

“COME TOGETHER, GO TOGETHER”
I Corinthians 11:17-26

In just a few weeks, Monday, May 31st to be exact, many people will have the day off as we celebrate a national holiday known as Memorial Day. This day has been set aside to remember those who gave their lives so that we might live in a free land. Emphasizing that their sacrifice should be the focal point of the day, many citizens forget and think only about themselves. In a *Detroit Free Press* article, Jack Kresnak illustrated this point. He wrote that 150 people were in attendance at a Memorial Day service near the Detroit River. While people were listening to a Naval Reserve captain lament the fact that the meaning of the day had been lost, the crowd witnessed an example of what the speaker was saying. A short distance away there was a young man in a safari hat and three-piece suit who was riding around on a decorated bicycle named “Spotlight.” This customized Schwinn bike was covered with cardboard, painted with gold spray paint, and pictures of his girlfriends.

Also attached to this bike were two radios and twenty flashlights shining in every direction. Later, when the young man was asked about his escapade, he promptly said, "I do this to get attention."

In our passage today we read about a different kind of memorial day. What we are reading about also became an occasion when people came together but forgot its true meaning. When they should have been remembering the Lord who had died so that sinners could live, many Corinthian Christians were only thinking of themselves. Ever think only of yourself a time or two? Anyway, the memorial meal that they were experiencing had become for them a time of eating, drinking and making merry. Which makes me ask, could something like this ever happen in churches today? When we come to the Lord's Table do we ever find ourselves preoccupied with our own desires and somehow forget Jesus' death?

At the time that Paul is writing our passage the early church had established a tradition in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. What happened was the church came together and had a meal that was called a "Love Feast" where each member brought whatever it was they were able to share. So they brought together their resources and then the entire church would sit down and eat a common meal, sort of like what we call a "pot-luck supper." The "church" coming and sitting down together over a common meal was a beautiful picture of the oneness they share in Christ Jesus. And what they were doing was creating and encouraging real Christian fellowship in the body of Christ, the church. And then, after they ate the common meal, they would celebrate the Lord's Supper. What this was reminiscent of was the night that Jesus was with the disciples in the Upper Room on that Thursday night before He was crucified on Friday, when Jesus, and the 12 disciples were together in that room celebrating the Jewish Passover meal.

I still remember a few years ago when, on Good Friday evening, we joined with our brothers and sisters from the Church of the Holy Spirit Anglican Church and had a dramatization of the last supper with men from both churches and dressed in appropriate costumes portraying Jesus and the 12 disciples, eating a meal of lamb and unleavened bread and other foods that they would have eaten at the Passover Meal, and then observing the Lord's Supper. It was certainly a different experience from one that we would have on the first Sundays of the month when we observe communion here at our church. For instead of the beautiful silver trays with the glasses of grape juice and the silver plates with bread, there were tables that had empty glasses, spilled food and crumpled napkins. When we normally would be thinking that everything had to be pristine clean and neat, it reminded me of what it would have been like the night that Jesus broke the bread and poured from the cup when He instituted what we now observe as communion or the Lord's Supper.

There were some problems that were going on in the Corinthian Church that caused Paul to address them in this letter. Let me briefly share two of them. First, **they were divided**. Paul says in verse 18, "For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it." They were not one family that was coming together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ but they had divided into separate groups. It is believed that these divisions were not theological but social. Verse 21 says, "For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry" insinuating that the richer members seemed to come together with those like them and they didn't share their food and have fellowship with those who were poor. Interesting.... And second, **there were those who were drunk**. Verse 21 says, "one goes hungry and another becomes drunk." These Corinthian Christians were coming together in name only- but they were not really "together" but rather some were dividing up and others were

drinking to the point of becoming drunk. They had forgotten to share and when they attempted to celebrate the sacrifice that God made in sharing His Son for our sins, they had made a mockery of worship and communion. All the appropriate words could have been spoken and all the right rituals and actions acted out, but if the condition of the church's fellowship and the spirit of the members of the Corinthian Church was not right and good, then it all was a contradiction as to the true meaning of the Lord's Supper.

So the people had come together, but they weren't really "together" in the sense that they should have been as brothers and sisters in Christ. I mean, any time you bring into a worship service or the church fellowship divisions within the body of believers, whether they are social or cultural they will weaken the true meaning of worship.

That is why it is so important to really "come together" so that when your time at church is over, whether it is for worship or study or whatever the function is the church is engaged in, once you have "come together" and it is over, you are truly ready to go out together and be Jesus Christ to the world- be His hands, His feet, His heart, His mind; to be imitators of Christ in a world that is desperately in need of the Savior. Because, when you think of coming into this sanctuary any Sunday morning we truly should enter to worship and exit to serve. And we need, we must, we have to do it together. And unlike the Corinthian Christians we need to come together for the better and not for the worse. And as a result of "coming together" we are ready to "go together" and serve Christ in a broken world. Amen.

Amen.

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Introduction: Monday, May 31st Memorial Day

Our passage and a different kind of memorial day

The meal had become a time for eating, drinking and making merry

At the time that Paul is writing our passage the early church had established a tradition in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper...

Some problems in the Corinthian Church...

First, **they were** _____ vs. 18

Not theological but social vs. 21

Second, **there were those who were** _____ vs. 21

They were coming together in name only

Any time you bring into a worship service or the church fellowship divisions within the body of believers, whether they are social or cultural they will weaken the true meaning of worship

Once you have “come together” and it is over, you are truly ready to go out and be Jesus Christ...

Conclusion: “coming together” so you can “go together” and serve Christ in a broken world