

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

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1 CORINTHIANS 11:24–26

William Thayer, nineteenth-century biographer and writer wrote, “Gratitude is the memory of the heart. Where there is no memory of the heart, there is an absence of grateful feelings.” Every year, on Memorial Day, we remember with grateful feelings our soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the freedom we enjoy today. We remember the price they paid for our freedom and the blood they spilled on battlefields at home and abroad, including the beaches of Normandy, the swamps and rice paddies of Korea and Vietnam, the desert sands of Iraq, and the mountains of Afghanistan.

To lay down one’s life for his or her country is the supreme act of patriotism. A failure to remember such loyalty with gratitude indicates a fundamental defect in our character. The Jewish exiles in Babylon, living in an alien society, lamented, “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth” (Ps. 137: 5, 6, NIV). These were the sentiments of a people who were not only loyal to their country, but who also longed for their God.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was a patriot. He left the glory of heaven and came down to us for the purpose of laying down His life for our deliverance from the bondage of sin. Before He went to the cross, He instituted the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper for us (also called the Lord’s Table, Holy Communion, or Eucharist) so that we may remember what He has done for us. Just as Memorial Day beckons us to remember our soldiers with thankfulness, the Lord’s Table reminds us of the greatest battle ever fought in human history—the battle for our soul on Calvary’s Hill. Two thousand years ago, on a rugged cross, Jesus Christ, God-incarnate, won a decisive victory over Satan, the enemy of our soul, and freed us from the fear of death. The Bible says that He bore our sins and died for us “when we were still without strength . . . while we were still sinners . . . when we were enemies” (Romans 5:5, 8, 10).

Why would God in Christ die such an illogical and irrational death on the cross? In the final scene of the film, *A Beautiful Mind*, we see the brilliant mathematician and economist, John Nash, accepting the Nobel Prize for his work. His journey to the Nobel lectern was a tortuous one, since he suffered from chronic paranoia and severe schizophrenia. As he accepted the Nobel Prize, he asked, “What truly is logic? Who decides reason? My quest has taken me to the physical, the metaphysical, the delusional, and back. I have made the most important discovery of my career—the most important discovery of my life. It is only in the mysterious equation of love that any logic or reason can be found.”

There you have it—the logic and the rationality of Christ’s death for us on the cross. What seems to us an illogical and irrational death can only be explained by the “mysterious equation” of God’s everlasting love for the unlovable. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Let us be captivated by God’s love that is “greater than any tongue or pen can ever tell.”

The Lord’s Table is observed in remembrance of Christ’s death on the cross. Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me . . . This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24–25). Every time we partake of the bread and drink of the cup, we remember with gratitude what Christ has done to reconcile us to God and put us in right standing before Him.

But the Lord's Table is more than a symbol of God's past act in history; it is also a sign of a glorious present reality—our mystical union with the living Christ conditioned by faith in Him. This spiritual union forms the basis of our communion with Christ and other believers. To be sure, our communion is mediated by the Holy Spirit who dwells in Christ as the head of the church and in believers as the members of His body. The emblems of the Lord's Supper signify the nourishment we draw from our communion with Christ. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53).

The Lord's Table is also a seal that points to our obligation to proclaim the gospel until Christ returns (1 Cor. 11:26). It assures us of divine grace and gives depth and expression to our prayers. The New Testament scholar N. T. Wright rightly observed: "The Eucharist is, in a sense, both the highest form of prayer, and the first and most basic answer to our prayers. It forms a lens through which all other answers come into focus."

How so? The Eucharist is the highest form of prayer because it invites us to bring to Christ all our hurts, burdens, and needs without fear, knowing that in Christ we have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses. It is also an answer to our prayer in that it points to Jesus Christ as the one who alone can meet our needs and satisfy us. And as part of that answer, it invites us to come on behalf of others in need and ask God how we might be a part of His answer to their needs.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you paid a debt that you did not owe and I could not pay by sacrificing your life for me on the cross. With a heart of gratitude, I remember what you have done for me. You were broken for my transgressions, and by your blood I am cleansed of all my unrighteousness. I take the cup of salvation you have offered to me and call upon your name. Use me as you see fit to be a dispenser of grace to others in need. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.