

Thinking of Jesus in the Breaking of Bread

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INTRODUCTION

This little book is intended to help make our remembrance of the Lord Jesus more meaningful. These "sample" devotionals are not intended to be read again and again. Rather they are designed to show how to express truths about our Lord in a variety of ways and in one's own style.

It is my prayer that this will encourage many towards a deeper and broader understanding of the glories of our Lord and the wonder of His sacrifice, to the end that our remembrance of Him is looked forward to and will linger longer in our memories.

-Rudy Ponce de Leon

THE LORD'S SUPPER

(Reminders for those who share devotionals.)

OUR SUBJECT is always the Lord Jesus Christ, not evangelism or Christian living or material blessings, unless we can tie it clearly to our remembrance of Christ.

OUR STYLE is NOT to preach at people but to direct their thoughts to Jesus so He is "remembered" as He requested. This means to think about His glories, His character, His power, His suffering, etc. and the value of His sacrifice.

OUR GOAL is to help believers thank, worship and love the Lord Jesus. The Breaking of Bread is our main worship time as a collective body of God's children. We must not be distracted by other matters.

OUR CONTENT can dwell on Christ's:

Infinite past (Who or where He was before His incarnation);

Beginnings on earth (prophecies, birth, childhood);

Public and private life (teachings, miracles, relationships, human and divine qualities);

Passion (arrest, torture, crucifixion, death and burial);

Resurrection and Ascension;

Ministry in heaven and indwelling of believers on earth;

Second Coming and eternal reign.

OUR APPROACH should be serious and sincere. We should not be funny or entertaining or impressive. Our

illustrations should not demean the thoughts we are sharing, i.e. not cheap or irreverent. They should not be too long, nor confusing.

OUR LANGUAGE should be clear, avoiding "Tag-lish," etc.

OUR ATTITUDES should be true humility, for it is not us who would be remembered; and confidence, for He gives us boldness to approach His throne and then "declare His name among the brethren."

OUR GLORY is "in the cross." We dare not draw attention to ourselves or to others by careless references. All our appreciation, gratitude, adoration, is on Him "Who loved us and gave Himself for us."

SUGGESTED ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Below are some suggestions on how to announce The Breaking of Bread so that guests are not offended, while minimizing the chance of people partaking of the elements without personal significance to them.)

1. "Beloved, the bread and the cup before us are symbols of Jesus' body and blood. Jesus asked that He be remembered by partaking of these. When we do we are also symbolizing our having received Jesus into our hearts as Personal Savior. This makes our Breaking of Bread truly meaningful and not merely ritualistic.

So all of us who have trusted Jesus as our Savior, whether we are members, or here for the first time, are welcome to partake. If we are still searching for salvation, then, don't feel obligated to partake. But we pray you will be blest by the meditations and drawn closer to Christ."

2. "As we prepare to receive the elements it is good to see if the true meaning of these symbols are true in our lives. Christ said, "He is the Bread of life." Those who invited Him into their hearts have eaten of that bread, and today we will be re-enacting it. This is the same with the cup. When we trusted Christ as our personal Savior His blood cleansed us from our sins and made us pure in God's sight. So, as we drink from the cup, we are reminded of that cleansing and we praise Him for this wonderful assurance.

If any of us here is still uncertain about eternal life and forgiveness, when the elements come to you, just let it pass. Do not feel obligated to partake. Thank you."

1. NOTHING IS MORE VALUABLE THAN JESUS

(Reading: Mark 14:1-9)

Has it ever been your experience to have such a strong desire to thank the Lord, and express in a practical way, your love for Him?

A woman in Bethany had such an experience and did something for the Lord Jesus. But what she did, earned her some criticism. We don't know who this woman was. Maybe she was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, all friends of Jesus. They, too, lived in Bethany. But Mark does not identify her.

Jesus was then in the house of a man named Simon the Leper. Jesus may have healed him already so that this dinner may have been his way of thanking Jesus.

The woman who had come into the house had a jar of very expensive perfume. We read that she broke it and caused all of it to pour on Jesus' head. It was broken so nothing could be left. And those around immediately saw its value as that of a year's wages. It was costly, and it was given away completely.

