

With Five Senses
Communion Meditation
By Don Green



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Well, it's a Communion Sunday here at Truth Community Church and we're going to celebrate Communion here at the beginning of the service. I think it's very important for us and we like to emphasize this, it's important for us to prepare our hearts for Communion. It is a holy time to remember the death of our Lord and it is not something that we should barge into without forethought, without setting aside the things of this world and preparing our hearts with a meditation of some kind on Christ before we partake of the elements together. Scripture tells us clearly that we are to examine ourselves before we take of the elements, that we are to reflect and to take it in a worthy manner, and to be hurried and to be rushed in it is something that is to take it in an unworthy manner, and so we try to have a different kind of meditation of some kind before we come to the Table. We want to remember here this morning is this: Christ truly suffered for us on the cross. He truly suffered in every aspect of his humanity. There was a genuine pain that was present in his suffering on the cross for us. And, yes, each one of us has our own aspects of pain and difficulty in life, but we recognize that the suffering of Christ is supreme and we subordinate our thoughts and our issues in life when we come to the table and we set them aside in order to remember Christ and his supremacy in our affections and the supremacy of his sufferings on our behalf, and so this is not about us in this hour, this is about Christ and what he has done for us. And when you look at Scripture, you examine Scripture, you see that all five of the human sense were involved in the suffering of Christ. He suffered in his sight. He suffered in his hearing. He suffered in his sense of smell, his sense of taste, and his physical touch. All of that was incorporated into his suffering on the cross and that's what I want to just briefly remind you of and to show you, maybe pull some things together in a way that you haven't quite seen them in the same context before.

Christ suffered with his physical sight, the things that he saw caused sorrow to him and that's our first aspect of it as we consider the five senses of his suffering. First of all, we see that he suffered with his sight and I'd invite you to turn to the gospel of John 19, and we're just going to touch on these very briefly. This is not a full-fledged message by any means, but just a means of getting us to sympathetically view Christ as we remember him. On the cross, it says in John 19:25, that "standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother," saw her with his physical sight, "and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said

to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' From that hour the disciple took her into his own household." Jesus saw these ladies gathered around the cross including his own mother, and it's very striking to me that our Lord himself saw fit to honor his mother and to care and provide for his mother even as he was hanging on the cross suffering for the sins of the world. And so he cares for her, he provides for her, the transaction, so to speak, that is taking place here is that he was pointing his mother to the disciple John and John to his mother and says, "Now that I am departing from this earth, John, you take care of my mother. And mother, you will be with John henceforth going forward." And he actually addresses her as "woman" there but whatever, you get the point. He sees what's happening in front of him and with a full awareness, he takes in the scene in front of him with his physical sight and he responds to it accordingly, and with a great sense of kindness and sympathy and honoring of his mother in full compliance with the fifth commandment even in his dying hour, he provides for her with his care based on what he saw as he hung on the cross.

Now secondly, Christ suffered in his hearing as well. He heard the words of accusation and rejection that were slung at him from vile mouths while he hung on the cross. Mark 15, if you would turn there with me. Mark 15. And the verbal abuse was wretchedly intense for our Lord as he hung on the cross. In Mark 15:27 it says this, "They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.' Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!' Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him." There he hung between heaven and earth, as it were, while earth rejected him and hurled its vile rejection and its vile verbal abuse at him, mocking his claim to be the King of Israel, mocking his power to save, and Christ responds in what manner? He suffers as a lamb led to the slaughter. He suffers in silence. He hears it all but he does not revile in return. He had said earlier that he had the power to call 12 legions of angels down in his defense and he refused to do so. He had that power. He had that authority as the Son of God and he deferred, he did not do that. He bore the accusations, he bore the rejection in silence in order to fulfill the eternal plan of God by which God had appointed this hour to be for the redemption of the people of God.

It's remarkable to see, and what I would ask you to do, what I would encourage you to do as we prepare for Communion here, is to just realize that Christ suffered that rejection on behalf of you, if you are a believer in Christ, and to realize that he suffered this rejection at the hands of men in order that he might reconcile you to a holy God. And in his suffering, we see something of the measure of his love displayed for us. He was willing to suffer for us. We all know the people that will love us while circumstances are good, but when times turn bad, they'll abandon you, fair weather friends, is what they are sometimes called. Christ was no fair weather friend. When the storms rained down upon

his own head and he heard these words of accusation, he continued on until the work would be complete.

Well, thirdly, we can say that he suffered also with his sense of smell. I won't dwell on this so much but it says in Mark 15:19, you can look up the page just a bit there, that "They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him." As Christ was being prepared for crucifixion, he smelled the foul breath of those that were preparing him for crucifixion. He smelled their sputum as it fell upon his cheek. And he suffered in his sense of smell in the repulsive nature of the whole situation. Again, he silently bore that on our behalf.

So with his sight, he sees the people around him, he sees what's happening. He suffers in his physical vision. He suffers in his physical hearing with the accusations and the rejection. He suffers with his sense of smell. He suffered also with his sense of taste. If you'll look at Matthew 27, his taste, his sense of taste was involved in his suffering as well. Matthew 27:33 and 34, "when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink." Sometimes they would give to the crucified person sort of a sedative that would deaden the pain just a bit. Christ tasted that, rejected any further because he wanted to fulfill the fullness of suffering on our behalf, but even in his taste, his sense of taste was involved in the collective sufferings that he made for us. And when we consider his sense of touch, his sense of physical pain, we don't need to dwell on that. His hands were literally nailed to the cross. His feet were probably placed together and a spike driven through his ankles to nail him to the cross, so both hands and feet suspended by nails and thorns and suffering in that manner. Every one of his human sense was involved in the physical suffering that he did on our behalf.

