

Are You a True Disciple?

Good Friday Communion Service

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Bible Verse: John 6:66-71
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Scripture tells us to look at Jesus and behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and that's what we come to remember this evening on this day that's set aside to remember his redemptive death on the cross of Calvary some 2,000 years ago, to come to the table that he's appointed with the simplest of elements to remember his love for us, his death for us, the bread representing his body which was broken for our sins, the cup representing the blood that was poured out, for Scripture says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. And so it's fitting, especially in light of the very clear gospel message that Dane gave to open our service, to know whether you are a true disciple. Have you received Christ and can you come to the Table knowing that you have been redeemed by him? If so, then this is the most joyous time of all because we follow an appointed ordinance that Christ has given to the church. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Communion is a gift from Christ to the church that we would be repeatedly refreshed and freshened in our memory of his love for us and how he laid his life down for us. Communion was never meant to be a rote process. It was never meant to be a mere outward ritual that we go through just because that's what churches do. Communion is a time of rich remembrance that the Lord Jesus Christ was sent by his Father into the world to be the Savior of the world. God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world, meaning that he is the only Savior that the world has and if you belong to Christ, your soul is eternally secure, the love of Christ will never be removed from you, you will never be separated from the love of Christ, and so this is just a wonderful, wonderful time. But it all depends on a true right answer to the question: are you a true disciple? You know, when it comes to Communion, and I said, you know, it was never meant to be a rote mechanical ritual that the church goes through, far to the contrary, it's a time where we look at ourselves, we look at our lives, Scripture calls us to examine ourselves as we come to the table. In 1 Corinthians 11 we read this, "Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

Now there's a little bit of a smile that wants to come across my lips as I remember how superficially I used to think about that process, and I'm sure that some of you have experienced it as well. It's easy to reduce that kind of self-examination to whether you had your quiet time today or not, you know, and examine yourself, have you read the

Bible today? Have you prayed today? And, "Oh, I'm so unworthy." That's really not the point. It's far more fundamental than that. It's far deeper than that. The question is are you a true disciple? Do you really belong to Christ? Is he the most important affection in your heart above children, above spouses, above earthly things? Do you love Christ supremely? That's what Scripture calls for. Jesus said, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and sure, we all fall short of that lofty standard, especially when we understand it's something in the true depth of its meaning, but is there a sense in which that Christ holds a preeminence in your heart that belongs to no one else? Is there a sense in your heart that recognizes that however dear flesh and blood may be to you, however much the interests and pursuits of the world may capture your affections, is there a sense in your heart that realizes no one died for my soul but Christ? My dearest, my best, my most faithful friends, my dear spouse, my dear children, they didn't die for my soul, and so I don't love them anywhere like I love Christ.

That's the mark of a true disciple and what we want to do tonight as just a meditation as we come to the Table, I want to use an episode in the life of our Lord to gain insight into what it means to be a true disciple, and to just give you things, a couple of things, that you can meditate on as you prepare your way for the Table. And I'll say at the front what I usually say just before the elements are distributed. We need to say this, the Lord's Table is only for true Christians. If you know that you're not a Christian, you should not be taking the elements tonight; you should not do an outward thing that is inconsistent with the inner reality of your heart. At the same time, if you are a Christian but you are in a pattern of sin and you know it, there are things in your life that are wrong before the Lord and you have consistently rejected the prompting of the Spirit to confess and repent of that, and you come in tonight still clinging to whatever that attitude or action or relationship may be, we would ask you to pass the elements and not pretend to rejoice in what the elements represent, the sacrifice of Christ for your sins, when you cling to the very thing that Christ died to deliver you from. That doesn't make any sense, and that would be taking the elements in an unworthy manner. But for the rest of you, coming here as a Christian, coming here with a sincere desire to love the Lord and harboring no unconfessed sin, not making a profession of perfection, but just, you know, there's nothing in your life that you're consciously clinging to, you want to obey the Lord, you love him, you trust him, then the anticipation of the elements is a time of great joy for you, and I trust that what we have to say here this evening from God's word will be an encouragement to you and an affirmation to you. You know, life is hard. Life is hard, and you know, our true comfort, our only true comfort, is who God is in himself. Our only true comfort is who Christ is and that he loves us and that he gave himself up for us. Nothing else comforts a soul like that, and that's what we want to focus on this evening.