Why did she do it? According to Jesus it was to prepare his body for burial. Was this in the woman's mind? If so she would be a prophetess. Or at least she was the only one who really believed Jesus' word about his crucifixion and burial.

If this was not in her mind, why did she do it? Perhaps it was in gratitude for raising her brother Lazarus from the dead, if this was indeed Mary of Bethany. Whether it

was Mary or someone else, we can never be sure what she did it for. But this we can be sure of. Her devotion to the Lord Jesus was such that she expressed it in a very expensive way, and she held nothing back.

It was Jesus who gave the meaning of her act: preparation for His burial. It was also Jesus who commended her act as a beautiful one. Jesus accepted it fully, saying it will never be forgotten.

The woman never anticipated all this. She was just so grateful, and loved the Lord so much; nothing was too costly for Him.

This is a sure measure of true love: that nothing and no one can be considered more valuable than the Lord Jesus.

How much does Jesus mean to me?

2. UNEQUALLED HUMILITY

(Reading: John 13:1-5)

When we meditate in remembrance of Jesus, we actually form pictures in our mind. No, not pictures of His face in front or side view. Not images or icons of Jesus as a child at the cross.

The pictures we form in our minds are our reading the Bible. Pictures of Jesus in action; compassion in action, healing power in action, grace in action, and in our passage: humility in action.

Jesus the teacher, the leader, the Master, stooping very low, to wash His disciples' feet. As a song says:

"Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,

In perfect harmony, the man who is God;

Lord of eternity, dwells in humanity,

Kneels in humility and washes our feet."

How long did the Master have to stoop to wash their feet? As low as any slave would. But how low did He have to go to wash our sinful hearts? Lower than any being in the universe ever could.

For from the highest pinnacle of heaven where nothing else could be purer, to the lowest depths of man's degradation, the Son of God lowered Himself to become sin for us. The Righteous died for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God.

Hallelujah, what a Savior!

3. THE COSTLIEST GIFT OF ALL

Let us read Colossians 1:15-20-"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

If it was only a human being who was sacrificed for the sins of the world, salvation would be very cheap; even worthless. Even if the sacrifice were a created being higher than humans, even higher than angels, He would still be a mere creation. Sacrificing such a created being would still result in a cheap salvation.

Why? It is God's holiness and justice that must be satisfied. Not anybody else's. God's holiness and justice are too high to be satisfied by a cheap sacrifice. If God chooses to lower the standard of His own holiness and justice, He will not have to answer to anyone else. But He will have to answer to Himself. And that is what matters to God.

Clearly this passage shows that the One whose blood was shed on the cross to make peace with God was no ordinary creation. ("Firstborn over all creation" does not

mean "first to be created" but "supreme over all creation"). He is identified in Verse 22 as Christ!

Our passage describes Him as "the image of the invisible God, creator of all things, sustainer of all things, and all God's fullness dwells in Him." He could not be anyone less than God. In Acts 20:28 Paul said the church of God was bought with his own blood!! Thus, our salvation is infinitely costly. It was purchased at a sacrifice for us. It cost God so much. It cost us nothing. It is a gift from God.

The true value of a gift is not in how much it will cost the receiver but how much it cost the giver. A gift is always free for the receiver. But for the giver it always costs, whether in money, or time, or effort, or sentiment.

Let us never lower the value of our eternal salvation simply because we received it as a gift through faith. Let us ever and always be aware that it cost our Savior so much. It cost Him His body, His blood. It cost Him that separation from His Heavenly Father while He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, the cross. While, as a river of blood, He washed away the mountain of our sins. While, as God's sinless sacrifice, He became sin for us.

"Lord Jesus, how can we thank you for Your gift of salvation, so costly, so priceless-ours for free. Never can we repay you, ever. But as we remember You now, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

4. THE POWER OF JESUS' BLOOD

Readings: Isaiah 1:8-"Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson they shall be as wool."

1 John 1:7-"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanses us from all sin."

When the famous evangelist John Wesley was returning home one night, he became a victim of a holdup. But the holdupper was disappointed to find that Mr. Wesley had very little money only and some Christian literature.

