

Lake Cities Community Church
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March 20, 2011
Series: 1 Corinthians. Growing Up. Building UP.

“Hey, Wait Up!”
1 Cor 11:17-34

A three-word phrase I remember well from my childhood is: “Hey, Wait Up!” Anyone remember those words? Maybe you had to stop and tie your shoe, or you forgot your toy and ran back to the house. But what happened is that the rest of the group (whoever they were), instead of waiting for you, started off without you.

“Hey, Wait Up! “Stop!” “I’m coming! Wait for me to catch up with you!”

Most of the time, that was no big deal, they were four or five houses down the street, but you ran and caught up and off you went.

But, I don’t know, at other times maybe it was a bigger deal. Why didn’t they wait for you? Were they really in such of a hurry? And inside you felt a little pang of rejection, or hurt. And as you grew up to be an adult, you realized there is always someone out in front of you and we appeal to them – “Hey wait up.” Can I join you? Can I be part of the group?”

I talked with a woman in another church plant church who for years felt like an outsider because she didn’t attend the planting church like many of the other ladies. They were always further ahead in terms of their relationships, and she was always trying to catch up. But the other ladies never stopped to fully include her.

And what happens is that if we always feel as is we are the ones left behind our message changes from, “Hey, wait up!” To “Go on without me, I’ll catch up. No – it is no big deal. You go ahead. It’s fine. In fact, it is better this way.” And we surrender to isolation.

If you feel this morning that you are on the outside looking in, behind trying to catch up -- whether it be in the church, or at work, in your family or school, I think you will find Paul's message to you encouraging. And if you and I happen to be those out in front, in the "in" crowd, those who have the blessing - Paul is going to challenge for us to wait for others.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 17-34. We are in the section of the book (Cpts 11-14) that deals with the problems the Corinthians were having in their worship services. Last week we explored the problems they had in their time of prayer, and today we will see the problem at the Lord's Table. The text breaks into three sections: 17-22 (Problem), 23-26 (Context), 27-34 (Solution / Warning). Let's begin with the problem.

PROBLEM -- EACH TAKES HIS OWN SUPPER FIRST (17-22)

1Cor. 11:17 But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 1Cor. 11:18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. 1Cor. 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you. 1Cor. 11:20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 1Cor. 11:21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 1Cor. 11:22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

I take the key verse to be verse 21, 1Cor. 11:21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. There was a group of people in

the church not waiting for the other people, and it lead to neglect and isolation on one hand, and excess and sin on the other.

Now, like the passage last week, we need some cultural background to really understand the problem. In the early church, before celebrating the Lord's Table they had a large meal, called an agape meal, or a love feast (see Jude 12). The modern equivalent would be our potlucks, but in first century it was not so much of a potluck as a brown-bag, each brought their own food to eat. And in the church there were rich and poor, and so the rich brought abundant food, and the poor brought very little if anything at all. Also, it is likely that in a first century, according to custom, the wealthy all ate together in a private room, while the poorer believers ate their meager provisions – perhaps in a courtyard. And none of the groups, especially the wealthy, waited for the others.

And to this Paul says, "*What are you doing!!!*" The Lord's Meal celebrates unity, yet they were promoting division by their actions. If the Gospel is suppose to bring together Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, male and female, slave and free you have missed the whole point by continuing to eat separately without regard for one another. Paul says, "**You do more harm than good in this!**" (17).

Paul wants them to realize that some actually are neglected so badly, that at a feast, they are going hungry. I imagine the story this way: A poor family just joined the church - gloriously saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. And they come, for the first time, to the Love Feast. Full of excitement they find the address and as they enter the gate they hear laughter and loud talking. Confused, they confirm that they are not late, they are right on time. What is going on here? They see a well-to-do looking group wearing the newest fashions - that is nearly done eating already and they are now enjoying large cups of wine. They begin to

move toward the feast thinking that this is the meeting when a helpful usher, with a practiced smile greets them and tactfully steers them out into the courtyard with other poor families. And there they, alone, begin to eat the small rations they had brought.

We once attended another church that would set a per person fee to attend an all church picnic or celebration because part of the meal was catered. And for many families, the fee was not too high, and was similar to perhaps what they would spend anyway on a lunch after church, 20 or 30 dollars, something like that. Now the church always said from the front, "Don't let price be a barrier to coming – if you need assistance with the fee, contact the pastor." But, honestly, how many people do this? Not many. The result was that the poorer members would not come, or if they did - they would not eat, or they would bring their own food, peanut butter sandwiches in paper sacks. And I remember seeing the poor families nibbling on their brown-bagged food while the majority enjoyed abundant catered fare. And because of that experience, on a very practical note, when we started LCCC, I determined that when we had picnics, breakfasts or anniversary celebrations we would never charge a fee and thus divide the church on the basis of economics.

Leadership must grapple with the diversity of their congregations – including rich and poor – but not just this -nearly **any significant difference can create two groups:**

Those who have education, and those who do not.

Those who are married, and those who are single.

Those who have children, and those who do not.

Those who have jobs, and those who are unemployed.

And so, often, those of us who are in the “in” crowd – who are in the power position are *insensitive to those who are on the outside looking in*. At worst, our insensitivity comes out of arrogance and pride. We believe we have earned what we have, we have paid the price and others should respect that, and even serve us. At best... even if we are not being intentionally mean or arrogant, we often just don't think about how our actions, what we say and do – how they can make a person feel inferior.

Those of us who are married don't think about what it would feel like to be a single person in our church. Those of us with kids, forget that those without kids don't want to talk about kids 24/7.

