

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Notes from Rodney L. Barbour

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Theme: Pastor Alan writes: According to what we find in Jude 17 and 2 Peter 2:13, there were meals that were brotherly/sisterly love feasts...often as a prelude to a celebration of the Lord's Supper. On this St. Valentines Day, let's take a closer look at this love feast, and what they say about life together as a church community.

Preparation for Worship: The music which calls us to worship today is a song of the amazing love of God through Jesus Christ and how he first loved us, so we can love others. Here's a portion of the text: *How beautiful the hands that served the wine and the bread and the sons of the earth. How beautiful the feet that walked the long dusty roads and the hill to the cross. How beautiful is the body of Christ. How beautiful the heart that bled, that took all my sin and bore it instead. How beautiful the tender eyes that choose to forgive and never despise. How beautiful is the body of Christ. And as He laid down His life, we offer this sacrifice: that we will live just as He died, willing to pay the price. How beautiful the radiant Bride who waits for her Groom with His light in her eyes. How beautiful when humble hearts give the fruit of pure lives so that others may live. How beautiful is the body of Christ.*

Call to Worship: Today's words are inspired by Paul's well-known teaching to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 13).

Leader: God, your love is the mightiest force in the universe, whispering, roaring, creating, redeeming...and taking delight in us! Thank you for your Word that offers to each of us this measure of your love.

People: If we are impatient, if we are unkind, if we do not protect, if we delight in another's trouble, then we are not loving with your love. Thank you for empowering us to love by your standard---our will washed in submission, ever rejoicing in heaven's best for the sake of others.

Hymn of Praise: This hymn of love was penned by one of Christianity's most prolific hymn-writers, Charles Wesley and speaks to today's worship theme: *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Vs1

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Vs2

Breathe, o breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast;
Let us all in thee inherit, let us find thy promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning, Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

Vs3

**Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.**

Vs4

**Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
Let us seen thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

Confession: As we celebrate God's love today, we come to realize that in our own power we don't always respond to others with the unconditional love God offers to us.

Leader: There are many times we think we love you well, O God.

People: But upon hearing your call to love you with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our strength, we confess that our love for you is a diluted love.

Leader: Our love seems pure only for brief moments; soon our affections are drawn away.

People: How easily our devotion dies. Forgive us. In grace, rekindle our love for you in seeing anew Jesus' love for us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: These words of assurance speak for themselves.

Leader: God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

People: Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture/Sermon: Be sure to read I Corinthians 11:17-22 before Sunday morning. The Lord's Supper is a visible representation of the gospel, the earth of Christ for our sins. It focuses on the remembrance of Christ's death and the glorious hope of his return. It is an act of fellowship among believers. And it strengthens our faith through fellowship with Christ and with other believers. When the Lord's Supper was celebrated in the early church, it included a feast or fellowship meal followed by communion. In Corinth, the fellowship meal had become a time of gluttony and excessive drinking rather than a time of preparation for communion. Although the feast was similar to a potluck, there was little sharing and caring. This certainly did not demonstrate the unity and love that should characterize the church, nor was it a preparation for communion. Paul condemned these actions and reminded the church of the real purpose of the Lord's Supper.

Song of Response: Our final song today is sung to the music of Joseph Haydn, a melody called “Austrian Tune”. The text is a response to God’s love and grace in our lives, and calls us to make a commitment to be God’s people in our communities, nation and world!

Vs1

**We are called to be God’s people, showing by our lives his grace,
One in heart and one in spirit, sign of hope for all the race.
Let us show how he has changed us, and remade us as his own,
Let us share our life together as we shall around his throne.**

Vs2

**We are called to be God’s servants, working in his world today;
Taking his own task upon us, all his sacred words obey.
Let us rise, then, to his summons, dedicate to him our all,
That we may be faithful servants, quick to answer now his call.**

Vs3

**We are called to be God’s prophets, speaking for the truth and right,
Standing firm for godly justice, bringing evil things to light.
Let us seek the courage needed, our high calling to fulfill,
That the world may know the blessing of the doing of God’s will.**

See you in Worship this Sunday! Rodney Barbour