

Lent Devotional March 17, 2026

Scripture

1 Corinthians 11:2-34

2 I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. 3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ. 4 Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head shames his head, 5 but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled shames her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair, but if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. 7 For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God, but woman is the reflection of man. 8 Indeed, man was not made from woman but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for the sake of woman but woman for the sake of man. 10 For this reason a woman ought to have authority over her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. 12 For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, but all things come from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that, if a man wears long hair, it is dishonoring to him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 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. 19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you proceeds to eat your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22 What! Do you not have households to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

23 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, 24 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." 25 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Luke H. Maybry '20

This passage would have been so much easier had it started at verse 17 instead of verse two. Who doesn't love communion around Holy Week? What better time to observe "the body of Christ broken for you and the blood of Christ shed for you" than during Lent?

So why would Paul, or whoever doled out assignments for this Lent devotional, include the bit about "the husband being the head of the wife"? Surely Paul isn't serious about the head-coverings—the only people who need those are old bald men like me who need to keep our noggins warm. What, pray tell, do we do with verses 2-16? What do we do with so many difficult passages in our canon?

Paul insists in verse 28 that we examine ourselves before we eat the bread and drink the cup. What exactly should we examine ourselves against? If indeed our canon (or "measuring stick") is holy writ and a special revelation from God, if it is the Holy Bible, then we are thrust into a world wholly different from our own. Disorienting though they may be, these old, ancient words lead to the Word made flesh.

Sometimes, we in the mainline churches are too convinced of our own moral certitude: we are certainly right; therefore, everyone else is certainly wrong. Then we read a passage like 1 Corinthians 11 that makes us scratch our heads. Do we just ignore that passage like it's not there? Or do we read it, study it, pray over it, and wrestle with it? Do we dare admit that we, of all people, need to change and be changed? Do we show up to communion on this Lenten journey, with the best and worst of our humanity, and dare to acknowledge a broken body and spilt blood, all for sinners like us? So, for God's sake examine hard passages like 1 Corinthians 11 on this Lenten journey, and examine yourself while you are at it.

Prayer

Holy and Gracious God, we come to you as sinners who have badly missed the mark, standing desperately in the need of grace that only you can give. Grant unto us the courage to examine hard passages that make us uncomfortable. Help us also to examine ourselves: our egos, motivations, fears, ignorance, and pride. We, after all, are part of the very darkness that we claim to reject. Remind us once again of your body that has been broken for us and of your blood of the new covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins, that we may taste and see that the Lord is good. In the holy name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.