

October 1, 2017

The Radical Sayings of Jesus  
*Do This in Remembrance of Me*  
Luke 22:14-20

**Opening words:** Today, I continue my sermon series called *The Radical Sayings of Jesus*. You know the truth. Most people read the Bible selectively. There are certain things we have read countless times. We read them continuously because they comfort us. However, there are other passages in the Bible we have never read because we find them hard to understand or harsh to our ears. It is true of the entire Bible, including the Gospels. We try to ignore certain words from the Master. The truth be told, there are certain things we wish Jesus had never said. They are just too radical. This is the problem: We can't dismiss those words, because they came from Jesus. We must wrestle with them. We must not just understand them, we must apply them to our daily lives. Today's radical saying of Jesus is a fine example. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, Jesus reminds us to do it in remembrance of him. That is harder than it sounds. What do you remember?

Today is World Communion Sunday. We observe World Communion Sunday annually on the first Sunday in October. Sometimes, we forget Christianity is the largest religion in the world. There are 2.2 billion Christians in the world. Each branch of the Christian church holds to different beliefs and customs. It is easy to see our differences and forget what we have in common. World Communion Sunday celebrates the one thing all Christians have in common, Jesus. Our scripture lesson for today is Luke 22:14-20. Let me call this message *Do This in Remembrance of Me*.

**Luke 22:14-20** When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.  
<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

<sup>17</sup> After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

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The great preacher from yesteryear Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) once said, "*We can't have communion with Christ until we are in union with him.*" That is the perfect quote for today's message. If you can understand that quote, then you can understand today's message. If you are ready to begin, say, "**Amen!**"

We find ourselves today in the twenty-second chapter of Luke. You know the story. Time is running out on Jesus's earthly ministry. So much has already happened. The last person has been healed. The last lesson has been taught. The events of Palm Sunday are nothing more than a memory. The tables turned over in the temple courts are now setting upright. The only thing left to do is to have one last supper with the disciples. It wasn't just any meal. It was the Seder. It was and is a meal with a message. Everything they ate reminded them of their past as God's Chosen People. The Exodus was not just remembered, it was celebrated. It was not their first Seder. They ate the same meal with the same message annually during Passover. There is nothing negative to say about the Seder. Everyone in the Jewish world looked forward to the Seder. That means, the disciples were looking forward to the Seder. They didn't have a clue that everything was about to change.

We call it Communion or the Eucharist. At one point in the meal, Jesus picked up the bread and shared it with the disciples. The bread was more than a baked good, it was the body of Christ. Later in the meal, Jesus picks up a glass of wine and shares it with the disciples. It was more than a fermented glass of grape juice, it was the blood of Jesus. They believed, blood was the life-giving agent in the human body. The disciples must have been confused because Jesus changed the script. They had no clue they were witnessing history. They had no clue Jesus was giving them a memorial for the ages. However, the disciples must have known it was a memorial. Jesus said it clearly. "Do this in remembrance of me." It was not just a command for them. It was a command for us. This is my question for you today: When you consume the body and the blood of Christ, what do you remember? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

Did you know I was not born a United Methodist? I'm a United Methodist by choice. My parents were members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I was raised at Central Christian Church on East Market Street in Warren. To the Sunday morning worshipper, there is very little difference between the United Methodist Church and the Christian Church. However, one thing stands out. In the United Methodist Church, the pastor decides how often Communion is served. Here we partake of the elements monthly. In some United Methodist congregations, the elements are offered quarterly. It is the pastor's choice. In a Disciples church, Communion is offered weekly. To be more exact, in a Disciples Church, Communion is offered every time the congregation gathers. If you throw in high holy days, Communion can be offered sixty times a year. I was raised in that tradition and heard the words of Jesus many times, *Do this in remembrance of me*. These words of Jesus have never changed, but what I remember about Jesus has changed.

When I was young, I remember sitting by my parent's side as they took Communion. I remember the minister quoting Jesus, *Do this in remembrance of me*. I did my best to follow Jesus's lead. I remembered Jesus's earthly life. I always thought of the birth of Jesus. Surrounded by his loving parents, Mary and Joseph, the infant Jesus lay in the straw in Bethlehem. Overhead were the multitude of angels, singing heavenly songs.

