

1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13**Lord's Supper Meditation****Sixth Sunday Morning After Pentecost, July 11, 2004**

A day will come when we shall see the Lord Jesus Christ just as He is. Until that day you and I are to make the earnest and humble attempt to see Him in others – even those unlike us. I speak on behalf of those who were in Mexico this past week. We saw Jesus as we touched children and adults. I do pray they saw Jesus in us. Even though there were language barriers for some of us, I do sense Jesus was glorified. A day will come when all who have faith in Him will join together in one great chorus and say, “Thanks be to God for this wondrous opportunity to look at Jesus face-to-face and see Him as He is!”

As we wait for that day, we are to continually be about the task of renewing ourselves to His Lordship. We are to permit the Spirit to energize us so we can make a difference in Mante, Mexico, in Carrollton, Georgia, and wherever we go. That can be done because it takes all kinds of people. And all kinds of people are found in a place called Tabernacle Baptist Church who are seeking to live a different kind of life.

Five weeks ago today, in the June 6 edition of The Times-Georgian in the “Southern Spice Section” most of you read the wonderful article that was written about our beloved Juanita Davis. On Mother’s Day we recognized her and named the Media Center in honor of her. The newspaper did a cover story on her. I had my picture made with her in my office on my day off. I’m not sure why I was here that day, but I was and didn’t have the normal “pastoral attire” on that morning. I’m not real sure what normal is these days. Any way I was wearing a Georgia Tech shirt. I realize that some of you have not forgiven me for doing that and you probably never will. During the interview, Juanita made the comment that she had worked with six pastors and that currently she was working with the Reverend Doctor Jimmy Gentry. She said and I quote: “He’s different!” Some of you are probably thinking, “Amen to that!” Juanita assured me it was a compliment.

I’m glad I’m different. I’m glad you are different, too. It takes different people to make this entity called “church” work. Without the body of Christ utilizing numerous gifts with which God has blessed Her, blessing cannot happen in Mexico, in the United States, and in other parts of the world. The mandate, then, to you and me is to open our lives to the movement of God’s Spirit, who calls us to celebrate and experience the joy of living the different life of love.

The text that I shall read as we prepare to eat this bread and drink this juice together is the text that was utilized last week in Bible study and worship on the Mexico mission venture. I divided it into four sections and attempted to share four meditations each evening in worship to help us understand better the call to look for a more excellent way. This text reminds us that though there are differences, we are bound together by a more excellent way of life.

Paul penned a timely word to the troubled Corinthian congregation. Some were vying for power. Some were engaged in a phony spirituality. Some were saying, “I am better than you.” Some were saying, “My spiritual gift is better than your spiritual gift.” Some were saying, “I am more spiritual than you are.” And others thought, “I have the goods whereas you don’t have the goods.” Paul reminded this arrogant lot that they were to function as one.

He spent three chapters – 12, 13, & 14 – discussing the importance of spiritual gifts. In chapter 11 he talked about the value of eating the supper together and he gave some specific instructions about how believing people should eat together: in friendship and fellowship and partnership with the Lord and one another. He reminded them as he moved into a talk about spiritual gifts that God had blessed everyone with at least one gift to be used in ministry and mission. Everyone is different. He then reminded them of God’s call to each of them to use their giftedness to build up the church. Most importantly, he called them to look for the more excellent way. Listen to what he said to them and what he says to us in 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13.

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually you are members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

Looking for a more excellent way. That way is the way of love. Living the different life of love allows us to be different and honor one another. It permits us to be spiritually gifted in a variety of ways. Living the different life of love is the key. Living this life allows us to eat some bread and drink some juice. Doing so affirms that it is good to be different. It is good to utilize gifts in various ways to impact many. But doing so without love, results in our giftedness being reduced to nothing.

The most important thing for you and me to do as we gather at these tables to receive these morsels of bread that will enter our bodies and as these sips of juice whet our palates, is to remember, again, that Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to walk this earth to show us how to live and to teach us a lesson that, unfortunately, most of us have not yet learned. In a sense, that is OK since we are all still learning and will continue to learn until we stand before Him and behold Him face-to-face.

I trust you will acknowledge the persons sitting beside you, the ones in front of you, the ones behind you, and everyone in this room. Give thanks that each is different. And give thanks that you are different too. Remember that Jesus is different. For it takes a lot for any human being to say, “I will willingly lay down my life so that you might live.” Which way are you going today? I pray you are going in the way of excellency that is demonstrated in love. We gather to eat and drink. We do so as family – brothers and sisters sharing a common meal together, living a different kind of life. It is the life of love.

**Meditation by Dr. Jimmy Gentry, Pastor
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All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version, 1989.