

Devotion on the Wine of the Communion as a Type of the Love of Christ, Tuesday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, 2 October 2012, Anno Domini



The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

**L**ORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. 11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, whichsing among the branches. 13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. (Psalms 104:10-15)*

When we recall the Wine-Cup of the Lord's Supper, what images come to mind? Are they images of revelry and common excess, or are they images of love, tenderness, sacrifice and even a Communal joy? Is this wine not an uncommon wine rather than a common and cheap one? If this Wine of the Cup of our Lord's Passover were a common wine of the daily variety, would we yet consider it with the same tenderness and love as that most uncommon and rare love that only Christ could provide?

From the days of the Reformation, the English Reformers, and particularly Archbishop Cranmer, counseled against making the Cup a too common indulgence. The Lord initiated the Supper at Passover – a yearly observance – and, we are told in 1 Corinthians 5:7 - *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* Since we are not commanded at any point to make a daily observance with Bread and Wine, nor a weekly observance, it remains an early principle of the Reformers that a too frequent observance renders the Holy Communion less edifying and meaningful. It is not to be repeated so often as to become an exercise in rote practice rather than the revered and spiritual partaking of the Lord's Body and Blood in Communion as the Body of Christ. The Impetus to lift the Holy Communion to the status of a weekly observance arose from the Oxford Movement under men such as John Henry Newman who wanted to take the Anglican Church back to Roman Catholicism – Newman did later betray his oath and went over to Rome.

So why do we use Wine and a single Cup for our Communion observance? It is because the single Cup represents the fact that we intend to partake, as Christians, of that SAME

Cup of the Lord. We all have a cross to take up daily and follow Him.

How is the Wine like the Love of Christ? In many particulars:

- 1) Wine of good vintage is sweet and pleasant in all ways to the taste. Christ is of the Highest Pedigree of Heaven and is sweet to the memory and mind of the Christian.
- 2) In the days of Christ, the alcohol in wine insured the drink was free of harmful bacteria. Water could not be so counted. Christ is free of all hurtful things for our souls and pure from imperfections.
- 3) Older wine is usually considered of better quality than new wine. The Ancient of Days is from Eternity Past to Eternity Future and His quality is above all that we can know.
- 4) Wine makes the heart warm with gladness – a gladness that does not result from any personal success. Christ warms our heart with the gladness of forgiveness, acceptance, and love – qualities for which we have not personally sacrificed or labored.
- 5) Wine relieves sorrow and despondency. *Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.* (Prov 31:6) When the heart is at its lowest ebb, Christ comes in and makes it new and full of joy.
- 6) Wine cause men to forget their sorrows just as Christ causes men to turn from their sorrowful and sinful past and begin a new life of love and joy.
- 7) Wine is often prescribed by physicians today to those who have heart disease. It improves blood circulation and thins the blood. The Love of Christ is an excellent elixir for the heart making it new and fresh. The heart that receives Christ is a new heart that brims over with love.
- 8) Good Wine must come from a good tree (or vine). What Tree is that from Which Christ proceeds and is of the same substance? Is it not God the Father? No better Tree exists.
- 9) Wine is a healing balm for wounds. It was used by the Good Samaritan to treat the mand left half dead on the Road to Jericho.
- 10) Wine enhances courage. The wine of the world gives a false courage, but the Wine of Christ gives a real and sacrificial courage.
- 11) Wine is used in celebrations at marriage feasts just as that wine of Cana of Galilee. So is the Wine of the Communion typical of that Marriage Feast of the Lord and His Bride, the Church.

Given all of these typical qualities of Wine as Symbolic of the Love of Christ, we must guard against making the Holy Communion an observance too common and of no special occasion. We must take this Sacrament soberly and with deep thought and meditation. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*

(1 Cor 10:16-17) Christ specified no regularity of the observance, however, if it takes on the nature of the Passover which Christ truly has become at His crucifixion, should we consider it a common fair of worship.? Or should it be observed with a special reverence and at occasions when its deep import for us can be realized? *This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* (1 Cor 11:25-29)

The elements of Bread and Wine are not physical and real manifestations of God. They are not to be revered and idolized, but taken as symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ. They represent His 'Spiritual Presence' in the elements and not His real, physical Blood and Body. Do we worship the Christ for which these elements are symbolic, or do we worship the symbol itself? Beware of Roman idolatry!