Think Ahead- Part 3

# Tell the Truth

## (1 Corinthians 11:17-26)

We live in a generation where people claim that truth is relative; what may be true for you might not be true for them, making it harder to discern what the truth actually is. However, according to the word of God, there exists such a thing as absolute truth. And so, we must remember that the truth doesn’t always make sense, it doesn’t always feel good, but it always brings freedom because Jesus said,

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

That is absolutely important because, while the schools are teaching lies as fact, only God’s word is absolute truth.

In other words, truth originates from God; it is unchanging and eternal. It is revealed through God’s word in the Bible and embodied in Jesus Christ, who declared,

“I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

As we examine his word today, we want to keep in mind that the truth of God encompasses moral principles, ethical guidelines, and spiritual realities that are consistent and relevant to all people, regardless of time or culture.

Even though we may not fully understand everything at this moment, the Bible assures us that, while we currently see only a dim reflection, as in a mirror, we will one day see face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Therefore, we can always pursue the truth, trusting that it serves as the solid rock foundation for understanding the nature of God, the purpose of life, and the means of our salvation.

The title of my message today is "Tell the Truth." If you're tired of the lies and ready to seek the truth, let me hear you. Everyone say, "Tell the truth." So, let’s go. We are in a series called “Think Ahead,” based on Craig Groeschel’s book. What I love about this book is that its principles are drawn from the Scriptures and can be applied universally. When you start to “Think Ahead” and make decisions that honor God, you can begin to live the life and purpose that He has in store for you.

Today, we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper together and delve into its teachings as outlined in First Corinthians chapter 11. This proactive approach encourages us to reflect and “Think ahead”, rather than waiting until we are in the midst of the moment. This is important because, in some situations, we may not have the opportunity to address and discuss our thoughts and feelings or consider the consequences of our actions on the spot.

Certainly, there are moments when sitting down to explain and illustrate is the best approach, and times when I wish I had done that. However, there are also situations where there's no opportunity for such discussions. Sometimes, we can in ways that are comforting and encouraging, but other times, we have to be blunt and direct, stepping in decisively to help someone out of their situation.

That’s where we find ourselves in First Corinthians chapter 11, starting at verse 17. The apostle Paul is dealing with a situation in the church and the Holy Spirit gives him this message:

"In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good" (1 Corinthians 11:17, NIV).

Paul is about to give us guidance on the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper. These are the most detailed guidelines we possess, and it is evident that the Lord’s Supper was designed to hold a significant place in the hearts and minds of Christians during this time when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father in glory (Hebrews 1:3).

However, it seems that very early in the history of the church, Christians began to misunderstand the purpose of the Lord’s Supper. This meal was created to powerfully remind us of Jesus' presence, encouraging His followers to focus on Him as they carry out their daily lives. And it is through the practice of this meal, this communion with Jesus, that He becomes the joy and center of our hearts, inspiring and sustaining us in our service to both Him and others.

Sadly, this reflects a rather unfortunate aspect of our fallen human nature: we often twist, distort, and misuse the gifts God has given us. Every physical desire granted by God has been misused in some way, and there are very few privileges and benefits that humanity has not exploited. For example, under the law, God gave Israel the Sabbath, a day of rest meant for their well-being and spiritual renewal.

He said, “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God" (Exodus 20:9-10).

One might think that people would view this as a blessing and embrace it as a gracious gift from God for their comfort and benefit.

However, over time, the Sabbath became a burden for many because they associated it with the 613 man-made rules, known as the mitzvot, laws that God Himself had not commanded. And as a result, instead of being a blessing and a day of rest and worship, it turned into a day filled with restrictions and obligations. Consequently, Jesus had to correct the people of His time telling them,

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

And so, the Sabbath, like many other Old Testament observances, was intended for the benefit of the people of God, not as a set of rigid and oppressive rules and regulations.

The same can be said about the two ordinances of the Christian church: the Lord’s Supper and believer's baptism. These practices were intended to be upheld in the church until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together with Him. However, throughout church history, different individuals have swung to one extreme or the other: either mistakenly treating these ordinances as saving sacraments or becoming careless and disrespectful towards them.

But the truth is, neither baptism nor the Lord’s Supper directly affects the salvation of our souls. Instead, they serve as symbols to remind us that we are saved solely through faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, they hold great significance as they help draw our hearts closer to Him and provide a beautiful illustration of our connection with the One...

“Who loved us and gave himself for us” (Galatians 2:20).

In the early chapters of Acts, it is recorded that they met together every day, breaking bread in their homes and eating with glad and sincere hearts. They celebrated the Lord’s Supper daily until it was noted later in Acts chapter 20 that they observed the Lord’s Supper...

“On the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7).

I believe that frequent gatherings to proclaim the Lord’s death bring us great blessings and glorify Jesus Christ. However, the early church began to misuse this ordinance, leading to meaningless celebrations and empty rituals. This prompted the Apostle Paul to write,

“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good” (1 Corinthians 11:17).

In other words, you can attend church, participate in the Lord’s Supper, and not gain anything from it. Paul states that your gatherings do more harm than good, and he explains why in verse 18.

“In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval" (1 Corinthians 11:18-19).

Paul acknowledges that God's leadership is vital, but the Corinthians were focusing more on their human leaders than on Jesus Christ Himself. They didn't understand that when we all partake of the bread and the cup, which represents the body and blood of Jesus, we should be united as one. However, the Corinthians were divided into separate groups, each following a different leader. Some said

“I follow Paul;” another, "I follow Apollos;” another, "I follow Cephas;” still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:12-13).

This division was contrary to the message of unity in Christ. As Paul pointed out, Christ is not divided, and it was not Paul who was crucified for them or in whose name they were baptized. Therefore, this passage emphasizes the importance of focusing on Jesus and maintaining unity within the church.