If you have your Bible, turn to the gospel of John 6. To the best of my ability, I tried to give a gentle challenge to you as we approach the text just now. What you're going to see in this text is that Jesus challenged his own disciples as well at a time, a crucial turning point in his ministry, and I'm going to read verses 66 through 71. We read this in God's word. It says,

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

The other disciples didn't know about Judas at that time; later in the gospel, it makes it very clear they never suspected that Judas was a betrayer, that Judas was a false disciple. But it helps us see something really important, especially in a mixed group like this. I'm so encouraged that all of you have come out tonight. What a blessing it is. You're all individually a gift from God to everyone else here this evening, and a gift from God to me to share in the Communion Table together. But if in the circle of the twelve there could be one who was unconverted, a devil, Jesus said, then how much more so us, removed from the physical presence of the Lord, removed by 2,000 years, how much more is there a danger of someone in here, likewise in like manner, being a devil, not truly belonging to Christ? We can't look in your heart. We don't know these things, and so we have to speak Scripture and do what Scripture says to examine ourselves.

So let's consider what Christ has said here in this passage. In verse 66 we read that, "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him." Now the word "disciple" there is simply a reference to someone who's a learner. They were following Christ and they were learning from him as he taught. It's not a guarantee, it's not an indication that someone has genuinely been born again, a regenerate person, it's not a reference like that. If they were regenerate, they wouldn't have walked away, they wouldn't have left. 1 John 2:19 teaches us about that, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us, because if they had been of us, they would have remained with us." And so these so-called disciples learned for a while without coming to true converting faith in Christ, and then they walked away. People followed Jesus, they learned from him, and these people that are being spoken of here in verse 66, they had seen Jesus feed the 5,000 with just a few pieces of bread and a couple of fish. They knew that Jesus had walked on water. They wanted him to be king in a political sense. The Jews were looking for a political Messiah, someone to deliver them from the domination of Rome over their lives so that they could once again be an independent nation and free from Roman oversight. That's the kind of king they wanted. They didn't want a dying Savior. They didn't want someone Lord over their lives. They didn't want someone, they didn't want a Christ who presumed to command their inner man and command them to follow him and we see that when Jesus challenged their commitment and exposed their superficial attachment to him, they were gone. This happens today. Christ comes, challenges someone in their thinking through the word of God, and people don't like it and they stop following Christ. It's a sad thing.

And look at verse 64 so we see the context here. Jesus said,

64 ... there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Wow. Jesus just challenged them. They followed him superficially, they gathered around his teaching, but he said, "there are those among you that don't believe." And let me tell you, it's as though Jesus said that, "No one can come to me unless my Father grants it to him. You do not have the power to make yourself a disciple of mine," Jesus says to them. "No one is able to come to me unless the Father gives it to him." God is sovereign. We are not, you are not. And so Jesus challenges their commitment. He was not deceived, Jesus was not. He was not deceived by the fact that they rallied around him when he was doing stuff for them. Rather, he challenges them, challenges their commitment, challenges their spiritual pride and wrong motives, and when he did that, they booked. They were gone. They left. Once their spiritual pride was exposed, they did not follow him.

Look at verse 66 again, "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him." You don't believe? You can't follow me unless my Father grants it to you? They checked out. So, so sad to see. Can you imagine? Can you imagine having the Son of God, the only Savior of the world, right in front of you, hearing his words with your own ears, and just because he says something you don't like, you turn and walk away from him to your own eternal destruction? That's what these people did. Beloved, I don't want you to be in that awful position. That's why we're talking about these things. That's why we take the occasion of Communion to examine ourselves. They were no longer following him. They turned back. They no longer walked with him. In other words, they abandoned Jesus as their teacher. They were false disciples and they went from thousands gathered around to a very small circle of remaining men around him, and what happens in the remainder of the text is that Jesus takes that occasion to probe those who remain with questions that reveal the heart of a true disciple. Jesus takes this occasion, it seemed like the ministry had just collapsed, of course, it hadn't, because God is always working out his eternal purpose, but from outward appearance, there had been a collapse that had just taken place and so Jesus turns to the others, and he speaks to them, and he challenges them in a couple of ways.

