spirit of God saying in your heart today.