



1 Corinthians 11:23-28

When we were doing the work day a couple of weeks back we came across this picture which is of our first Minister, Kersey Cowell – I wonder if he's any relation to Simon Cowell! He's well remembered, because apart from leaving us his picture, we've also got this memorial stone fixed into the wall that says "Sacred to the Memory of AK Cowell, for 26 years the esteemed and useful Pastor of this church. In fact, as you know, this whole site is filled with graves and we retained the memorial stones that were still readable. GRAVE Most of them have the same words or similar "In loving memory". GRAVE +1 What's the whole idea of a plaque like the ones in the church and the headstones outside? They are memorial stones – there for their relatives and subsequent generations to remember them.

It's exactly the same with the War Memorial here in Felixstowe. WM It stands in front of the Town Hall for us to remember those that made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Usually on these we have the phrase "We will remember them". WM +1

But for most of us memory is a more of a daily challenge. It certainly is for me. ELEPHANT I don't seem to be able to remember simple things, like ring someone, or send an email, but have no problem remembering my credit card numbers or the registration of my first car. If it doesn't get into the diary on computer, it doesn't happen – and sometimes doesn't happen if I forget to look at it!

I'm sure we'd all like to be elephants, who never forget. DOG Even the dog sometimes seems to remember things better than I do, although dogs have an ability to selectively remember things – like it knows it goes in the boot, but always wants to get into the car.

But humans – oh, dear, some of us just aren't very good at remembering at all are we? SURGEON Now don't listen to those who tell you that your memory gets worse as you get older. Some people do medically have problems with memory but for those that don't think they remember that as they get older, please note that you are likely to forget more as you have that much more stored away in your memory to remember! It's like carrying a mug of tea. The fuller it is, the more you're more likely to spill. Well, that's my excuse anyway!

So how do we remember? Usually be using an aide mémoire REMINDERS Something to remind us – like a diary, or post it notes, or if you have a computer, some kind of question that you answer to get back your forgotten password – if of course you can remember the answer to the question! Both headstones and war memorials are aide memoires – they help us remember the dead.

Let's have a look at couple of phrases we read earlier: VERSES *"This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me."* *"This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me."*

We are looking this morning a bit more closely at the core of the passage I preached on last Sunday. We realised then that the Lord regards our observance of the Lord's Supper / Communion as something that is really important in the life of the church and to take it lightly or abuse it is something we just shouldn't do. The folks last week abused it by turning it into their own bring and binge party and God judged them for it.

So, what is the purpose of Communion? The long and short of it is that it is an aide mémoire – it's there to make us remember something – the words I just read. AIDE MEMOIRE

Jesus instituted this meal as a means of remembrance. Now I don't know if you ever got this impression, but I certainly did when I was younger. Years ago this was often described as a "feast of remembrance". Whenever I thought of the word remembrance I thought of war memorials and the noble dead. In many churches communion is a sombre experience, serious, staid – like a funeral. We remember One who has suffered and died. If that's our idea of what communion is – remembering the dead – then we're going to miss the point because this act in memory of Jesus isn't the memorial stone sort. The Greek word for in memory of here (or in remembrance of) is in the sense of call to remember in one's own mind – a reminder: a post it note from God to remind us what our faith is all about. A reminder that it is a joyful experience – that we have a Saviour who has died, but is risen and with us – and who has brought blessing to our lives. Communion is a joyful occasion, not a solemn one!

So God has given us this aide mémoire to remember Jesus. But what are we supposed to remember?

◆ **An Aide Mémoire that Jesus has died for us**

VERSES *"This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me." "This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me."*

What do we remember in this act we are to shortly do? We are going to remember two specific things in relation to Jesus' death that are represented by the bread and the wine. These are the things we should be thankful to Him about and are the reason why we are here and have much to praise God for.

The first is the bread: *"This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me."*

The reason why we are here is that we have a Saviour who loves us so much that He was prepared to let Himself be taken, beaten, tortured and killed by evil men so that He could suffer in our place and be the means by which God is able to forgive us our sins and take us into relationship with Him. It's not by our merit, by our works, by our status, but alone because God has decided to offer it freely to us as a His gift. A gift we accepted. It's the only reason. That's why our worship around this table focuses on Jesus – not on ourselves as happened in Corinth.