Alongside the division of leadership, distinctions based on race, class, and gender were also evident. The apostle addressed this, saying,

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

However, many early Christians were slaves and couldn't escape their obligations. And so when they gathered, they maximized their time together by sharing food and enjoying fellowship, incorporating the Lord’s Supper into their gatherings, alongside prayer, worship, and biblical instruction. The apostle remarked,

“When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?" (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, NIV)

In this context, the wealthy were spreading out great feasts while the poor were left with nothing. Some had plenty to eat and drink, while others had none. Some drank excessively, while others went hungry. Paul indicates it is far better to eat at home if it will prevent division among believers.

"What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not" (1 Corinthians 11:22, NIV).

After reprimanding them for their misbehavior at the Lord’s Table, Paul explains the instructions that the risen Christ gave him from heaven regarding the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper. Paul says,

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you” (1 Corinthians 11:23).

Since Paul was not with the twelve in the upper room when Jesus instituted this practice, he testified,

“Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned” (Galatians 1:17).

In other words, for three years, the apostle received a divine download—direct revelation from the Lord Jesus while he was in Arabia. Therefore, if he received this information from the Lord Jesus himself, then the practice of celebrating the Lord’s Supper should hold great significance for us, as it was important enough for our Savior to share it with Paul.

Look at what he says in verse 23, Paul continues:

“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread” (1 Corinthians 11:23).

The phrase “on the night he was betrayed” serves as a powerful reminder that the Lord’s Supper was intended to touch the hearts of his followers. It emphasizes that Jesus instituted this meal on the very night he would endure the deepest betrayal and confront pure evil directed at him.

In taking the bread, we find a continual reminder of our Savior's loving heart as he gave himself for the people. There is something profoundly touching here because it states, “he took bread,” which is significant given that he had previously told the people,

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (John 6:56).

They didn’t understand what He meant, but He shared this truth, leading many to leave Him. Jesus offered this memorial feast to His believing followers—those who would partake of the bread and abide in Him.

Therefore, this meal would have been very meaningful for believers, as it was intended for those who have been redeemed by His precious blood. It is not for those who are lost or hoping to be saved but for those who have already experienced the joy of redemption and know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. To these, Jesus spoke when He took the bread,

“And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

Some people believe that when we give thanks to God for the bread and grape juice, the elements are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ. Others argue that while this transformation doesn’t occur outwardly, when ingested, they are actually receiving the body of Christ. However, it's not necessary to examine these views in depth because, when Jesus sat at the table in His complete human body, He was not physically divided among His disciples. The focus should be on the symbolic and spiritual significance of the Lord’s Supper.

When Jesus took the loaf, gave thanks, broke it with His own hands, and said, “This is my body,” the clear and literal meaning is that the bread on the Lord’s table represents—everyone say, “represents” —the precious, holy body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we receive the bread with gladness and sincere hearts, focusing our minds on Christ, we experience our Lord Jesus Christ in faith in a unique way. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial that makes Jesus incredibly real to us and gives us a profound sense of His presence. As He said in a different context, the principle remains the same:

“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

When we celebrate this meal with sincerity of heart and full faith, Jesus' presence is felt most strongly. This is why our Savior desires us to celebrate the Lord’s Supper frequently.

In verse 25, the apostle continues saying,

“In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

The Lord’s Supper reminds us that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was not a random act of wicked men but a deliberate and premeditated plan of God. Every time we gather at the Lord’s table, we “Think Ahead.” The cup of grape juice and the wafer of bread symbolize our redemption—of humanity and all Creation—solely through Jesus' precious atoning blood.

He says, “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” In other words, whenever Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper, they are preaching a sermon. Through our actions, we declare that Jesus’ death was not that of a martyr but a sacrificial death, where He died for sinners and shed His blood so that we would be justified.

When the Lord’s Supper is observed as Jesus intended, it continually preaches to the world, conveying a message more powerful than any words of ours because whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

I wonder if the Lord’s Supper holds a special place in your heart. For some, it may feel more like an obligation, something done just because Jesus commanded it. But think of it more as a request. When Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” it’s as if He were saying, “I would love for you to do this.”

Imagine you are at the bedside of a loved one who is about to pass away. They might gather their children and give each one a photograph, saying, “I’m going to be leaving soon, and you won’t see me for a while, but I want you to keep this picture, treasure it, and remember me whenever you look at it.”

Would you consider that request a chore? If you love that person, you would gladly take out the picture from time to time, cherishing it and remembering the love you shared. This is the purpose of the Lord’s Supper in the church; it’s not about legalism but about having a heart full of love for Him and joining His people to remember Him.

Some may have viewed the Lord’s Supper as a way to earn salvation, partaking in the elements hoping to find assurance that their sins are forgiven. However, what is truly needed is not a ritual, sacrament, or ordinance, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You need to trust in the gospel:

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Would you celebrate with me the Savior who gave His life for you and who we memorialize in the Lord’s Supper?

Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me." We want to remember His shed blood, being thankful for it because,

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

When we celebrate this meal, we let Jesus know that we still remember.

We celebrate the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of His suffering, His body, His blood, His resurrection, and His soon return. The Bible says,

“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Psalm 107:2, NKJV).

Think about His love, His goodness, how He died on the cross and rose again. Think about His grace that brought us through. How could we forget His love and mercies?

This morning, I ask you to remember Jesus—what He did for you, what He called you out of, and the times He brought you through difficult situations. We must remember Him because He hasn't forgotten us. In fact, He said,

“I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16).

As you come forward to receive the emblems, remember the palms of His hands.

“He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands'” (John 20:27).

Jesus said to you, "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me."

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