

## *Our Common Dependence on God*

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (October 3, 2021)

### *1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>25</sup>In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

### *Historical Context*

Greco-Roman culture was socially stratified, meaning that the population was divided into social levels or strata. People in the Greco-Roman world always knew their status relative to others in the social pecking order. Locating themselves on the relative-status continuum was as natural as breathing. Virtually all social interaction was shaped by this hierarchy of status. For instance, if a host had guests for dinner, it was common for guests of high status to be served more and better food and drink than others, and for guests of lower status to be served less food and drink of poorer quality. Differences in status resulted in (many would have said “necessitated”) differences in treatment.

### *Theme: Our Common Dependence on God*

Social stratification was so taken for granted that it shaped the practice of celebrating the Lord’s Supper at Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, Paul takes the Corinthians to task for what was happening when they met for the Lord’s Supper. The Corinthians observed the Eucharist in conjunction with a common meal, and at that meal social divisions were visible in a way that Paul believed compromised the Gospel. Some people had so much wine that they were drunk, while others had to be content with so little food that they remained hungry.

Paul’s response to this situation was not to abolish social stratification. That task would have been impossible and ultimately out of the control of the Christians at Corinth. Rather, he instructs the Corinthians to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in a way that doesn’t marginalize (Paul uses the word “humiliate” 1 Corinthians 11:22) the poor among them. Paul argues that it’s better to eat at home before coming to the common meal than to humiliate the poorer members of the community by eating your fill in front of them.

Instead of turning the Lord’s Supper into an occasion to exhibit social distinctions, the Corinthians needed to be reminded of what the Eucharist is for: remembering Jesus and proclaiming his death until he comes. They ought to partake in the Lord’s Supper in a way that demonstrates their unity rather than their divisions. For it is meant to remind us of our common dependence on God and of our common task of remembering Jesus’ work on our behalf. Distinctions among us, where some of us are deemed to be better or more important than others, are not appropriate to the people of God.