

Do This in Remembrance of Me

Message for Sunday, April 14, 2013
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Children's Message: When you pray... Luke 11:1-4
When my parents were teaching me to pray, they said, "Now close your eyes, and talk to God." Why do you think they said, "Close your eyes"? *So that I won't be looking around at everything else.*

You won't find in the Bible anywhere that says, "Close your eyes when you pray." It's just a practice we've learned to help us pray.

Some people kneel when they pray. Some people stand with their arms stretched up high. Some people pray just sitting in a chair. There is no *one* right way to pray. The main thing is to *do it!*

God takes delight when his children stop and pray. Let's do that now...

Message: "Do This in Remembrance of Me"

Have you ever stood outside on a night when the sky was clear and black, and you could see a multitude of stars? I remember when I was a child, looking up at them, full of wonder and awe:

Will I ever go out there?

What would it be like to actually be near one of them?

What would I do when if and when I got there?

It was, and still is, a mystery.

I grew up in a family with two brothers and no sisters. I never knew much about the female species. My mother was obviously female, but she was, well, *Mom*. It's not the same. In the earlier grades in school, the girls played on their side of the yard, and the boys played on the other side. To be seen playing with a girl would have been awful!

Then came adolescence. I remember the mix-up of emotions within me as I began to realize, "Hey, it's kind of nice to be around girls." But I had no vocabulary to express this, no experience of actually *being* with girls.

Then our class had a dance one Friday evening. I lined up with the boys against one wall; the girls on the other side. Too nervous to speak to a girl, we spent the first half hour refilling our glasses with punch. Looking across to the girls was just like looking at the stars:

Will I ever go out there?

What would it be like to actually be near one of them?

What would I do when if and when I got there?

There was one girl, Karen Uncles, on whom I had a crush. In class she sat one row in front of me, off to one side. In other words, she was in a perfect position so that I could sneak a glance at her every now and then without her knowing. I didn't tell her how I felt – I didn't know how to talk about such things, and I was much too embarrassed. The night of the dance, Karen wore a pink chiffon dress, with a matching pink ribbon tied around her wavy hair.

I saw Karen leave her group of friends and go towards the punch bowl. Here's my chance! I grabbed my glass and tried to look casual as I hurried over. Our eyes met. This was the moment!

"Uh..." [OK, so what do I do now?] "Uh... hi, Karen."

She looked up and replied, "Hi." [She spoke to me!!]

My stomach was churning. My mind started to race. [She's waiting for me to say something back. What's that look in her eyes? Maybe she has a crush on me, too! She knew that I had been watching her, and had come over here on purpose to give me a chance to be with her!]

I got up all my courage and let out my precious secret: "Karen, would you like to dance?"

She looked me straight in the eye and said, "Bruce, you make me sick."

That was more than 40 years ago. I have no idea where Karen is now, or even if she's still alive. But sometimes, when I'm with a group of young people, and I observe the ebb and flow of romance among them, Karen Uncles suddenly comes to mind ... and stomach. I can feel the knot tighten as I hear those words again. She's not even around, but in that setting, Karen is suddenly, momentarily, real. It's funny what our minds can do.

Someone once said that what distinguishes human beings from animals is that we have the capacity to make meaning. We're the ones who take a piece of paper, put ink on it, and say, "That *stands for* ten dollars." Animals can't assign meaning to a piece of paper that way.

We are the ones who design a flag and say, "When you see this flag, respect it, because it *stands for* our country. Animals can't do that.

We are the ones who can write a wedding ceremony to unite two persons as life companions. We say the words and they *mean* something. Animals can't write ceremonies.

But meaning isn't just something we *give*. Meaning is also something we *get*. We gain from it.

By giving meaning to our flag, we gain a sense of pride when we see it raised over a Canadian athlete who has taken first place at the Olympics. When I went to live in Bolivia in 1979, and I didn't know a soul, and could hardly speak the language, I felt terribly alone. But the next day when I saw the maple leaf on the door of the Canadian consulate, I knew I was not alone.

Sometimes the meaning isn't tied to an object. It may instead be associated with a familiar ritual. A funeral is a ritual that allows us to begin healthy grieving.

A family Christmas is a ritual that has deep meaning for many people.

Assigning meaning to things allows the mysterious to become somehow real to us. Things that we can't touch or can't understand – we can at least share in it.

The Remembrance Day service at the cenotaph in Halifax includes firing cannons at the nearby Citadel. With each boom, I feel shudders as I imagine what that means. I, who have never been to war, share in its memory.

That's what we're doing today. We're sharing a meal we call Communion or the Lord's Supper. We're sharing it not to get the food – there isn't that much bread on the plate. We do this to share the *meaning*.

The mysterious, the invisible somehow becomes real to us. Something we don't fully understand, we can appreciate. Jesus Christ, whom none of us ever knew while he lived on earth, is here with us.

The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

1 Corinthians 11:23-25, Today's English Version:
 For I received from the Lord the teaching that I passed on to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup and said, "This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me."

Do this in remembrance of me.

As we share communion, it's not necessary that you can give a theologically correct explanation of the bread and juice. In fact, that can just get in the way. Let this meal speak to you in its own way, with its own power. Let Jesus come in and fill you.

Do this in remembrance of me.