On that sacred night, the shepherds came to see the newborn king. Several years later, the Magi came to visit the toddler. Then, I would remember Jesus's baptism. Then I would remember Jesus's teachings, including the parables. I tried to remember as much as I could about Jesus because Jesus said those words, *Do this in remembrance of me*. When Jesus tells us today to remember him, what are you going to remember? If you remember part of Jesus's earthly life say, "**Amen!**" Some remember Jesus's earthly life. Some remember Jesus's eternal promise.

The first significant death in my life was my maternal grandfather, Walter Milligan. He lived in Brooklyn, New York with my grandmother, Nina Milligan. My grandmother was harsh and opinionated. She wrote harsh critical letters weekly to Franklin D. Roosevelt to tell him everything he was doing wrong. This is the truth: As harsh and as critical as my grandmother was, my grandfather wasn't. He was quiet and kind. He worked for his father, who owned apartment buildings in New York City. I have heard the stories of how he helped his tenants during the Great Depression. He only expected them to pay what they could afford and that wasn't much. Personally, I have very few memories of him. However, I do remember him smoking a pipe. Every time I smell pipe tobacco, I think of him. I am guessing, I was eight years old when he died. I will never forget that day because it was the first day I saw my mother cry. I can count on one hand the number of times I saw my mother cry. This is the truth: When I get to heaven, I am going to spend some time with Walter Milligan. He was the grandfather I never really had a chance to know. Death has a way of making us think of Jesus's eternal promise. Who do you want to visit first when you get to heaven?

Death always reminded me of the fourteenth chapter of John. Jesus is with the disciples and he tells them that he is going to be leaving them. He has said it to them in the past but this time they hear it, Jesus was leaving them. Upset, the disciples begin to question him. Jesus sees and hears that they are upset and tries to comfort them with these words, "In my father house are many mansions", or rooms. That means there is a mansion or room waiting for you and me when we get to heaven. That means our departed loved ones are already occupying their room in heaven. My grandfather, Water Milligan, is occupying one of those rooms in heaven at this very moment. The hope of occupying one of those eternal rooms is only possible because of the redemptive work of Jesus. When Jesus tells us, *Do this in remembrance of me*, I remember Jesus's death and resurrection. When Jesus tells us today to remember him, what are you going to remember? If you remember part of Jesus's death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb, say, "**Amen!**" Some remember Jesus's earthly life. Some remember Jesus's eternal promise. Some remember Jesus's high standard for living.

History tells us Adolph Hitler commanded all religious groups to unite during World War II. The command was given so he could control them. Among the Brethren assemblies, half complied and half refused. Those who went along with the order had a much easier time. Those who did not, faced harsh persecution. In almost every family of those who

resisted, someone died in a concentration camp. When the war was over, feelings of bitterness ran deep in the Brethren. To resolve the tension, a retreat was held. For several days, each person spent time in prayer, examining his own heart in the light of Christ's commands. Then they came together. Francis Schaeffer, who told of the incident, asked a friend who was there, "What did you do then?" "We were just one," he replied. As they confessed their hostility and bitterness to God and yielded to His control, the Holy Spirit created a spirit of unity among them. Love filled their hearts and dissolved their hatred. When love prevails among believers, especially in times of strong disagreement, it presents to the world an indisputable mark of a true follower of Jesus Christ.

Do you remember the story found in the twelfth chapter of Mark? It is Wednesday of Holy Week and Jesus is in the temple courts teaching the crowd. One of the teachers of the law came up to Jesus and asked him a good question, "*Of all the commandments, which is the most important?*" Without hesitation, Jesus answered, "*The most important one is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these.'*" They are easy words to say but they are hard words to live. Jesus sets the standard high. Is anyone one here living out those words? When Jesus tells us today to remember him, what are you going to remember? If you remember Jesus's high standard for living say, "**Amen!**" Some remember Jesus's earthly life. Some remember Jesus's eternal promise. Some remember Jesus's high standard for living.

This is World Communion Sunday! That means, in a perfect world, there are approximately 2.2 billion believers standing shoulder to shoulder united in the name of Jesus. Each one of those people are consuming the body and the blood of Christ. Each one has heard Jesus's command, *Do this in remembrance of me*. Each one of us will remember something different. This is the question you must answer today: What will you remember about Jesus? Do you remember the words of Charles Spurgeon? He said, "*We can't have communion with Christ until we are in union with him.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"