As the holdupper was leaving, Wesley called out. "Stop, I have something more to give you." The surprised robber stopped. Wesley spoke some more. "My friend, you may live to regret this kind of life. If ever you do, remember this: 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'"

The holdupper quickly walked away, and Wesley prayed that his words might bear fruit.

Years later, Wesley was greeting people after a Sunday service when he was approached by a stranger. What a surprise to learn that this stranger, now a true Christian and a successful businessman, was the holdupper who robbed him years ago.

The transformed man said, "I owe it all to you, Bro. Wesley." "Oh no, my friend," Wesley explained, "You don't owe it to me, but to the blood of Jesus Christ who cleansed you from all your sins. And gave you a fresh new start to a holy life."

John Wesley did give something to the holdupper that night on top of the little money he had. He gave him the good news of salvation.

No person is too wicked, no heart so stained with sin, that Jesus cannot forgive and cleanse. This is the greatest miracle of all.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

William Cowper was a very sensitive poet who fell into depression. He had to be treated in a mental institution. One day he read the verse in 1 John 1:7-"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son cleanses from all sin." Somehow the Spirit of God touched his guilt-ridden mind and heart that he cried to the Lord Jesus to wash him from all his sins by His blood, and rid him of his terrible sense of guilt. God answered his prayer. And he recovered from his depression. He was soon discharged from the mental hospital. He then wrote the poem I read earlier:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

5. GLADLY GIVING TO GOD WHAT IS HIS

Reading: Matthew 22:21b: Jesus said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

This famous statement of Jesus was given as an answer to a dangerous question. It was posed by His enemies as a trap: to get Jesus into trouble with the Roman authorities.

The tricky question never bothered Jesus. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the wisdom of God. And he does not have to be told what is in men's minds; when they are being deceitful, or honest. So Jesus turns every opportunity into moments of valuable instructions.

Jesus never denied that his questioners had responsibilities to the emperor. And Caesar was the highest human authority in Jesus' day.

Even today we have responsibilities to those above us—local and national government, employers, teachers, administrators, officers in the military, and so on.

When we put ourselves under obligation to others, we have to render to them what is theirs. When we borrow money or things or when we make promises, we are to pay back, or return, or fulfill our promises. God Himself holds us accountable for our responsibilities to our fellowmen.

But over and above those are our responsibilities to God. Jesus said, "Render to God what is God's."

The Bible is replete, filled, with things that we are to render to God; His laws, His commands, His counsel,

His desires, His invitations, His longings. The true believer does not have to be forced to render to God what is due Him, Caesar had to. Those who refused were immediately punished.

When God gave the 10 Commandments He started with the words, "I am the Lord your God who brought You out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

Out of appreciation and awe at the might and power of God comes the recognition that no one else deserves to be called GOD! Out of the realization that His power was displayed to free His people comes gratitude and worship. The commandments will be obeyed willingly, gratefully, and joyfully.

Out of our understanding that Jesus is the Beloved Son of God, we render worship. Out of our realization that His death on the cross was for us, comes gratitude and devotion. His desire to be honored and remembered will be obeyed wholeheartedly.

"Do this in remembrance of me." Yes, Lord. Gladly. Gratefully.

6. JESUS ASKS: DO YOU LOVE ME?

In John's Gospel Chapter 21 Jesus asked Peter the very intimate question: "Do you love me?" He asked Peter three times.

Peter was bothered by being asked that question. And three times, too. Maybe it was especially painful to Peter because of the shameful and cowardly way he had denied his Lord.

If I was in Peter's place I should be the one to ask the question: "Lord, after I shamefully denied You, can you still love me?"

But it was the Lord who asked. And in my opinion, I believe the Lord Jesus asked to prove that in spite of Peter's failure Jesus' love had not changed. And Jesus wanted Peter to stir, to fan, the flame of love that had flickered and faltered so it would not die.

Jesus made sure it did not. And Peter's love for his Lord revived, and would soon shine brightly at Pentecost through the Book of Acts and through the years of the early church. Peter's love remained strong and true until he was martyred for Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus asks us the same question in this time of remembrance. Let us put our name before the question: " (Name) , do you love me?" And let us answer Him from our hearts.

