

Sunday Worship Service - 10.30 am 1st November 2026

Led by Bridget Gurney and Revd Zoltan Biro preaching

**Honour: Discerning the Body at
the Table**



Call to Worship

Lord God, to whom shall we go? Your words are of eternal life.

Lord God, we come here in all kinds of moods and from a variety of situations. You know what these are and what each of us needs to hear at this time. Make us ready for the word that will bring us life. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Song MP 378

Jesus shall take the highest honour
Jesus shall take the highest praise
Let all earth join heav'n in exalting
The Name which is above all other names
Let's bow the knee in humble adoration
For at His Name ev'ry knee must bow
Let every tongue confess
He is Christ God's only Son
Sov'reign Lord we give You glory now

For all honour
And blessing and power
Belongs to You belongs to You
All honour and blessing and power
Belongs to You belongs to You
Lord Jesus Christ
Son of the living God

Chris Bowater

Song MP 388

Jesus we enthrone You
We proclaim You our King
Standing here in the midst of us
We raise You up with our praise

And as we worship build a throne
And as we worship build a throne
And as we worship build a throne
Come Lord Jesus and take Your place
1980 Thankyou Music Ltd

Family time *During the song the collection will be taken*

Song It's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer

It's me it's me O Lord
Standing in the need of prayer
It's me it's me O Lord
Standing in the need of prayer

Not my brother not my sister
But it's me O Lord standing in the need of prayer
Not my brother not my sister
But it's me O Lord standing in the need of prayer

Not the preacher not the deacon
But it's me O Lord standing in the need of prayer
Not the preacher not the deacon
But it's me O Lord standing in the need of prayer

Not my father not my mother
But it is me O Lord standing in the need of prayer
Not my father not my mother
But it is me O Lord standing in the need of prayer

Allen Dain Percival and Peter D Smith

Children and young people leave for their classes

Prayer

Song BPW298 / MP 613

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the living God,
fall fresh on me:
break me, melt me,
mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me!

DANIEL IVERSON (1890-1972) CCL Licence Number: 1763

Bible Reading 1: 1 Corinthians 11 v17-22 **Bible Reading 2:** 1 Corinthians 11 v27-34

Sermon

The Mark of Honour: Discerning the Body at the Table (1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 27-34)

Over the last two weeks we have started looking at the marks of respect in the letters to the Corinthians. Two weeks ago, we saw that God wants his church united. Last week we heard Simon talk about the importance of humility. Today is Communion Sunday, so this is the obvious text to have from 1st Corinthians.

I enjoy being a father, most of the times. However, what hurts most is not when one of them is unkind to me. It is when one of my children is hurt, and hardest of all, when one of them hurts another. God the Father feels the same. He loves every one of his children, and it grieves him when we hurt each other, or when we simply do not notice each other.

That is what Paul is dealing with in our reading. He gives us three examples to follow.

1. Don't let the table expose our divisions (11:17-22)

Paul begins with words no minister wants to write: "In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good." He says that when they come together as a church, there are divisions among them, and "in part I believe it."

To see why he is so strong, we need to picture what a Sunday gathering looked like at Corinth.

There were no church buildings. The church met in homes, and the only homes big enough belonged to the wealthy. Gaius (Romans 16:23) was one of those hosts, and Erastus, the city treasurer, was another believer of standing. The Lord's Supper was part of a full shared meal, in the host's house.

Now think about how a Greek dinner worked. Status was everything. The dining room in a wealthy house held perhaps nine guests, reclining on couches. Those were the host's friends and equals, and they were served first, often with the best food and wine. Everyone else was sent to the courtyard or stood or sat in the entrance hall. Rank decided who sat where and what was put in front of them.

And think about who the rest of the church were. Most were slaves, freed slaves, and labourers. They could not leave work at sunset. Some worked until late in the evening and hurried over to the meeting, tired and hungry. When they arrived, the food was gone. The wealthy had already eaten and, as verse 21 puts it, some were even drunk. “One goes hungry, another gets drunk.”

Paul says this is a way of despising “the church of God” and humiliating “those who have nothing” (v. 22). Notice the shame in that word. These people had come to worship, and they were being shown, in front of everyone, that they didn’t count.