It is very likely that at least some of the rich people in Corinth didn't think twice about how they took their meal, as they were used to being treated with honor. Others may have thought about it, and defended the practice based on custom. But I would guess all were surprised at the amount of damage Paul says it is doing to the church and their faith.

CONTEXT -- THE LORD'S TABLE (23-26)

The context of this feasting is the Lord's Table, verse 23-26. Probably after the feast was over, the pastor or elders would move the group into the taking of the wine and the bread.

Paul gives us in verses 23-26 a beautiful description of Communion: 1Cor. 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 1Cor. 11:24 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.” 1Cor. 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in

My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” [1Cor. 11:26](#) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

What struck me about this passage in the context of “waiting” was verse 26. Paul reminds us that at the Lord’s Table we, “[proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.](#)” The Table itself reminds us that we are all waiting for the return of Christ.

And Paul is saying, “if you cannot wait for one another, and look out for your brother or sister now in the church, how will you ever be prepared for my return? The principle is one that we see often in the New Testament; your vertical relationships with God cannot be right until your horizontal relationships are taken care of.

SOLUTION -- EXAMINE YOURSELVES (27-34)

And so in the third and final part of this section, verses 27-34, Paul gives us the solution which is delivered in cloak of a strong warning. [1Cor. 11:27](#) Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. [1Cor. 11:28](#) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [1Cor. 11:29](#) For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. [1Cor. 11:30](#) For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. [1Cor. 11:31](#) But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. [1Cor. 11:32](#) But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

The key word in this section is the word “judged”. On the positive side, we are to examine¹ ourselves (v28) – to test our own motives and behaviors. This is introspection.

¹ A different Greek word is used there than “judged” (krino) but it communicates the same basic idea.

We are to judge the body rightly (29) and judge ourselves (31) rightly. Paul here is looking back to the problem of the feasts. Paul says, "Think about these things." Examine the situation – think about what you are doing.

Because... the result of not judging rightly is that God Himself will punish (30) and discipline (32) His people. That is, Paul says, why some have gotten sick or died in the church (30). Their behaviors at the feast which they brought to the Lord's Table so offended God that he decided some of them had to die as punishment! Beware, Paul says, lest you provoke God's anger. This is serious business.

And I would guess most of us have heard other pastors also reiterate what a serious thing it is when we take the Lord's Table. And we should take the Lord's Table seriously and examine ourselves – but actually this passage is not about your own personal sin and is often pulled out of context.

Dr. Tony Campolo shares the following helpful story: He said, "Sitting with my parents at a Communion service when I was very young, perhaps six or seven years old, I became aware of a young woman in the pew in front of us who was sobbing and shaking. The minister had just finished reading the passage of Scripture written by Paul that says, "Whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. As the Communion plate with its small pieces of bread was passed to the crying woman before me, she waved it away and then lowered her head in despair. It was then that my Sicilian father leaned over her shoulder and, in his broken English, said sternly, "Take it, girl! It was meant for you. Do you hear me?" She raised her head and nodded—and then she took the bread and ate it. I knew that at that moment some

kind of heavy burden was lifted from her heart and mind. Since then, I have always known that a church that could offer Communion to hurting people was a special gift from God.

What Campolo tells in that story, one of my commentators said in more theological language: “Paul’s warning was not to those who were leading unworthy lives and longed for forgiveness but to those who were making a mockery of that which should have been most sacred and solemn by their behavior at the meal.” (Bloomberg, 231).

In other words, if you have been dividing this body – the church – how can you participate in that thing which is suppose to unify the church? You can’t shame one and honor the other. It makes a mockery of both. It is like when the government lectures it citizens for having too much debt – it is incompatible. You have to fix the problem first, before you can have integrity.

And if they would take some time to think about their actions and examine their own hearts they would come to the conclusion, verse 33: [1Cor. 11:33](#) So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, **wait for one another.** [1Cor. 11:34](#) If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. Please wait for one another. Place other’s needs ahead of your own. Reach out to those who are behind you, those on the edge of the fellowship. Don’t let food, or education, or marital status, school choice, political affiliation or anything else create division in the church.

And if Paul were here today, he would tell us, “Lake Cities, examine yourselves. Are there any brothers or sisters going hungry in your midst.” Are there people on the outside looking that you need to wait for? Are you prideful in any areas? Or are you just not thinking about the needs of others and how your actions or words impact others.

As we begin to close, and as we prepare for the Lord's Table, I am going to show you about a four-minute video clip. It is about a young man who gets really frustrated waiting for other people – just like you and I often do. We think we are right, and that others should submit to that. I think you will see his pride and selfishness clearly and how it brings conflict. But then something happens (he puts on special glasses that allow him to see the needs of people around him) to remind him to think about the needs of other people. Let's watch it now.

We need to wear those kind of glasses in the church. So that we are on the lookout for the needs of others and fight against our natural tendency to only please ourselves. Then, in the church the discouraged, the lonely, the struggling and the hungry would find a welcome, and encouragement, and food for their souls.

Wait up – let's bring everyone along into the church. No outsiders, not "have" and "have not's". Only sinners saved by grace clinging to one another at the Table of our Lord, unified in Christ.

Father,

We ask for your forgiveness when we, to whom you have given so much, are so absorbed in our blessing that we forget and neglect those around us. Help us to see with your eyes, the needs around us, and to bring along everyone into sweet fellowship that you call to Lake Cities Community Church. Thank you for the unity you have already given to us, for the kindness and love I see each week. But where we are weak, strengthen us we pray. And where we are pleasing you, help us to excel still more. Prepare us now as we come to your table, just at the Corinthians did so many years ago. Help us to honor you in a special way as we remember your Son's sacrifice. In His name, Amen.