

## Rappahannock Christian Church – 11/21/10

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

### Communion Meditation

Biblically speaking, it is interesting to examine the way that the psalmists and others who have taken upon themselves the task of writing praise to God go about their task. Sometimes they do simply exclaim, “Praise God!” Often, however, what they say is “Remember...”, and then they speak of the acts of God for His people. It’s like they are simply saying, “We acknowledge that you have done these things, O God.” This is what we do at Thanksgiving. The very mention of God’s great and good acts constitutes praise!

We do the same thing here each week. Here at this Table we come together and we rehearse. We remember. We think about our gratitude, even when we may not specifically say “Thank you.” The very rehearsal of the Body and Blood of Jesus is meant to remind us of the great gift He made for us in suffering and dying in our place. This is an act of praise that is meant to convey our thankfulness to God.

Here in 1 Corinthians 11 we have the words of the Apostle Paul about this rehearsal and the very way it is meant to remind us of His sacrifice and of His coming.

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26** – The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

### Generous Portions

In case you’ve been following along, this morning our Scripture does *not* come from the book of Revelation! Today we are going to the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. This is a bit of a heavy parable that Jesus tells. I hope that we will be able to lighten it up a bit.

**Matthew 18:21-35** – Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Sit back, if you will, and picture it all with me. It's Thanksgiving Day. You're just sitting down to the table. I'm guessing that, for most of us in this room, someone will be saying a prayer. This won't be just a prayer for the mashed potatoes and peas, either – am I right? It will likely be a prayer to thank God for more important things as well: people, prosperity, good health and such.

This parable of Jesus is often referred to as "The Unforgiving Servant." I think it's also about being unthankful. I'm just not sure that a person who is truly thankful for what he has can be unkind and unforgiving. It seems to me that these are somehow connected.

Now just pretend that, instead of Dad, God is the host of your Thanksgiving meal this year. He brings lots of satisfying things to the table. There are mercy, compassion, pity, forgiveness and much, much more. And when God brings His stuff to the table you can be assured that He brings generous portions, indeed. He offers freely to everyone. "Everyone come and take a seat at my table!"

Now remember the parable. The king is generous and merciful, but the servant goes out, and he is unmerciful and unforgiving. The servant fails to put 2 + 2 together. He fails to see the connection between what is happening inside (being thankful) and real life. He fails to see that he should be thoughtful, try to understand the other guy's situation and allow him the grace that he, himself, has been accorded.

Have you ever met unforgiving people like that?

I remember that when I was a kid, I used to have a job at an apple orchard after school and during the summer. I'll never forget this old guy named Harold Booth. Harold was probably 80 years old. He had a brother whom he saw and spoke to often. But at the

time I knew him, Harold hadn't spoken with his brother in 30 years. You want to know why? ... It was because it was his brother's turn to call him! Is that crazy?! Why couldn't he just pick up the phone and make the call? It's just unbelievable, and I'll never forget it!

Folks, we are the King's servants. We have received generous portions of God's mercy and the very best offerings at His table. So what are going to offer to the others whom God has seated at the tables of our lives? Shall we offer them the sour, the bitter stuff? Skimpy bits of leftovers? Surely this will make the King unhappy!

It's really like Jesus said, "Freely you have received; freely give." We are the King's representatives. We are to represent what the King is like to the world around us. What we have freely received, He expects us to freely give.

So, who have you not forgiven? Who has not received the generous portion from your hand? A parent? A spouse? A classmate? A teacher?

I believe that we can only truly experience the power of God's love when we are generous, compassionate and forgiving ourselves. It's true that this generosity is risky. You may offer -- and be rejected. This kind of risk-taking takes faith. But I am convinced of two things. God does not want us to be picky eaters when we come to His table. He wants us to help ourselves generously of His grace. Neither does God want us to be stingy when it comes to others. He expects us to be generous!

So what will your Thanksgiving include; the "Three Fs" -- food, family and football? I hope it will be "Four Fs". I hope you will receive, and give, a heaping portion of God's forgiveness, as well!

### **Benediction**

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. – 1 Timothy 1:17