And here is the most shocking thing. Nobody at Corinth would have thought anything of it. It was normal. In every dinner they had ever attended, the rich ate first and best. They carried the habits of their culture into the church without thinking. Paul says, “Not here. At this table, everyone is equal, because Jesus gave himself for every one of us.”

Now this is about the Lord’s Supper, but it applies to every part of our life together. We can be doing what Jesus said about loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and still not be loving our neighbour. And just as it hurts me when my children fall out, it hurts God when his children have fallen out and have not forgiven each other.

I think of a time when I was leading a funeral and found that one of the people there was someone who had hurt me deeply and caused me real distress. I had a choice. I could stay on my side of the room and avoid them. Instead, I went over and had a conversation with them. Please understand, it wasn’t because I had forgotten what they did. I hadn’t. It was because I know that God still loves them. They are someone Jesus died for, just as he died for me. I didn’t feel warm about it, and it didn’t fix everything. But it was a step, and I believe it is the kind of step God asks of us to do.

I know that there is tension in our church, but I don’t think anyone here is a bad character. We have been tired and anxious, and we have said and done things we wish we hadn’t. So, this morning, let the table do what it was made to do.

2. Discern the body (11:27-32)

Paul continues: “Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat.” Notice whose examination he asks for: our own. He is not asking us to examine our neighbour or keep a list of who has wronged us.

Then in verse 29, he speaks of “discerning the body.” Christians understand this in different ways. Some hear it as recognising the body of Christ in the bread. Others hear it as recognising the body of Christ, the church. I don’t think we need to settle that this morning. In this passage, though, the context is hard to ignore: the problem was how they treated Christ’s people. They failed to see their brothers and sisters as people Jesus had died for.

Paul says in chapter 10 that “because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.” At this table, we are saying we belong to Christ and to one another.

So, to discern the body is to look around the table and see people Christ gave himself for. That includes the person I find difficult. It includes the person who I feel hurt me.

Now I need to be honest with you about something, because Paul is. Paul takes this very seriously. He tells them in verse 30 that because of the way they have treated the body, “many among you are weak and sick, and a number have fallen asleep.” And back in chapter 3, writing about this same church, he says: “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple” (3:17).

Paul believed that when someone deliberately tears a church apart, there will be judgement on them. God is serious about his people. To God, the church is not a club or a committee. It is his own temple, bought with the blood of his Son.

I want to be careful here, because this can be misused. This is not a word for the person who is hurting, who has made a mistake, or who disagrees honestly. We may have said or done things we regret, and struggle to ask for forgiveness and come back to unity. I'm not pointing at anyone this morning. Paul's warning is for us all, and it is the reason he says to examine *ourselves*.

We should not read every illness as a punishment either, or I would never say that to anyone who is unwell. But the warning is real, and so is the mercy in it. Paul says the Lord's discipline exists "so that we will not be finally condemned along with the world" (v. 32). Even God's correction is meant to bring us back.

And remember the setting. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and said, "This is my body, which is for you." He did not wait for his friends to become faithful first. One was about to betray him, one to deny him, and all to run. He shared the table with them anyway. There is no top end of this table, and nobody sits here because they are better than the person next to them.

3. Wait for one another (11:33-34)

Then comes Paul's very practical instruction in verse 33: "When you gather to eat, wait for one another."

Think back to the Corinthian meal. The wealthy had eaten before the workers could even arrive. Paul's answer is wait. Don't start without them. Let the late ones arrive and let everyone eat together. Same can be true at a church meeting.

Waiting can mean allowing space for people who don't normally have voice, rather than dominating a meeting.

Waiting can mean welcome the latecomer. There are people who come in late because of work, family or travel, as the workers at Corinth did. Waiting means making them feel expected, with a seat kept and a welcome given, and not letting them feel they have missed the meal.

Waiting can mean moving beyond your usual circle of friends after the service. It is easy to head straight for the people we know. Waiting means looking around the room for the person standing alone and sitting down next to them.

Waiting can look like, making room for someone who doesn't fit our existing friendships. In a church with so many nationalities and backgrounds, it is easy to stay with the people we already know.

Communion is not only about me and Jesus. It also says something about how I receive the people Jesus has gathered around me.

So, hold these three questions quietly:

1. Who can easily be overlooked in a church like ours?
2. Who might feel that they are on the outside?
3. What would it mean for us to "wait for one another" this week?