First of all, we see him address, number 1, the allegiance of a disciple. The allegiance of a true disciple. Now, we don't use the word "allegiance" too much in normal conversation. Oh, we pledge allegiance to the flag, but, you know, we don't use it in terms of personal things beyond that very often. The word "allegiance" refers to an obligation of duty and loyalty to a master. A true Christian, a true disciple, one who could legitimately partake of the elements is someone who recognizes gladly that he has a duty of obedience to Christ, he has a glad duty of loyalty to Christ. And this is not something that is against the will, it's not something that is a grudging duty, a grudging loyalty. No, no, far to the contrary. The true disciple who knows that Christ loved him and gave himself up for him, gladly gives that duty of obedience, gladly gives that sense of loyalty. How could I do anything other than love him in return in light of what he has done for me if I'm truly redeemed? The thought that, you know, we would take Jesus as Savior but

reject him as Lord or put that off to another time, that's so foreign to the gospel, that's so foreign to any understanding of the truth. The one who is Savior is the one who is Lord, and the one who is Lord has right to command obedience, and the one who died evokes from those who truly belong to him this glad, willing allegiance, this glad, willing loyalty to him so that however far short we might fall in day-to-day practice, when a true disciple is thinking rightly about the Lord Jesus, he's thinking, "I'd rather die than betray my loyalty to Christ. I'd rather die first than to betray Christ. I would rather be struck by lightning. I would rather die a miserable death than to align myself with Judas Iscariot and betray the one who loved me so." Do you know something of that in your heart? Can you say within your heart, "I want Christ like that. I love Christ like that."

As we read in verse 67, you see Jesus challenging the allegiance of the disciples and bringing this to the forefront. In verse 67, "Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?'" Wow. They had just watched the masses flee out of the stadium, so to speak. They had gone from a rock concert of support and enthusiasm, and all of a sudden the place empties out, and they're just left with the hollow echoes of what's around, and Jesus looks at them and says, "You want to go away too?" Now understand this. Jesus was not asking them for information. He already knew the answer to the question, and in fact, the very form of the question in the original language expects the answer no, but he wants to give them an opportunity to respond. So the question is really something more like, "You don't want to go away also, do you?" Is the way we would express it in English. "You don't really want to go away also, do you?" It's kind of a leading question. It leads them to the answer no, but they still have to articulate.

He's drawing out the disciples' commitment of loyalty to him, and you see that even if you didn't know anything about the form of the question, you can see that by the way Peter responded as he speaks on behalf of the twelve there in verse 68. The question was, "Do you want to go away also? You don't want to go away also, do you? Do you want to follow them? The door is open. Will you go?" Would some of you today, if the choice were put to you in that same direct manner, would you pick up and follow after the crowd that betrayed him? Showed the falsity of their commitment? Show forth by a physical distancing that you really didn't want Christ? You wouldn't do that, would you? That's the sense of the question. That's the sense of the issue that's before us.

Beloved, where is your allegiance? Where is your deepest loyalty? Where does your highest love and affection lie? Look at the Table. Look at the body of Christ, as it were, the elements that represent that. There is no body of Christ here but look at the Table and what it symbolizes, remember Christ and answer well the question. Would you want to go? I trust that with me you say, "No, no, no, no. No, that's the last thing I would want." That's what Peter said. Peter answered his question with a question. Simon Peter in verse 68 answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Peter says, "Lord, how could we go anywhere else? Where are we going to go to find someone like you? You, unlike anyone else in the universe that has ever existed or ever will exist, Lord, you have the words of eternal life." He recognized that in Christ there was a pearl of great price, there was something of great highest value in Christ that no one could replace. He said, "The thought of of leaving is unthinkable. There's no one else that we

could learn from like you. How could we follow someone else? Your words are absolutely unique."