7. CHRIST, OUR PASSEVER LAMB

Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:7b-"For Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

Whenever something is to be done for the very last time, it is usually significant. It becomes special. It becomes unforgettable. Even very emotional.

For the disciples of Jesus, this meal would be just another Passover. A yearly observance of the Jews' protection from the angel of death; commissioned by God to kill all the firstborn in Egypt, in one night. This included Goshen, an area in Egypt where all the Hebrews or Jews lived. They would be protected from that angel if each family killed a lamb and sprayed its blood on the doorposts outside. That night the feared angel would see the blood and "pass over" that house and its residents. That night, too, the dead lamb would be roasted with bitter herbs and eaten. And with everyone was dressed for travel-out of Egypt into freedom.

The annual Passover meal would always remind the Jews of a lamb killed and eaten, but whose blood would protect.

The Lord Jesus knew it would be the last proper celebration or observance. His disciples could not yet understand that their Master would be the ultimate, the final, Passover Lamb. They had, as yet no idea that all the lambs killed that fateful night in Egypt and all the lambs killed every year since, were all pointing to the final Passover Lamb from God, their Master. Sure they

had already received a lot of information but they could not as yet see how they connected.

So the disciples as yet could not see and feel the significance of that Passover Meal in the upper room. But that night Jesus would pull back the curtains even more.

We read in Matthew 26:26-"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

It is customary that as the Passover meal is being eaten the significance is reviewed. History is recalled. And it would be after that, that Jesus would now talk about the blood; His blood; the bread, His body. His blood and His body, in a covenant. The first covenant was sealed with the blood of animals. Now a new covenant, sealed with the blood of Jesus, the Messiah, the Lamb of God would replace the first.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7 says it all: "Christ our Passover lamb was slain for us." Sacrificed for us.

Christ that night celebrated the Passover for the very last time. He had come to finally replace the Passover lambs. By His blood the judgment of God would pass over all who trust in Him. As the blood on the doorposts protected the people who believed God's warning and obeyed, so the blood of Jesus Christ would cover over the sins of those who trust in Him. And the judgment of hell would pass.

Then Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

This meant: Stop remembering the Passover in the Egypt. Start remembering Me, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Today the Jews who don't believe in Jesus as Messiah continue to celebrate the Passover. They keep looking back to the deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

The Jews who believe in Jesus as Messiah and trust Him as their Savior now remember Him in the Breaking of Bread. This is what all Gentile Christians do, too. Together, in spirit, even if not together in one place, the greater deliverance is celebrated-deliverance from the slavery of sin and from eternal damnation.

All the lambs killed yearly for every Jewish household since the time of Moses-hundreds and thousands and millions, can never outweigh the worth of the One and only Lamb of God, slain for our salvation. All deliverances from slavery and from dictatorial regimes on earth (including People Power of 1986 here in RP) put together, can never compare with the eternal deliverance the Son of God accomplished for us at Calvary.

8. LIFT UP THE CUP OF SALVATION

Psalm 116:12-14 reads: "How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people."

Can we really repay the Lord for all His goodness to us? We never can. But we should never stop trying because of the gratefulness that is in our hearts. What is all this goodness we should thank Him for? Too many to count; too much to measure.

For all who have been redeemed, all the goodness of God our Father comes in one glorious package. It is all wrapped up in the package of salvation. Without this salvation, all that we can thank God for are the things that even the wicked and the enemies of God enjoy. The natural benefits that come from living on this planet.

Within the package of salvation come forgiveness of sins, peace with God, a home in heaven, His Spirit in us, His Word to guide us, His peace, joy, love to comfort us, His grace to sustain us, His power to protect us, and His son to defend us, and much more.

The Psalmist said He would offer two things in gratitude. First is "to lift up the cup of salvation." This sounds like the Lord's Supper. But the Psalmist did not yet know that. He meant salvation from death in the hands of his enemies.

