

## The Uniting Force of Holy Love for the Church

11/24/24

Play Song: Have people come forward to receive communion items

Mark 14: 12 – 25

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed), Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover supper?" So Jesus sent two of them into Jerusalem to make arrangements. "As you go into the city," he told them, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. At the house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks, "Where is the quest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?" He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is the place; go ahead and prepare our supper there.' So the two disciples went on ahead into the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover supper there.

In the evening, Jesus arrived with the disciples. As they were sitting around the table eating, Jesus said, 'The truth is, one of you will betray me, one of you who is here eating with me.' Greatly distressed, one by one they began to ask him, 'I'm not the one, am I?' Jesus replied, "It is one of you twelve, one who is eating with me now. For I, the Son of Man, must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for my betrayer. Far better for him if he had never been born!"

As they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and asked God's blessing on it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'Take it, for this is my body.'

**Take the bread and eat**

And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And he said to them, "This is my blood, poured out for many, sealing the covenant between God and his people. I solemnly declare that I will not drink wine again until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.

### **Take the juice and drink**

### **Pray**

We just had communion as a Church family. Communion as we do it today has been done since the beginning of the New Testament Church. What I find interesting about the communion that was done by Jesus in Mark 14 was how Jesus had it already set up before it was set up. Jesus had this preplanned. Jesus had the place already picked out and everything. This was an important moment for Jesus to spend His last moments with His disciples in human form before going to the cross. Jesus wanted to spend His last communion with His disciples or we can say Jesus wanted to have His last communion with His friends. We still do communion today in the hopes that it helps us to remember Jesus and His sacrifice, but to also remember Jesus shared Communion with His friends. Except for one disciple, there was unity in this communion. This is one reason we do communion together is for unity out of holy love for each other through Jesus Christ. What does this really look like?

As we finish up with Paul and his letter to the Church in Rome, we'll see that Paul finishes up on his letter by focusing on the last important element of being a Christian. Paul has been building up to this from the very beginning of this letter. So, let's start by looking at Romans 14: 1 – 12 where we read, "**14** Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. <sup>2</sup> For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup> Who are

you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.

<sup>5</sup> In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. <sup>6</sup> Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. <sup>8</sup> If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

<sup>10</sup> So why do you condemn another believer<sup>a</sup>? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup> For the Scriptures say,

“As surely as I live,” says the LORD,  
'every knee will bend to me,  
and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.<sup>b</sup>”

<sup>12</sup> Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. (NLT – BibleGateway)

Paul gives notice to the Church on how we are to treat one another through Christ. For the Church to be successful in its mission that was set forth in Matthew 28: 19, we must go and make disciples of all the nations. To do this, there must be unity. However, many times stupid things that we allow or think up destroy unity. An example can be found about a story of Admiral Phipps, commander of the British fleet in the 1750's during the conflict between England and France in Canada. Admiral Phipps was given orders to anchor outside Quebec and wait for the British land forces to arrive, then support them when they attacked the city. While waiting in the harbor, Admiral Phipps became annoyed by the statues of the saints that adorned the towers of a nearby cathedral, so he commanded his men to shoot at them with the ship's cannons. No one knows how many rounds were fired or how many statues were knocked out, but when the land forces arrived and the signal was given to attack, the admiral was of no help. He had used up all his ammunition shooting at the “saints” (story from Wesley Bible Curriculum). We can do dumb things that can cause unwanted

