

Let Us Keep The Feast!

Text: 1 Cor 5:6-8

1) Why We Keep The Feast

Suggested Hymns:

2) How We Should Keep The Feast

88, 101, 95, 840, 543 ALHB

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

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 5:6–8, *⁶ Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We just sang,

Jesus lives! thy terrors now
Can, O death, no more appal us;
Jesus lives! by this we know
Thou, O grave, canst not enthral us.
Hallelujah!

Jesus lives! henceforth is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm our trembling breath,
When we pass its gloomy portal.
Hallelujah!¹

Yes, *“This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.”² ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes.’³*

This is the great feast in the Christian Church, the day of joy which follows in the wake of the days of sorrow and gloom. On Good Friday we have been in spirit with our dear suffering Lord. In spirit we followed Him in His last painful suffering from Gethsemane to Mount Calvary where He was nailed to the cross for our sins, and suffered as no man ever suffered, and finally poured out His life with the cry, *“Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’”*⁴

And tender hands took down from the cross the corpse, and the remains were deposited in a new rock-hewn grave which was closed with a large stone.

But what do we hear today? Jesus lives! He is risen from the dead. Early in the morning the pious women went to the sepulchre to anoint His body. From a distance they saw that the great stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. They ran; they looked in; the tomb was empty — Jesus is alive.

He had made true His prediction that on the third day He would rise from the dead. His murderers knew about this prediction. They said to Pilate, *“Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’”*⁶⁴ *Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day.”*⁶⁵ Pilate complied with their wish. He had the sepulchre guarded by a watch and the stone sealed with the imperial signet.

But what did these precautions amount to? They could not hold Christ in the tomb. On Easter morn, when the first rays of the sun came out over the Mount of Olives, the Prince of Life came forth, light shone round about the keepers who became as dead men, an earthquake added to their confusion, and an angel came down from heaven, and rolled the stone away, and sat upon it.

Jesus lives! For forty days He showed Himself to His disciples in the body of His resurrection, and then, before their eyes, He ascended into heaven. Jesus lives! Having once conquered death, the Prince of Terrors shall have no more power over Him. He lives and reigns to all eternity. He lives today.

How could we account for the existence of the Christian Church on earth and for its wonderful progress in the world, if Jesus did not live? Jesus lives, and because He lives, we are here to celebrate Easter.

Our theme for today is *Let Us Keep The Feast!* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Why We Keep The Feast

“Let us keep the feast!” Which feast? The Apostle refers to the Passover which was the feast, the greatest and most important feast of the Jews. By divine command they celebrated this feast with great joy every year in the full moon of spring in commemoration of their deliverance from bondage in the land of Egypt.

It was called the feast of the Passover because the angel of death, who entered every Egyptian home on the night when they departed from Egypt and killed all the first-born, did not cross their doors but passed over.

It was also called the feast of the Paschal Lamb because in every family they slaughtered, roasted, and ate a lamb.

And it was called the feast of unleavened bread because the bread which they ate during the time of the Passover had to be prepared without leaven or yeast, to remind them of the haste in which their forefathers left the land of Egypt carrying upon their shoulders the unleavened dough.

But what have we Christians to do with the Passover, the Paschal Lamb, and the unleavened bread? Must we keep this feast? The Apostle obviously does not mean to say that. Let us pay close attention to his words.

He says, *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.* ⁸ *Therefore let us keep the feast.* Why, then, are we to keep the feast? Not because we should remember what God did for His chosen people in Egypt, when the angel of death passed over, but because Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.

In the time of the Old Testament the paschal lamb was the leading feature in the celebration of the Passover, but in the time of the New Testament Christ sacrificed for us is the central figure of the feast.

That lamb which they slaughtered and ate in the night when they departed from Egypt prefigured Christ. That lamb had to be perfect and without blemish, and so is Christ, our Passover, perfect in every respect and without the slightest taint of sin.

That lamb had to be eaten completely, so that nothing remained, and so Christ has given Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink in the Lord's Supper.

That Lamb's bones had to remain unbroken, and so Christ's legs could not be broken when He had died on the cross.

But the most striking prefigurement we have is the blood of the paschal lamb. With the blood of this lamb the Israelites painted the two side-posts, and the lintel above their doors, and it was the blood of the lamb which saved them from death, for at the sight of this blood the angel of death passed over. So does the blood of Christ save us from death and from the power of the devil.

Now as Christ, whom this lamb prefigured, has come and has sacrificed Himself for us, why do we keep the feast? We keep it in commemoration of the great things which God has done for us through Christ, our great Paschal Lamb. We keep it in commemoration of the great deliverance by which we have been made free through Christ. We keep it in commemoration of Christ's resurrection.

Have we not all the cause in the world to keep the feast, to rejoice from the depth of our soul, and to sing praises to our God on this day? Consider what Christ's resurrection means for you, my friends! Consider that Christ is your Substitute in everything He did.