For us the words of Paul come to mind: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." (1 Corinthians 11) We lift the cup of salvation and the church bows down to

worship her Savior. We lift the cup of salvation for the world to see, and "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." So we lift the cup of salvation not only at the Breaking of Bread, but at all times.

The Psalmist's second offering is "I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people." He says this twice in Psalm 116. Old Testament saints took their vows very seriously because they knew God took them seriously.

In the presence of their Holy God, Old Testament men and women of faith were more aware of their responsibilities to God than their privileges. Hence their faith was immediately followed by obedience. This was also true in New Testament times and in the early church.

But today, because of our "democratic" way of life, modern man is more concerned with rights and privileges. So, fulfilling of vows becomes conditional; we want flexibility. And at the slightest excuse modern man will forget his vows. The increasing number of broken marriages is strong evidence of the carelessness we, in the modern age, treat our vows.

When we lift up the cup of salvation at the Breaking of Bread, we also lift up afresh our commitment, our vow to the Lord Jesus-our vow of total and loving obedience. Like Paul we repeat: "The life I now live, I live for the One who loved me and gave Himself for me."

So, in the presence of the people that is, our brothers and sisters, I pray: "Lord Jesus, as You willingly gave Your body and Your blood for me and for mankind, so I, too, this morning pledge myself anew; I give my all to You, so small an offering compared to what You did."

I place my heart behind the words of the song: "Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord to Thee: Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee; Take my voice and let me sing always, only for my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with messages for Thee; Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. Take my love, my God, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store; Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for THEE."

9. MARKS OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE

A radiant young graduate went up the stage to receive a special award. At her request her widowed mother came up to hang the medal on her. She noticed the trembling of her mother's hands.

"Mother, don't be nervous. This is a happy day for both of us."

"My dear daughter, this is not nervousness. It's nerves. My hands were too long in the water washing clothes. It was my only way to get you through college. This is what it cost.

"O mother, it's only now that I have looked closely at your hands. They're nothing but skin, bones, and veins. And they're so hard. O mother, I'm sorry."

"It can't be helped, my daughter. But it's all been for you, I have no regrets. I'm so happy."

The daughter brought the trembling hands to her lips and kissed them watering them with her tears. Kisses and tears of gratitude and love. And determination that from now on the hands that were sacrificed for her needs, will be served thankfully and faithfully.

"Thomas, come here. See my hands and side. Touch them and know that it is I. Stop doubting but believe."

Thomas responded with the words, "My Lord and my God."

Today Jesus extends the same invitation and expects the same response.

"See my body and my blood in the symbols I have chosen from the dinner table." Bread and juice-the fruit of the vine. "Remember me, your God made flesh."

Jesus is not with us anymore in body as He was with Thomas. But he left the symbols to remind us of Him. The symbols are not as precious as the One whose sacrifice they symbolize. The wounds in Jesus' body are precious, but not as precious as the One who loved enough to sacrifice His body, His life, Himself.

Did the hands that flung stars into space, have to be surrendered to cruel nails? Did the feet before whom angels bowed, have to be smashed to fasten them to the cross? Did the side where the beloved John often rested his head have to be speared to make sure the crucified Savior was dead?

Yes! It was all for you and for me. And if only by faith, we would kiss the hands and feet of Jesus and lay our head on His wounded side to hear the last faint beat of His loving heart. What a sacrifice for us, by our Lord and our God.

No sacrifice will be too great for the One who spared nothing to bring us to Himself.

10. BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, LORD

A 16-year-old Canadian boy wrote this poem shortly after he became a Christian.

"My Jesus, I love Thee. I know Thou art mine---

For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;

My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou,

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou first loved me

And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;

I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'Tis now."

In 1 John 4:9-11 we read: "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear Friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

This Breaking of Bread, or Lord's Supper, is also called Communion. Why? Because it is not meant to be done alone. I would remember the Lord Jesus with you, my brothers and sisters. If there are two reasons why Jesus would be happy to accept our communion this moment, it is, first, because we remember Him in love. We love Him, so we gladly remember Him. Second, because we love one another. And in one precious circle of love, together, we eat of the bread and drink of the cup in remembrance of the One who first loved us.