How can you recognize a true disciple? How can you look in the mirror and answer that question for yourself, am I a true disciple? One of the things about a true disciple is that there is a fundamental love for the word of Christ. To hear the teaching of the word of God, to read the word of God, to understand the word of God is the sweetest thing of them all. In the Old Testament, I believe it was Jeremiah, "Thy words were found and I ate them and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I've been called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." There's a delight in the word of God that is a vibrating, organic influence on everything that informs your desires and emotions. And that's what God does, God implants a love for his word in the hearts of true disciples. Beloved, Jesus had just said that, "No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." Well, you know what the Father does when he grants repentance? When he grants faith to someone and draws them to his Son? He puts within them a principle of a fundamental love for his word.

In 1 Corinthians 2, you don't need to turn there, the Apostle Paul explains this principle when he says, "Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." He says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." God has given us things in his precious word and when he truly saves someone, he puts in their heart a desire, a respect, a principle of submission and attraction to the word of God that is a symptom of a fundamental allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, this is more than going through the outward motions of a quiet time. You could say that the word of Christ owns the affections of a true disciple.

We have the word of God incarnate, we have the word of God written, and true disciples have this love for the word of Christ that Peter expressed, verse 68, "You have the words of eternal life. Lord, we love the written word," so to speak. And then he goes further and states his allegiance to the person of Christ. In verse 69, Peter says, "and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Lord, we recognize that there is a distinct essence to your words that are unlike any others and we realize that you yourself are distinct, unique. You come from God. You are the one set apart by God. We recognize that. We bow before you. We love you. We recognize you as the appointed Messiah." To call Christ the Holy One of God, beloved, holy being the word that means to be set apart, to be sanctified, not in the progressive way that we talk about, progressive sanctification as believers grow in Christlikeness. Christ didn't have to grow in godliness. He was already perfect, always was. Here to talk about him as the Holy One of God means that he holds the highest place of having been set apart. He is absolutely pure. There is no one like him anywhere and so he is high and lifted up, exalted above the heavens, co-equal with the eternal God.

And here's what I want you to see, beloved. Look at Peter's words. Let's just look at them in an overview sense one more time before we move on. There's almost a hint of desperation in what Peter says at the unthinkable prospect of going away. "Lord, to

whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed, we've come to know that you are the Holy One of God." Beloved, here's what you need to see tonight: Peter's allegiance to Christ was personal. This was not an abstract philosophical principle in his mind and the gospel is not a message about how the moral life that you need to live. The gospel is a message about the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 1, it says it is the gospel concerning God's Son, the seed of David. Christ himself is central to the gospel and the response of faith is one of personal faith in a personal Savior. "Others may walk away, Lord, the commitment of my heart is I'm going to stay." Peter wanted to stay. True disciples recognize and submit to Christ's authority. They recognize how precious his word is.

Beloved, as we contemplate coming to the Table, does that somehow describe you? Perhaps it is fundamentally true, but you realize you've strayed. This is a great time as you're sitting under the word of God to just silently breathe out the prayer, "O God, O Christ, that is what I want. I have strayed. I confess, Lord. I repent, Lord. Thank you for bringing me to a passage, a text of Scripture by your Spirit that has reawakened, that has blown on the dying embers of my heart and is fanning it back up to a flame. Yes, you are what I want, Lord, more than anything. You have my allegiance and I forsake before you in this moment, I forsake everything as a competing affection. I forsake my sin. I forsake my laziness. I forsake my cold-hearted, lukewarm response to you. Lord, thanks for bringing me back. This is right where I want to be. I don't want to go anywhere else." It's the allegiance of a disciple.

Now, secondly, Jesus highlights another aspect of a true disciple. We could call it this, we could call it the reliance of a disciple. The reliance of a disciple. Now, when you look at verse 69 and in the Bible that I have in front of me, it's the last verse on the page, and you read the last verse on the page, so to speak, you read that verse, and Peter says, "We believe. We've come to know that you are the Holy One of God," and then you turn the page, you look at the next verse, and you would expect, you would expect Jesus to affirm Peter's words as he did in Matthew 16, where he said, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven." You know, there have been times in other places in Scripture where Jesus affirmed such a profession of faith.

