

## **Rappahannock Christian Church – 9/18/11**

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

### **Communion Meditation**

Let's not make this more complicated than it needs to be. The elements that we have before us on this Table, the Bread and the Cup, are supposed to be a "meal", but this is not really a whole "meal." It's symbolic. These emblems are simple reminders of our Lord Jesus Christ. They remind us that we had a need and God saw it and sent his Son to die so that we may have eternal life as a gift.

I hope that this "meal" works for you. I hope that it really does remind you of our Lord Jesus Christ. As I take the Bread and the Cup, I always pray a simple prayer; "Lord, thank you for what Jesus did for me." It's that simple.

Let me read to you from the Gospel of Matthew about what Jesus had to say that night.

**Matthew 26:26-29** – While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

### **"Enough for Today"**

This morning the Scripture reading is found, once again, in Matthew 6. This is Matthew's rendition of the Lord's Prayer. This week we will focus on just a very short part of it.

Matthew 6:9-13 – "This, then, is how you should pray:

    "Our Father in heaven,  
    hallowed be your name,  
    your kingdom come,  
    your will be done  
    on earth as it is in heaven.  
    Give us today our daily bread.  
    Forgive us our debts,  
    as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
    And lead us not into temptation,  
    but deliver us from the evil one.'

There is a question that I've been asked a number of times that I can't say I have an adequate answer for. It is, "Why do we pray if God already knows what we need? Do you think that, in praying, you will change God's mind? Or is prayer simply for our benefit?"

This is a mystery. However, the New Testament clearly admonishes us to pray. There's no doubt about that. Paul even says that we should, "Pray without ceasing!" (1 Thes.

5:17). James says, "You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:2-3). So clearly, we're supposed to pray.

Here we have Jesus' model prayer. As we discussed last week, it is in two parts. It is first God, then us.

Last week we examined the first part. I want to step back and point again to the special word that Jesus told us to use in addressing God as our Father. (I realize that I talked about this week, but I want to make it, perhaps, clearer than I think that I did.) It is especially important (shocking, really) that Paul repeats this Aramaic word, "*Abba*" when writing to his Greek readers in Rome and Galatia. Scholars believe that he uses this word because it is the word Jesus used to address God. It is an intimate personal word. It must have startled the Jews of Jesus' day to hear him use it. The great irony here, (and this is what I failed to point out last week), is that, having just told us to address our Father God in such an intimate and familiar way, the very next thing Jesus tells us to say is, "Hallowed be your name." So even though we are to be in close, personal relationship with God, we also hold God to be holy. We are in awe of His very name.

Now we come to the petitions, the second part of the prayer. The first one is, "Give us today our daily bread."

That's it. What does this mean?

I think it means, "God, please give me the bread that will be sufficient for today."

It is a lot like the provision of God for the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness under Moses' leadership. Do you remember how they were complaining that they had no bread, so God provided them with manna each morning? The thing is, they had enough for each day, but they were not allowed to gather enough for more than one day at a time. If they did, it would spoil.

I think Jesus is saying that this is how it should be for us. We are dependent on God for what we need today.

Of course, Jesus is talking about more than literal bread. We are to acknowledge that God is the one who provides for all of our needs. Mind you, he is talking about *needs*, not *wants*. We ask God for a roof over our heads, not the biggest mansion we can imagine. We may need a car, but we are not angry or dissatisfied if we don't own a BMW.

It's like the time when the chickens were in the yard and a football came sailing over the fence. The rooster strode over to it, looked it up and down. "I'm not complaining, girls," he said, "but look at the work they're turning out next door!"

So, no, we don't need to have the football-sized eggs.

Asking for bread also means admitting that we are not SELF-sufficient. This is a hard thing for Americans to say. The ideal, in America, is to be independent and strong and capable, not needing anyone's help. And, I know that it appears like we are providing for ourselves by the work that we do each day. But where do our abilities come from? Our strength? Our health? Our intelligence? All these are gifts from God. In the model prayer, Jesus wants us to remember this.

It's sad to me that so often the only time that folks seem to realize what is really is important is when total disaster strikes. It is then that they realize that the "things" in their lives are just "things." "'Things' can be replaced," they'll say, "I'm just so glad that my family is safe."

As Christians, we need to listen to God's Word and realize how dependent we are upon God's grace and kindness, and to be thankful for life's blessings.

**Benediction**

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. – Psalm 19:14