11. JESUS LOVED THE CHILDREN

Reading: (Luke 18:15-17) "People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have Him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"

Today let us remember the Lord Jesus in the way He viewed children. In our passage He welcomed them when the disciples turned them away. Jesus loved the sincere and simple praises. He even used a boy's lunch to feed a multitude.

This was Jesus' unusual message. It is not the wealthy, the strong, or even the wise who are great, but the humble, the servants, the poor, the children. You cannot enter the kingdom unless you become like a child.

Wisdom, wealth, power-these are not that important in the kingdom of Christ. He deals in hearts of love, praise and devotion. These are the gifts He longs to receive.

120 years ago this hymn appeared in a Children's Book of Praise, from an anonymous writer.

"The wise may bring their learning, the rich may bring their wealth

And some may bring their greatness, & some bring strength & health

We, too, would bring our treasures to offer to the King;

We have no wealth or learning; What shall we children bring?

We'll bring Him hearts that love Him; we'll bring Him thankful praise,

And young souls meekly striving to walk in holy ways;

And these shall be the treasures we offer to the King,

And these are gifts that even the poorest child may bring.

We'll bring the little duties we have to do each day;

We'll try our best to please Him, at home, at school, at play;

And better are these treasures to offer to our King,

Than richest gifts without them; Yet these a child may bring."

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we come to You as children in our humility. We come to You as children in our sincerity. We come to You as children in our faith as we did when we first trusted You as our Lord and Savior. And we come to You today in childlike gratitude for receiving and lovingly bringing us to Your Father.

12. REJECTED AND HURT FOR US

(Reading: Isaiah 53:1-12)

These words were written 700 years before the Lord Jesus was born, but His life and death were so vividly detailed. His name was not mentioned but only Jesus of Nazareth could fit the description precisely.

Who would be impressed and attracted to a mere carpenter from a despised little town? The Bible said Absalom was handsome with beautiful hair. But nothing was said about Jesus' face. The Bible said Joseph was well-built and handsome. King Saul was head and shoulders above everyone. But nothing was said about Jesus' body except that he grew up in stature like everyone else (Luke 2:52).

After having done so many miracles he would still be rejected, despised and mocked.

Though he had a pure heart and a clear conscience He would be called "a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering." (Verse 6)

All His afflictions, sufferings, punishments, oppressions, were not for Himself but for others. Yet the blows were never blunted or softened. No one shielded Him from the pain. He took it all?for us!

Because we had gone astray and become transgressors. Because we had wounds that needed healing. Because we desperately needed peace with an offended God, Jesus had to become a sacrificial lamb, wounded, tortured, killed and buried like a criminal.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer. So that in the end He will see His offspring; He will justify many; the arm of the Lord will be revealed; and as He looks on those whom He redeemed He will be satisfied.

13. THE GREATEST MAN

Great men leave their mark in history. By their great exploits they force themselves into the memory of those who look to the past. One such man was Alexander the Great. By his youthful military genius he forced the mighty Persian Empire to its knees. As he conquered his world, the superior Greek culture blanketed the earth. Truly a great man! But how would he compare with a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth who did not conquer the world, but saved it?

Charles Ross weeds, a poet, presented a comparison. He titled his poem "Jesus And Alexander."

"Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three:

One lived and died for self; one died for you and me.

The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died on a cross.

One's life a triumph seemed; the other but a loss

One led vast armies forth; the other walked alone;

One shed a whole world's blood; the other gave His own.

One won the world in life and lost it all in death,

The other lost His life to win the whole world's faith.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;

One died in Babylon and one on Calvary.

One gained all for self; the one himself he gave;

The one made himself god, the God made himself less;

When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords;

But Jesus died to live forever Lord of lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;

The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew made all men free.

One built a throne on blood; the other built on love.

The one was born of earth, the other from above;

One won all the earth, to lose all earth and heaven;

The other gave up all; that all to him be given.

The Greek forever died; the Jew forever lives;

He loses all who gets, and wins all things who gives."

Alexander exemplified the ultimate in human ambition, genius and greed. Jesus modeled ultimate obedience to God's plan for what is best for man.