As we come to the table, God gives us a choice:

We can hold on to our hurt, or we can bring it to him.

- **Forgive others.** Let Christ's peace rule your hearts (Colossians 3:12-15).
- **Wait for others.** Make room for the person on the edge (1 Corinthians 11:33).
- **Honour others above yourself.** Imitate Christ's humility (Philippians 2:3-5).
- **Comfort others.** Show them the mercy God has shown you (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- **Love others.** Let God live through you as you live in him (1 John 4:16).

In a moment, as we share the bread and the cup, ask God to forgive you for any hurt you are holding on to, and for any you have caused. Then look around at the body of Christ. These are the people Jesus gathered, and he gave himself for every one of them.

Let us pray.

Father, thank you that you love every one of us and want your family to be at peace. Forgive us where we have hurt one another or held on to hurt. Heal what is broken among us. Give us hearts that notice,

hands that welcome, and patience to wait for one another. As we eat this bread and drink this cup, make us one body, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Communion - "Come to the Table" Communion Service

Come to the table of Jesus our Redeemer!

Jesus invites you here as part of the people of God.

Come to the table humbly,

not because you have earned a place here,

but because you need mercy and help.

Come because you love God, and want to love God more.

Come because Jesus first loved us, and gave himself for us.

Come because you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Come because you want to experience the mystery of God's grace.

On the night he was handed over, Jesus had a meal with his friends.

He took a loaf of bread and after giving thanks to God,

he broke it and gave it to his disciples.

He said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper Jesus took the cup of wine;

and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said,

"Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant

which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Whenever you drink it, remember me."

Let us pray: God our Creator,

thank you for the gift of your son Jesus Christ,

whose love pursues us our whole life long.

Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life to us in word and deed,

even unto death, even death on a cross.

Come Holy Spirit, feed us with your love

that we may be filled with power

to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds. Amen.

[the bread and wine are served]

Prayer of response:

We have come to the Lord's table,

we have eaten the bread of heaven.

God is the one who will transform us

so that we can see with Jesus' eyes,

hear with Jesus' ears, speak with Jesus' mouth;

so that we can be the body of Christ in the world,

proclaiming the good news of God's reign.

Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

Prayer of Intercession

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for this day and for Your love. Thank You for always being with us and taking care of us.

Lord, when we look at the world, we see many wars, fear, and sadness. Many people are suffering and many families are in danger. Dear God, please bring peace to our world. Please stop the wars and protect innocent people. Help those who are sad, afraid, or alone. Give them hope and comfort.

Father, thank You for loving us so much. Your love is great, and You never leave us alone. Please help us to love each other, forgive each other, and be kind to everyone. Help us to show Your love through our words and actions.

Lord Jesus, please bless the Abby Church family. Protect our church and our families. Help us to love and support one another. Give us strong faith and peaceful hearts. Please bless our pastors and everyone who serves in the church. Help our church to grow in love and faith.

Dear Lord, please be with us every day. Help us to trust You, even when life is difficult. Fill our hearts with Your peace, joy, and love.

We give our lives and our families into Your hands.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Song BPW 559

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us your humble dwelling,
all your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion,
boundless love that makes us whole;
visit us with your salvation,
enter every trembling soul.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all your grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more your temples leave.
You we would be always blessing,
serve you as your hosts above,
pray, and praise you without ceasing,
glory in your perfect love.

Finish then your new creation:
pure and sinless let us be;
let us see your great salvation,
perfect in eternity:
changed from glory into glory
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before you,
lost in wonder, love and praise!

CHARLES WESLEY (1707-88) / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Blessing

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault, and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power and authority. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and evermore. **Amen**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Connect Groups with Coffee after the service

Events next week:

Wednesday 4 th	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.00	(No Bible Study meeting at 2.00)
Thursday 5 th	10.30	Bible Study – Listening to the Bible
	10.30	Toddlers
	7.00	Prayer and Praise – Worship with Hope
Friday 6 th	10.30	Prayer Meeting Upper Room
	4.30	Table Tennis Club

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Sunday 8th November 10.30 **Worship**
Remembrance Sunday
4 - Honour: One Body, Many Members
1 Corinthians 12:12–26