Then you read verse 70, and you say, "This is not what I was expecting at all. This almost seems like a non-sequitur. This doesn't follow, it seems." Verse 70, "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.'" Well, this is not what you expect. Jesus goes a different direction than affirmation. He challenged the crowds, and they left. Peter makes a wonderful confession of faith, and yet Jesus is pushing back a little bit. Why would he do that? When I first studied this passage years ago, I was very deeply interested in that question. Why would he do that? Why would he talk about one of you being a devil when Peter had just said, "You're the Holy One of God"? How does that follow? What's the line of thinking? What's our Lord thinking here? He obviously had a purpose.

Well, there is an answer to the question. In verse 69, you go back and look at Peter's response again, and he's talking about, "We have believed. We have come to know." And

there's a little bit of an emphasis there in the original text. What Peter had done in verse 69, as true and as good as the confession itself was, Peter was stressing the disciples' own belief as the ground of distinction between the disciples and the false disciples who turned away. Jesus is changing the focus here. Peter said, "We have come to know. We have believed." Jesus says, "Peter, time out. Let's get straight who did the choosing here, and it wasn't you." He says, "I myself chose you."

Jesus answered there in verse 70, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." Why would Jesus say that? Why Jesus emphasizing his choice at this point of the conversation? Well, and this helps all of us, there's an element of rebuke, an element of correction to what Jesus says to Peter here. Peter seems to be giving the impression that the twelve, "We have come to believe, we're kind of a cut above those fickle ones that had left." There's just a little too much self-importance here. Peter's emphasizing what he had done, what he knew, and what Jesus is doing here is he's purging Peter of that pride. He is tempering the overconfidence which often marked the disciples. Jesus says, "You didn't choose me. I chose you. Peter, you've got it exactly backwards."

Later on in John 15:16, if you want to turn there, Jesus comes back to this theme and makes it even more explicit. In John 15:16, he says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide." You did not choose me, but I chose you. Later on, the apostle that wrote the gospel of John in the letter of 1 John would say in chapter 4, verse 19, "We love because he first loved us." Who did the initiating here? Who is the one who set all of these things into motion?

Jesus says, "I chose you, the twelve," verse 70, "And yet one of you is a devil." And the idea is this: there can be no confidence in man whatsoever. Jesus said, "Even with my choice, I chose one who would prove to be a devil in the end. And Peter, if my choice can have those kinds of ramifications, on what basis do you make such a big deal about your choice?" Jesus is teaching Peter, and he is teaching us to put no confidence in self, put no confidence in man. "Don't talk about how strong and how great your belief is, Peter." Trust Christ, not your choice. In modern day theological terms, Jesus would look at Peter and say, "Peter, don't be an Arminian. Don't be an Arminian, Peter. Get straight who chooses whom here." The reliance, the faith, where we base our hope – this is so absolutely critical, beloved – our faith is in Christ, not in our own faith. Christ is perfectly righteous. Our faith is just the means by which we receive him. It is the distinguishing work of Christ to choose and save us. Faith is the means by which we receive it, but our faith is not our righteousness before God. Christ is our righteousness before God, and faith is the vehicle by which we receive his righteousness.

Earlier in John 6, Christ had stressed the centrality of trusting him. Verse 40, John 6:40, "this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life." Looking at the Son, S-o-n, and I will raise him up on the last day. In verse 51, oh, these sweet, precious, living words from our living Lord. Verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Christ is calling on Peter, "Peter, don't trust in your own faith, trust in me. Rest on me and my promises." The message for us today, in this room today, what the Spirit of God would bring to you through the written word today is to behold Christ and to believe in him, receive him, rest in him. Don't boast about your own faith. Peter, as you know, would later deny Christ three times. His faith wasn't that great but his Lord was, his Christ was, and so the mark of a true disciple is one who's resting in Christ, not in his own choice.