14. PROCLAIM HIS DEATH, EXPECT HIS COMING

Reading: Revelation 1:5-7-"To Him who loves us and has set us free from our sins with His blood, who has made of us a royal house to serve as the priests of His God and Father-to Him be glory and dominion forever! Amen. Look He is coming with the clouds; everyone shall see Him, including those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the world shall lament in remorse. So it shall be. Amen."

The Bible tells us through the Apostle Paul that whenever we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, in remembrance, "we show forth Jesus' death, until He comes." Most meaningfully, therefore, we remember His death, which is past. And proclaim it. And most eagerly we await the day in the future when He returns. We will not need the symbols anymore, for we shall see Him as He is.

So our brother Charles Wesley, in a moment of excited inspiration wrote:

"Lo! He comes with the clouds descending,

Once for favored sinners slain;

Thousand, thousand saints attending

Swell the triumph of His train;

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

God appears on earth to reign.

"Every eye shall now behold Him,

Robed in dreadful majesty;

Those who set at naught and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

"The dear tokens of His Passion
Still His dazzling body bears;
Cause of endless exultation
To His ransomed worshippers;
With what rapture, with what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!"

15. GLORY, GLORY TO THE SON

John 17:4-5-"I brought glory to You here on earth by doing everything You told me to do. And now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began."

These two verses that belong to Jesus' prayer tell us a lot about the extent of the humiliation that was part and parcel of the Incarnation.

Before Jesus came to earth He was in heaven's glory. He was worshipped and adored by the angels. And He was the Father's Beloved. Together in the Godhead they shared the glory of deity.

Then, in obedience to the Father, He humbled Himself and came to earth as a human being. Throughout His time as Jesus the carpenter's son, he lived a perfect life-perfect in sinlessness, and perfect in obedience. Doing His Father's business. Submitting His own will to that of His Father's. Then dying on the cross alone. Thus bringing glory to the Father while here on earth.

In Hebrews 12:2 we read that "Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross?and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. The joy was to share once more the glory in heaven with His Father. There is no greater joy for the Son. And the joy that the Father cherished is having His beloved Son give glory to Him on earth. Then be reunited after completing the sacrifice for sins. Then in heaven, to receive glory from the Father.

Glory to our God the Father

Glory to our God the Son

Glory to our God the Spirit

Glory to the Three in One!"

16. GREATER THAN ANYONE

Reading: John 1:15-"John testifies concerning Him. He cries out saying, 'This was He of whom I said,' he comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me."

John the Baptist was an unusual man. In the first place he lived a very different life than most people. He grew up in a godly and respected home. At the same time he spent his years in the desert. He must have spent a lot of time communing with God. His diet was different. He ate mostly locusts and honey. He clothed himself in camel's hair and a leather belt. He was physically strong and was a disciplined man.

When John started preaching he called people out of their comfortable homes. He met them in the wilderness where he could preach to them God's Word. Then they would be baptized as a testimony to their repentance.

John was greatly respected, He was held in high esteem. But one day they would see how humble he was. He would point to someone who would come after him but was actually before him.

John knew that this one would surpass him. At another time he said he was unworthy even to tie his sandals. He was talking about Jesus. And it was an honor for him to point people to Jesus.

When John was asked who he was, he quoted from the prophet Isaiah: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way for the Lord."

In Isaiah, the statement referred to Jehovah or Yahweh. In the New Testament, in the Gospels, John applied it to

Jesus. Jesus later would equate John with Elijah. Here John equates Jesus with Jehovah. That is why he considered himself so unworthy to be compared with Jesus.

Also in John's Gospel Chapter 1 we are told that John was sent from God as a witness concerning the light. He himself was not the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world, after him.

This true light was the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God. Through Him, the Word, all things were made. In Him was life. And the life was the light of men.

John the Baptist had the honor to prepare men and women for the coming of Jesus. His witness was mighty. But his heart was humble.

Here we are, before the Lord's table. Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup we witness to the Lord and His death. It is an honor. We lift Him up, and we humble ourselves.

The bread reminds us that as sinners we were dead spiritually. We needed Jesus, in whom He was life. And the life was the light of men. Jesus said He was the Bread of life.

