

Sermon Summary | Sunday 7th June 2026 | 1 Corinthians 11.17–34

In 1 Corinthians 11.17–34, Paul teaches the church about the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion. This passage helps us understand what Christians are doing when they come to the Lord’s Table. Communion can easily be misunderstood. Some may think of it mainly as a private moment between them and God. Others may treat it as something that works automatically, whether or not they come with repentance and faith. Others may think it is only a reminder. Paul shows us something richer: at the Lord’s Supper, Christ gathers his people to remember and proclaim his death, to receive his grace by faith, and to live as one body before him.

First, we come together as one body. Paul rebukes the Corinthians because their gatherings were doing more harm than good. The rich had enough, the poor were humiliated, some were full, others were hungry, and the meal that should have shown their unity was exposing their divisions. They were claiming to remember the Lord who gave himself for others, while ignoring the needs of others. Communion is personal, but it is not individualistic. It is not simply “me and Jesus.” It is the meal of Christ’s gathered people. We confess our sins together, hear God’s promise of forgiveness together, and come to the table as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Second, we remember Christ’s death for us. Paul takes the church back to the words of Jesus: “This is my body, which is for you” and “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” The centre of Communion is not our feelings, the beauty of the service, the holiness of the minister, or even the strength of our faith. The centre is Christ: his body given, his blood shed, his promise made, and his death for sinners. Communion is not a new sacrifice of Christ. His sacrifice on the cross is full, perfect, sufficient, and once for all. But neither is Communion an empty sign. The bread and wine are visible signs and pledges of Christ’s love. As we receive them with repentance and faith, Christ strengthens us by his Spirit.

Third, we examine ourselves before we receive. Paul warns against eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. That does not mean asking, “Am I good enough to come?” If that were the question, no one could come. The table is not for people who have made themselves worthy. It is for sinners who are trusting Christ. To come rightly does not mean coming sinlessly; it means coming honestly — repenting of sin, trusting Christ’s mercy, seeking peace with God and neighbour, and recognising the church as Christ’s body. Self-examination is not meant to drive believers away from Christ, but to bring us to him truthfully.

Finally, we receive with reverent joy. We come reverently, because this meal is holy. We come joyfully, because Christ is gracious. The Prayer Book captures this beautifully: we do not come trusting in our own righteousness, but in God’s great mercy. So we must not come casually, proudly, or carelessly. But weak believers should not stay away because they feel needy. The table is not for people who have no sin; it is for people who have a Saviour.

So when we come to the Lord’s Table, we come as sinners to Christ. We come together as one body. We remember his death. We examine ourselves honestly. And we receive with reverent joy, feeding on Christ in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving, until he comes.

Questions for personal reflection

1. Do I tend to treat Communion mainly as a private moment, or am I recognising that Christ gathers us to the table as one body?
2. Where do I need to come honestly before Christ — repenting, trusting his mercy, and seeking peace with God and neighbour?