For you He lived and led a life in perfect obedience to the Law, fulfilling for you all the commandments of God which you did not keep. For you He suffered and died on the cross, and thereby endured the punishment which you ought to bear for your sins. For you He was laid in the grave, and entered the dark' chambers of death.

And as Christ was your Substitute in life and in death, so is He your Substitute in His glorious resurrection. God raised His beloved Son from the dead, and thereby solemnly declared, as it were, that His great work is accepted, that the Law is fulfilled for you, that the penalty has been paid for your sins, that your entire redemption is an accomplished fact.

O the glorious meaning of Christ's resurrection! It means that our blessed Mediator and Redeemer has not only successfully finished the great work of His mission upon the earth, but that His great work for us has also been approved.

It means that the divine subscription and seal has been affixed to the document which pledges unto us the remission of all our guilt. It means that

God's anger and wrath upon our sins is appeased, that His stern justice is satisfied, that He is reconciled with the whole fallen world.

It means that a universal pardon is pronounced upon all the children of men, declaring them free from guilt and exempt from the damnation which they deserve with their sins.

Does not Paul distinctly say that Christ was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification? Behold, this is the great message of Easter. This is why we keep the feast. It is the feast which proclaims a universal pardon. Come, whoever you are; doubt no longer that all your sins are forgiven. Has not Christ's resurrection sealed your forgiveness? Come, take it, receive it, accept it, believe it, and you shall have it.

2. How We Should Keep The Feast.

And now, in the second place, let us briefly consider how we should keep the feast.

The Apostle says, *⁶ Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.*

To understand these words rightly, we must look at the context. The Corinthians had a member in their congregation who had committed incest.⁶ He had married his stepmother. And instead of dealing with this member, the Corinthians did nothing to him, but kept him in their midst as a brother.

The Apostle therefore says, *⁶ Your glorying is not good*, which was as much as to say, *"You do not have a good name because that man has brought shame upon your community."*

And to inform them what they must do in this case, he compares the whole congregation to a lump, that is, to a mass of dough, and the offender to a piece of leaven. He says *a little leaven leavens the whole lump*.

This implies that the sin of a single member, if tolerated, defiles the whole congregation. And what were they to do in this case? *Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump*. They were to rid themselves of the offender, to put him out of the Christian congregation, to excommunicate him, and thereby show that sin should have no dominion in their midst.

We must observe, however, that though the Apostle has in his mind this special case of incest, he lays down a general rule for all Christians when he says, *purge out the old leaven*.

The rule is, that Christians must deal with sin as the Israelites dealt with the leaven at the time of the Passover. At the approach of this feast the Jews scrupulously searched their houses, and cast out every scrap of leaven which they found that they might duly keep the feast of unleavened bread.

So must Christians rid themselves of sin, wherever and whenever they detect it, and not let sin have dominion over them. And why must they be so zealous to purge out sin? Because Christ is their Passover, because Christ was sacrificed for them and has taken away from them the guilt of their sin, not to this end that they might continue in sin and sin as much as they please, but to this end and purpose that they should hate and detest sin, rid themselves from it always more and more, and walk in holiness of life.

As St. Paul says in Romans 6:4, *⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*. The Apostle, therefore, says at the end of our text, *⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*.

How, then, should we keep the feast? “*Not with old leaven,*” says the Apostle. With old leaven you would keep the feast if in complacent indifference you hear the great message that your Redeemer is risen from the dead and lives, but you remain in your old ways, being carelessness and disinterested.

Come, let this day be for you a day of joy, and do not harden your heart as you hear what great things your Saviour has done for you in His resurrection. Keep the feast; keep it in putting off that which is evil, and putting on that which is good; keep it not *with the leaven of malice and wickedness*.

If there is any day in the year to suggest to us that we banish malice and wickedness from our hearts, it is Easter. On this day we are informed how God has pardoned us all in the resurrection of His dear Son. Should we not do away, then, with malice against the neighbour, and pardon him who has wronged us, just as God has pardoned us?

And should we not sweep out the wickedness which still dwells in our hearts, and with which we insult and offend our God who has been so merciful to us?

Keep the feast; keep it “*with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*” You know what a deceitful and extremely wicked thing the human heart is, and that, by nature, no good thing dwells in your heart. Watch your heart, then, and let the Spirit of God fill it with that which is good.

Put away lying; speak truth, every man with his neighbour. Walk before God in honesty and uprightness, not in hypocrisy and deceit, but as a sincere Christian following after holiness and growing in true Christian virtues.

May the Lord grant us all, His grace that in the right mind and spirit we keep the feast of Christ’s resurrection, that on this day we form the good resolve to rise from sin, to do better in the future than we did in the past, to amend our sinful lives, and to grow in all Christian virtues with the help of God’s Holy Spirit.

Then this glorious festival shall be for us all a true feast, a feast of life, of joy, and of salvation to the praise and glory of Jesus Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hymn 101

² Psalm 118:24

³ Matthew 21:42

⁴ Luke 23:46

⁵ Matthew 27:63–64

⁶ 1 Cor 5:1-2, Lev 18:8