What about the cup. Jesus' words are interesting here. They do not say, "this is my blood" but *"This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood."* The death of Jesus isn't just about God's forgiveness, but that God has made a set of promises (a Covenant), a very one sided set of promises on His part that if we accept His covenant, He's going to bring us into a whole load of blessings – His Holy Spirit with us day by day, eternal life, membership of His family, a position of honour. We didn't have to sign it, just accept His forgiveness and decide to follow Jesus – and we get the benefit. TITLE

Now here's the value of Communion. Each time we take it, we affirm that covenant. We affirm His grace, we affirm His forgiveness, we affirm His love, we affirm the only reason we are here is Jesus. And that strips away – or should strip away – any personal arrogance that we are here because we are good, or we are of a particular class, or because of our race, or because of our birth, or because we are better than someone else. We are here because we recognise we are sinners and only the shed blood of Jesus gives us the right to associate our names with the name of God and claim any of His promises.

◆ **An Aide Mémoire of our shared fellowship in Christ**

Paul writes to the Corinthians to remind them of something that God had given them to enjoy together as His people. Communion is not an individual act, but is a recognition together that Jesus has died for us and that as a result of that we have come into a covenant relationship with God. That's why He was angry that the Corinthians used it as an occasion to show the importance of some and humiliate others. This was a communal act – a shared experience as the church ate bread and drank wine together. It showed the reverse of what they were doing: that the only reason they were there because Jesus body had been broken and His blood shed for them. When we break bread and drink wine in Communion we affirm that being in Christ is a shared experience. VERSE

1Co 10:14-17 So then, my dear friends, keep away from the worship of idols. I speak to you as sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup we use in the Lord's Supper and for which we give thanks to God: when we drink from it, we are sharing in the blood of Christ. And the bread we break: when we eat it, we are sharing in the body of Christ. Because there is the one loaf of bread, all of us, though many, are one body, for we all share the same loaf.

A shared experience. TITLE Whatever we may think or want church to be, right at the heart is this act performed together recognising that we all have just one common reason to be here and to be church – Jesus. Communion is an aide mémoire that God has made us all part of Christ's body, His church. And in eating the bread and wine in obedience to what Jesus commanded, we have placed ourselves as a church under his authority. That by definition makes us all in the same position under God. The only

right and status we have and the only merit we plead is represented by bread and wine – Jesus. It's there so we don't forget it. God has given us one another to grow in Him and serve Jesus in this local church, all under His authority – and nothing else.

◆ **An Aide Mémoire Of His presence with us**

I mentioned earlier that that Communion is not so much a memorial as it is a post-it note from God to remind us what our faith is about so that we don't go and bend and pervert it for our own selfish ends. And this post-it note is an aide mémoire that by His Spirit, Jesus is present – so we take it seriously. Communion isn't just about meeting together and sharing our common life and worship, but it's recognising as we meet at the table that this is the Lord's table and He's present. It's not like some people believe that He's present in the bread and the wine – all they are are just bread and wine. But Jesus is present in each believer here this morning, so He's here in a very real way. It's a designated place where we remember the significance of His death, remind ourselves that He has given us each other and to affirm that we are under His headship and His authority. And because He is here, we should realise that He wants to reveal His mind and His presence with us.

For all the way we may feel we may want to criticise the Corinthians for their behaviour, they did have a keen understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the way in which their times of worship should be where they would not just worship, but where they would know His presence and it was a place where they received from Him through prophetic words, healing and other miraculous signs and other manifestations of the Spirit. Unfortunately they even got that wrong and abused that. Those sort of things don't strongly characterise our fellowship right now but doesn't mean they can't or won't. It's a question of what we know to expect, want to expect or want to ask of God. Perhaps you've been receiving words from God that you're not sure what you should do with them. Maybe it's a prophetic word, maybe it's something to share from His word, maybe it's a gift of the Spirit or ministry you currently have no outlet for. Please talk to me or one of the Elders.

We need to remember that our aide-mémoire reminds us that we should examine ourselves before coming to the table: *27 It follows that if anyone eats the Lord's bread or drinks from his cup in a way that dishonours him, he or she is guilty of sin against the Lord's body and blood. 28 So then, you should all examine yourselves first, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup.*

LET'S Is Jesus the centre of our attention this morning? In the next few moments we are going to examine ourselves using the information we have learned from last week and this week as we prepare ourselves for communion. Let me give you a quote and a prayer before we do that.

Andy Braunston: And so when we share communion together we do many things; we remember Jesus' death on the cross because of our sins, we accept the forgiveness that is ours because of his death, we receive Jesus into our lives and bodies and the sacrifice of Calvary is transferred through time and space and made present now in our midst. This is what we do in response to Jesus' command "do this in memory of me" or, in less traditional language "do this and make me real in your lives".

Prayer