Beloved, let me remind you, Christ gave his life on the cross so that you and I could live with him forever to deliver us from the judgment and the wrath of God which our sins deserve. He saw us in a position of danger. He saw us in eternal peril and with nothing good in us to prompt him to do so, Christ, in keeping with the eternal plan of God, came to earth in a loving act of self-humbling and of self-sacrifice in order to gather up his flock and bring them safely home. Our Good Shepherd. It's not a matter of looking inside for the strength of your faith. It's not a matter of looking inside to see if you have the right feelings to prove your faith. People stumble on that all the time. "I don't know if my faith is strong enough. Sometimes I don't feel this. Maybe I'm not a Christian." That introspection is a bad place to be. Don't look inside. Look outside to Christ. Don't trust your choice. Don't trust your works. Don't trust your feelings. Look outside to Christ and rely on him and on him alone. Rest in who he is, what he has done, and in his promise. You know, he said, "The one who comes to me, I will not cast him out."

Look at verse 37, the promise of Christ, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." How many of us have been hurt by people that broke their promises to us? How many of us have been betrayed by people we've loved? How many people have we hurt by failing in our love to them? You know, human love is not a resource ultimately. Human love can fail. But beloved, you have before you in the Lord Jesus Christ, one who makes a promise, "If you come to me, I'll keep you. I'll never cast you out." The worst of sinners, you can come. Guilty, defiled, trembling, afraid, you can come too. Come to this Christ and trust his promise, "I'll never cast you away. I'll never cast you out." He would have you. My unsaved friend here tonight, Christ will have you. Christ invites you. Christ calls you. He commands you to come to him, to behold him, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. There is nothing in Christ that is keeping you away from him. There is no reluctance in him. There may be unwillingness in you, there may be resistance in you, there's none in him. There is a complete, total, sincere, free offer of eternal life. And so you rely on your perfect Christ. That distinguishes true disciples. I trust not in my faith, not in my choice. I trust Christ and I submit to him.

Now, as we come to the Table, maybe you say, "My faith is weak. It's imperfect. I struggle. I get so discouraged. I have my doubts." Do you know what? Simon Peter can relate. He denied Christ three times with curses. But Christ, in this everlasting love that he has for his own, told Peter in advance, "Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith would not fail." Christ lets us stumble. Christ lets us see our own weakness so that we would learn not to trust in ourselves, and once we've learned that lesson, Christ comes along to gather us up and say, "I never left you. I was always, you were always in my hand." And suffering, weak, discouraged Christian, even tonight in that sorry state, Christ

has you in his hand. Christ loves you. Christ keeps you. Even when Peter was about to fail, Christ was keeping him. I look back at the times where I failed, look back at the time where literally, literally I raised my fist against heaven, I did this as a Christian and said, "What are you doing?" What a shameful thing for a disciple to say but my point tonight is, is that even then, Christ didn't send me away.

Have you resisted, rebelled, Christian friend? Christ hasn't sent you away. Just come back to him. In your weakness, Christ is keeping you. Christ died to save you. His act of saving you in the past was not a temporary reprieve, it was a permanent gift, an eternal gift of eternal life that he gave to your eternal soul, and the keeping of that, he takes his own responsibility for.

Are you a true disciple? A true disciple holds to Christ with allegiance and reliance. If you see something of those things pulsating in your spiritual veins, you can rest, beloved. You can rest knowing that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. And if you are a true disciple, I invite you to come to this Table with joy. We who know Christ have the opportunity to celebrate his love for our souls tonight. We remember him by faith. It's a memorial, not a sacrifice. There's no need for any new sacrifice, for a recurring of the sacrifice. No need for any of that because he's a perfect Savior. He offered one sacrifice which was perfect for all time. What a wonderful Savior. What a wonderful, wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord. Perfect in his love for us. Perfect in his sacrifice. Perfect in his keeping of us. Perfect in his forgiveness. Perfect in his godhood. Perfect in his humanity. Everything about him is perfect. And he loved us and gave himself up for us.

Let's bow together in prayer.

O Christ, we ever so gratefully remember you. Thank you for delivering us from our sin. Thank you for making us a new creation in Christ. Thank you for keeping us, Father. Even when we stray, you never let us go totally away. Even when our actions have been defiant and unbelieving, and our love for you failed, your love for us never did fail and it never will fail because, O Christ, you are perfect and your salvation is perfect, and when you save someone, you save them forever, and how we bless your holy name for that great truth. We love you and bow before you and we come to the Table now at your command, at your invitation, and with joy. Amen.

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