

# Remembering Jesus

Sermon for Sunday, April 1, 2007  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” What does it mean, to remember someone?

## 1) We think about someone and absorb that person’s character

What does it mean, to remember someone? To me, it means that we think about what that person was like, the things he/she used to do. That’s what happens when we remember Jesus.

I think of the time Jesus was wading through a big crowd on his way to the house of a V.I.P. to heal his daughter, he stopped to talk with a woman who had touched his robe. He always had time for people.

I think of how he faced the powerful people who ran the country, and refused to stop doing the work his Father had sent him to do. He lived by his convictions.

Each one of us has memories of special Bible stories of Jesus. More than that, we also remember what he has meant in our own lives.

Communion, then, is a time to think about Jesus. The more you focus your mind on something, the more you become like that something. This is particularly true with Jesus, because the Holy Spirit in us is also molding us.

In Communion, we do more than just think about Jesus. In a symbolic way, we even receive Christ into our own bodies. In some mysterious sense, we draw closer to our Lord this way.

In communion, as we meet with Christ, we pray that we may also be like him.

## 2) Jesus unites the Body

Another thought comes to my mind when I think of “Do this in remembrance of me.”

As we think about communion, we remember Christ’s broken body on the cross. “This is my body, broken for you.” The New Testament also tells us that we as believers are members of the Body of Christ.

When Jesus was killed on the cross, we speak of it in a sense that his body was broken; that is, dismembered. When we come to the Communion Table, we are united

together as members of the Body of Christ; that is, we re-member the Body.

Communion, then, more than any other part of our worship, is the time to forgive our enemies, to heal our hurts, to bury grudges. As members of this Body, we are called to love one another, even as Christ loved us.

Let me tell you an Easter story. It’s about a minister named Rev. Kitagawa. His family was Japanese, but he was pastor of Christ Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Near the church was a U.S. Army Base, and a lot of the soldiers came to this church.

One Sunday in 1943, Rev. Kitagawa preached about how the cross of Christ joins us back together with God. That would mean that all who come to God are brothers and sisters of one another. The cross breaks down all barriers, between us and God, and among ourselves. Forgiveness brings people together again.

After the service, one young soldier waited behind until everyone else had left. Then he went to the minister at the door. He said, “Father, I too believe what you said in your sermon is absolutely true. I’m glad I was in the church this morning to hear you preach that particular message.”

He paused momentarily and then continued: “I was training as a violinist, but that’s all finished. In the South Pacific my right wrist was permanently injured by shrapnel. When I was discharged, I vowed to kill the first Japanese that I met. You know, Father, you’re the one.”

With that, the man put out his injured hand, shook hands with Rev. Kitagawa, and walked out.

That’s communion. That’s what we have come here for, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

## Before serving communion

James Moore of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in Houston tells a story about one of his minister friends. His name is Tom and he has a habit he does each month. Even though he has an extremely busy schedule he still makes the time each month to go down to the homeless shelter in his city to work in their soup kitchen.

After the homeless people have been fed, he then invites them to join him in a service of Holy Communion and many of them will come with him to the little chapel in the homeless shelter and join in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. They have shared soup together in the

soup kitchen and then they come to share the bread and the cup together at the altar in the chapel.

One day, Tom had an unforgettable experience in the communion service. As he was moving down the altar serving communion, he came to a man kneeling there who looked like he had been out on the streets for quite some time.

The man looked up at Tom and whispered: "Skip me." "What? Pardon me?" Tom said. In a louder whisper, the man said again, "Skip me." "Why?" Tom asked. "Because," the man said, "I'm not worthy." Tom said: "Neither am I." Then Tom added: "I'll tell you what. I'm going to serve communion to these other people. Then, I'm going to come back and serve communion to you and then I would like you to serve it to me." The man blinked and said to Tom: "Father, is that legal?" "Yes, it's legal; it's beautiful and that's what we are going to do!" Tom answered.

Tom went on down the altar and served all the other people kneeling there. Then he came back to the reluctant man and said: "What's your name?" And the man said, "Josh." Tom placed the elements of the Lord's Supper before him and said:

"Josh, here is the Body of Christ and here is the Blood of Christ given for you. Eat this and drink this in the remembrance that Christ came for you and Christ died for you. Amen."

Josh blinked back the tears in his eyes. and he received Holy Communion. Then, Tom knelt and handed Josh the trays of bread and wine and said: "Now, you serve me."

Josh nervously took the trays and again he said: "Father, are you sure this is legal?" "Yes, it's legal. Just do it."

Josh's eyes were darting from side to side as he looked over this shoulder and then the other. as if he expected (at any moment) the police, the FBI, the CIA or the Pope to come rushing in to arrest him.

Finally, he held the trays toward Tom and as Tom received the Sacrament Josh muttered: "Body - Blood - for you, Hang in there!"

Tom said later: "Of all the communion rituals I have ever heard, I don't recall the words 'Hang in there' in any of them. but at that moment for me, Holy Communion had never been more holy."

If you have a guest come to stay at your home, you probably allow them to use the bathroom to get cleaned up. It is Jesus himself who welcomes you to come to this meal as his guest. He himself provides the washing and cleaning up: "If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong" [1 John 1:8-9].

This food and drink is for *everyone*.