The cup reminds us of our sins being forgiven and washed away by His blood. We could not help but be humble before Him. And be thankful.

And, like John, we lift up a mighty witness. The world is in a desperate situation. Only in Jesus can the world find hope and in no one else.

Like John, it is our honor to witness to the world. To let the world know of Jesus. He is the only One who can

save the world. He is the One we remember and worship today.

17. WHO CAN COMPARE WITH OUR SAVIOR?

Reading: Isaiah 46:5-"To whom will you compare me?to whom will you liken me that we may be compared?"

No one in the whole universe is like GOD. And even if everything came from God, nothing can be compared with GOD. God stands alone in His completeness, perfection, and independence.

God has complete authority and power over everything else. He can choose, and be able, to create anything out of nothing. And He can choose to obliterate anything He created so it can revert to nothingness. Such is God's self-completeness.

But one day, in eternity, He decided to create man in His image. Because man was created in God's image. There will be some comparison with God. But, still, the difference would be as great as a galaxy from a speck of dust.

This difference, God crossed one day in history, when He became a man. That man was Jesus of Nazareth. He identified himself as the Son of God the Father, in heaven.

Then, more than once the father's voice was heard from heaven: "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased."

The "Iglesia Ni Manalo" claims that because God said He is God and not man, then He can never become a man. So Jesus could never be God. But they close their eyes and ears to the fact that God can choose to become

a man if He so desired. And the Bible very clearly and repeatedly says He did so. Because He can, and chose to, for a purpose.

He loved the world so much He would give mankind a chance to avoid certain, sure, eternal damnation. So He became a man in the person of His Son. So that as John 3:16 says: "That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

In being God our Creator, to whom can we compare Him? In being God our Savior, who can we liken to Him?

18. MY BLESSED ASSURANCE

The blind poet Fanny Crosby wrote more than eight thousand hymns in her lifetime. Although she was blind she could produce three new hymns each week. She would formulate an entire song in her mind then dictate it to a friend.

One day she was visited by the wife of the founder of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Mrs. Phoebe Knapp, herself a devout Christian.

"I have composed a tune. Can you write the words to it?" She asked Fanny. "Play it for me on the organ." The blind poet requested. Phoebe did. When she finished playing, she turned to ask Fanny, "What does the tune say to you?" Phoebe saw Fanny kneeling in prayer.

Phoebe played it a second time and then a third. Then the blind woman responded. "The tune says, 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!'"

And so another hymn was born to the glory of God in the Savior's sacrifice, "Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood. Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest; watching and waiting, looking above; Filled with His goodness, lost in His love. This is my story, this is my song; Praising my Savior all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long."

(Read Hebrews 10:18-20)

19. DEPART, I AM A SINFUL MAN!

(Reading: Luke 5:4-11)

In the eyes of his town mates Simon Peter was not a sinful man. He was no blasphemer, murderer nor thief. He was a family man with a decent livelihood. But when he was face to face with Jesus whose miracle astounded him, Simon saw his sinfulness. He was not at all worthy to be near Jesus. And he told it like it is.

"I am a sinful man, O Lord. Stay away from me."

True repentance always receives forgiveness from our gracious Lord. Then the assuring words, "Fear not." In effect Jesus was saying, "You do not have to fear the wrath of God, nor the punishment your sinfulness deserves. I came to bring sinners to God."

Usually fish in the sea don't want to be caught. They are used to the free and wild life. Here Jesus used them as a picture of sinners who need to be caught in the net of God's love. Simon the sinner was among the first to be caught, and forgiven, then used to catch others.

Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is so pure and so holy. But he came for the impure and the unholy. Sinners cannot pretend to be sinless in his presence. The contrast is repelling and convicting. But he will not depart as the repentant Simon suggested. He offers his forgiveness for he had said he came to bring sinners to repentance.

At this moment his holiness again causes us, like Peter, to see our sinfulness. But rather than saying, "I cannot partake for I am sinful," we should thank Jesus for His

words, "Fear not, my shed blood on the cross has cleansed you."

Depart? No, I want to be close to him.