division which will cause unity to deteriorate. Paul starts off chapter 14 by talking about accepting those whose faith is weak without quarreling over disputable matters. These were new Christians from the Jewish faith who still felt uncomfortable in eating meat and still wanted to eat only vegetables. Some were uncomfortable in totally cutting themselves away from following Jewish law. Other Christians, who were either Gentiles or had stopped trying to be made right with God by following Jewish law, may have been looking down on these new Christians Jews because they still felt uncomfortable from a total break of the Jewish law. These Jews no longer had to try to make themselves right with God by following the law because a new way had been made because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Now, the only way to be made right with God is through His Son Jesus Christ. So, these new Christians whose faith was still weak, still were clinging to some Jewish law. Paul didn't want the older Christians to put the hammer on them. Paul wanted Christ's love to do the work of helping these Christians with weak faith to grow in their faith. In fact, I would question the faith of the older ones. We're supposed to build each other up, not tear down. Now, does this mean we allow new Christians or those with weak faith to do whatever they want? No! Our culture embraces this type of thought. Paul uses the term "doubtful disputations" in the KJV and "disputable matters" in NIV verse 1 of chapter 14 of Romans. The Greek term that is used here means "differentiation". This is a heavy word. What it means is that there are some things that are not necessary for salvation, so we give the Holy Spirit time to work on that person. There are some things that we do not waver on like sin against God, lifestyle that can destroy one's belief in God or destroy their relationship with God. So, we have to know the difference between the two. I had someone one time keep sticking their finger against my chest as they told me I can't keep using another translation besides the translation they were using. I couldn't understand that translation and I wanted to understand God's Word so I could apply it to my everyday life. In other words, that Christian didn't grasp the thought that I new to my faith and I needed help with it to grow. His translation would not help me. You see, Paul wanted the church to grow to the point where those who were weak in faith could work beside those who were strong in their faith. This is unity through the love of Jesus.

In fact, Paul tells us why we should do this in verses 7 to 9. Paul tells us in verse 7 that none of us should live our lives for ourselves. If we live, we live for the Lord. We also die for the Lord. In other words, the Church lives and dies for the Lord. This means all of us who has allowed Jesus into our heart serve the same master. This alone should bring Holy unity within the Church. A good football team will all work together because they all want to win. We should all want to be unified because we all serve the same master which is Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul tells us in verse 9 that the Jesus died and returned to life so that we may have new life and to be unified together. We should be building each other up through prayer and through helping each other to build a stronger faith in Jesus. Why, because some day we all will have to bow before the Lord and acknowledge who He is (verse 11). We must all give account of ourselves before the Lord.

Paul goes further in Romans 15: 1-6, “<sup>1</sup>We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>For even Christ didn’t live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, “The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>4</sup>Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.

<sup>5</sup> May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. <sup>6</sup> Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NLT – Biblegateway)

Paul now states we must develop the character of Jesus when dealing with each other. In other words, Jesus die not to please Himself, but to do the Will of His Father. Jesus didn’t come to serve Himself. He came to serve His Father and us. So we must follow in His footsteps. To do this, we must allow Him to help us to join together in one voice. The Lord will supply us with patience and with an encouraging spirit so we can live in complete harmony. Isn’t nice to know we can enjoy a little of the Kingdom of God now by living in this complete harmony. So, we must allow His Spirit to do this work within us so we can have patience with each other and have the desire to encourage each other. When this happens, then we can join in one voice in giving praise and glory to God because we will

realize we are living out His love through true unity. A unity that this world can't produce. Paul wanted the Church to enjoy this holy unity.

Then, Paul finishes by telling us what this unity produces. Paul states this in Romans 16: 25 – 27, “<sup>25</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. <sup>26</sup> But now as the prophets<sup>al</sup> foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. <sup>27</sup> All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen. (NLT – Biblegateway)

Paul tells us that now this message is available to all people. It's available because of His Church. Remember what Paul said back in Romans 10: 15, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! (NLT, 1787)” We do this so Jesus receives all the glory. To Paul, this was the mission of the Church. If a church is not unified and is fighting among each other or are putting each other down then that will hurt the cause of Christ. A church that is unified in the mission of Jesus will produce much fruit through the Spirit. We have to be careful we don't become like an Admiral Phipps who was selfish and helped to disrupt the mission that he was suppose to be part of. We all are part of the mission of Jesus Christ. We all play a part and let's make sure we are not the one who is the stumbling block. We must support one another. We pray for each other. We must help build each other up in faith. We must make sure we are patient with those weak in faith. We must make sure we are not the stumbling block in our own church. We must make sure we are carrying on the mission of Jesus as a church. Let's pray that God will make us strong and united in Christ.

*NLT Life application Study Bible.* Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996

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