Now there's a lot that we can draw out of that. There is a spiritual significance that we should draw out of this. First of all, let me just remind you that this is the holy, blameless Son of God of whom we speak. This is the one who is God Incarnate. God is love. This is love Incarnate that we see suffering like this, the eternal Son of God, the one who was without sin of his own. He invited his enemies, "Convict Me of sin. Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" And they fall silent because he was utterly blameless. And in the perfection of his wonderful character, the perfection of his attributes, the wonder of his humility leaving heaven to come to earth, and you just see the blessed nature of his character and the blessed nature of his impeccable heart, and you see that he is suffering like that, you realize that there is a cosmic significance to what is in play here. And we remember this, we remember why he was suffering. Christ was not suffering in order to give us an example. There was far more to the atonement than that. He simply wasn't providing a moral influence for us and say, "This is how you should love and how you should obey God." That is so inadequate of an understanding. Christ was suffering like this physically because he was paying the price for your sin and for mine, and Scripture makes this abundantly clear. The suffering on the cross physically was displaying

something of the far greater, more infinite spiritual suffering that he was undergoing on our behalf.

I would ask you to turn to the book of 1 Peter. After Hebrews and James you'll find 1 Peter in your Bible. 1 Peter 2:24, you could say verse 23 because it picks up on things that I said earlier. 1 Peter 2:23-24, "and while being reviled, Christ did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." In all of this, there was no spirit of retaliation in Christ. That in itself is worthy of an entire message. There was no spirit of retaliation. There was no response of anger on his behalf. And why was he doing this? Verse 24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross." This was a guilt offering to God that Christ was making. He offered his sinless life as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of his people to satisfy the justice and the wrath of God.

You know, we talk, I fear sometimes that we get a little too familiar with the idea that we're sinners and that the profundity of that doesn't often go as deeply into our hearts as it should, but as a member of the human race, you have a fundamental problem of guilt that Christ was addressing there. You were guilty in Adam and Adam's sin is a sign to his posterity. You're guilty in your own corruption and pollution of nature. You are guilty in your own violations of the law of God and that guilt and those violations must be punished. There must be a consequence. The justice of God demands a payment for the violation of his law and what Scripture teaches us is that as our substitute, Christ was paying for that sin and it was a consequence of suffering that he endured in order to do so. He bore our sins in his body on the cross.

Look at chapter 3, verse 18, there in 1 Peter where it says, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." Christ on the cross received the imputed nature of our sins. God counted Christ as guilty of the sins of all of his people and caused him to suffer, and the ultimate suffering was during the three hours of darkness as the wrath of God fell upon him and the universe went dark, as well the sun might hide when the Son of God is suffering in that way.

So this is the price of sin, suffering is the price of sin and Christ gladly paid that for us in his body on the cross, and here's what I want you to see, is that in his suffering, in the miserable aspects of the physical suffering that we can sort of see, the external suffering in his five senses, and then we see the suffering, the spiritual suffering that he did as he bore the wrath of God on our behalf, we start to see something. What we start to see is this, we start to see how dark and how ugly and how repulsive your sin and my sin is in the sight of God because it took suffering like that in order to pay for sin like yours and like mine.

The Puritan, Thomas Watson, said this, he said, "In the bloody sacrifice of Christ, see the horrible nature of sin. Sin is ugly as it banished Adam out of paradise. Sin is ugly as it throws the angels into hell. But that which makes most of all sin appears so ugly is this, is that it made Christ veil His glory and lose His blood." We see the ugliness of sin in the ugliness of the sufferings of Christ and it's not simply to make us see the darkness that we

discuss these things today, it's that we would see the glory of it, that Christ in his love gladly suffered like that for sin as ugly as that in order to bring us to God, in order to reconcile us, in order to cleanse us and to wash us of all of our guilt so that we could stand blameless before a holy God.

This is a wonderful thing to remember and it's what we remember at the Table today. His suffering was the price of our salvation, and in love he gladly paid it in full. He paid it with all of his senses and with all of his soul in order to purchase a complete and full salvation for us offered and given to us as a gift, received by faith alone. What a wonderful Savior we remember. What an episode of suffering that we remember as we partake of the cup, as we partake of the bread and remember our Lord Jesus Christ. We invite every true Christian here today to participate in the Table. We only ask that you would confess and forsake any sins in your life that you know of before you partake. If you're here and you know that you're not a Christian or your life has been one of darkness for a considerable period of time that you've just not responded to the promptings of the Spirit, we would ask you as a church and we'd ask you in the name of Christ to pass on the elements. We should not mock and denigrate the elements that represent and symbolize his suffering for sin if we're hardened in sin and pursuing it ourselves. This is for believers alone and this is for believers who want to forsake sin, and if you are like that today, this is for you. This is a remembrance from Christ to you that he gladly paid that price on your behalf, that you can draw near to him, draw near to God with confidence through faith in him.

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