

In remembrance of me

Message for Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Luke 22:19-20, Proverbs 4:23

Children's Message:

Do a simple experiment to show how people learn.

- Explain how to balance a pole on one's finger (the key is to look at the *top* of the pole: keeping that steady is the trick).
- Then demonstrate it.
- Then let the kids themselves do it.

You learn a bit by hearing someone. You learn more by seeing it done. But you learn the most of all by doing it yourself.

When Jesus wanted his followers to remember him,

- He told them how would give his life for them.
- He showed them bread and wine, symbols of his body and blood, symbols of how he would die for them.
- Then he said, "Do this in memory of me."

In church we have communion (bread and juice) to help us remember Jesus. We talk about it; we see it; but we also *do* it.

Message: "In remembrance of me"

(*Standing at the communion table*) This part of our worship was initiated by Jesus. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." That's why we call it "the Lord's Supper."

1) As you think, so you become

Luke's gospel tells us that Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to his Father for, it broke it, and gave it to the disciples. He said, "This is my body, given for you." And then he said,

Luke 22:19, New International Version:
"Do this in remembrance of me."

Jesus says, in effect, "Focus on me." Now that could mean that Jesus has a big fat ego, and he needs everyone to pay attention to him. Or it could mean something else...

Proverbs 4:23, Today's English Version:
Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.

People become like the thoughts they hold. If your life is focussed on money, you'll become greedy

and stingy. Concentrate on something long enough, and you will grow to be like it. And that's what Jesus wants for us: to grow and become like him.

John 15:5, New Living Translation:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me." In other words, "Look at me, think about me, talk with me... *live in me!*"

2) Remember how Jesus suffered and died

So let us remember Jesus. We remember how he amazed people with his teaching. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, it says, "the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" [Matthew 7:28-29].

We remember how he amazed people with the miracles he did: healing the sick, walking on water, even raising the dead.

Today, let us remember Jesus especially in those last moments as he gave his body and blood for us:

- Feel the scrape of stubble on his cheek as Judas kisses him in betrayal.
- Hear the ringing in your ears as the mob screams, "Crucify him, crucify him!"
- Listen to the vicious crack of the whip as it snaps against his back. Feel the agony as it rips a strip of flesh right off, exposing the bare muscle underneath.
- Hear the cry of the rooster cut the air, and also cut the heart of anyone who has ever let down a friend.
- Listen to the thud of a hammer as it pounds nails through the wrist joint.
- Feel the anguish, the desperation, as Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- Hear the sobs of a broken-hearted mother, watching her son being tortured before her eyes.
- Feel the panic, the chaos, when the earthquake hits, the sky is black, and Jesus finally dies.

As the song says, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” Were you there? Do any of us have even the slightest idea what Jesus went through as he took the sins of the world upon himself; what he did by giving his life for us? When you eat the bread, and drink the juice, remember him.

3) Remember what Jesus’ death means

Let us think about what this meal means. It means that someone loves you; and not just anyone – God loves you. It means that God loves you so much that he was willing to come here in person, and help us to understand what love is all about. It means that God loves you so much that he was willing to suffer and be killed for you.

Jesus said about the bread: “This is my body, given for you.” About the juice: “This is my blood, which is poured out for you.” He died for us, for the forgiveness of our sins, to give us new life.

I read about a priest at the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris who was speaking to a group of visitors. He told about an incident from years ago. Three young men, arrogant non-believers, came to the cathedral and went inside—not to worship, but to have some fun with the priest.

One young man suggested, “Let’s draw up a list of the worst sins we can think of. Then we’ll draw straws, and the one who gets the shortest straw will go in and confess those sins.” “I’ve got a better idea,” one of his friends responded. “After we draw up the list, you go in and confess. It’s your idea. In fact, I’ll bet you twenty bucks you’re too chicken to do it.” So he accepted the challenge.

They drew up their list and gave it to the young man. He went into the confessional booth, and told the priest all these lies about what he had done. It was obvious to the priest that the young man was playing with him, so when the confession was finished he said, “For every confession, there is a penance. You must go to the front of the church, kneel in front of the crucifix, look into the eyes of Jesus dying on the cross, and say three times, ‘All this you did for me, and I don’t give a damn.’”

The young man left the confessional booth and went back to his friends. “Did you do it?” they asked

him. “Of course I did.” And he related the story, including what the priest had said afterwards. “Now where’s my money?”

“Just hold on,” said the one who made the bet. “The confession’s not complete without the penance. Do that, and then you get your twenty bucks.”

The young man walked up to the front of the church, approached the crucifix, knelt down before it, looked up into the figure’s eyes and began, “All this you did for me, and I... and I...” but he got no further. Tears flooded his eyes. His heart was torn by the pain of what Jesus had done, and by his mockery of that pain. Right there his old life ended, and a new life began.

The priest concluded by saying, “I know that this story is true, because I was that young man.”

Today, when you are about to take the bread and juice, stop and think what Jesus did for you. Tell him, “Thanks.” But even more than that: give your life to him; let him truly be your Lord.