

**“Turning the World Upside-Down: The Earth-Shattering Power of God’s Word”
(Acts 17:1-15) — 2/2/2020**

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OPENING WORDS

Good morning family!

Hear the Word of the Lord from Psalm 119:25-28...

“My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to Your word! When I told of my ways, You answered me; teach me Your statutes! Make me understand the way of Your precepts, and I will meditate on Your wondrous works. My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to Your word!”

You may be seated

- **God’s Word brings life!**
- *If you're our guest, you can learn more about us in the brochure in our pew Bibles*
- *Turn to Acts 17:1 (page 1100)*
- *While you're turning there...*

NextGen Training—2/16 at 9:15 AM *(all new volunteers must take the course before they serve; head to the Connect Desk to sign up)*

Members' Meeting—2/16 at 5:30 PM *(bring soup/sandwiches to share)*

Ash Wednesday—2/26 at 6:30 PM *(For about 1700 years, many Christians have observed Ash Wednesday as the beginning of a 40-day season called lent leading up to Palm Sunday. Different traditions have approached the day in different ways, but at PBC we've approached it as a special opportunity to gather to consider our FRAILITY, MORTALITY, & SINFULNESS, as we prepare our hearts for the Good News of the cross and resurrection. I think you'll be deeply blessed if you make it a priority to join us.)*

Now turn your attention to Acts 17:1 as Sue Collins reads for us

New City Catechism

Question #5

What else did God create?

God created all things by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Thank You Jesus for being our great prophet

- Thousands of years ago You promised to Moses that one day you would send another prophet greater than Moses, a prophet who would be like us and yet different from us.
- Jesus thank you for being that prophet
- When the OT prophets spoke they said "thus saith the Lord" but Jesus said "Truly, truly, I say to you"
- Jesus, thank you for being a trustworthy Prophet, but for being much more than a Prophet. Thank you for being our great high priest, and the king of kings

Prayer for PBC—help us to be *truthful*

- In our *prayers*; especially when we *confess*

- In our ***music***; help us to value *truth* about *style* or *feeling*
- In our ***preaching and teaching***; help us to faithfully communicate God's Word
- In our ***lives***; help us to live authentically and obediently
- In our ***words***; help us to speak the truth in love
- In our ***evangelism***; help us to boldly speak the Gospel

**Not just PBC, but the Village Church in Portsmouth
(no pastor)**

**Not just brothers & sisters, but our country—against
*sexualization***

- From the rise of pornography
- To the hyper-sexualization in our advertising and entertainment
- Young girls who feel a need to dress provocatively to fit in or get attention
- Forgive us as men for tolerating and even celebrating this great evil that turns our sisters into nothing but body parts to be ogled
- Help us to resist the temptations to lust after these images
- Help us as moms and dads and grandparents to protect our children and grandchildren from these temptations

Not just our country, but the world — *St. Lucia*

- President Allen Michael Chastanet --> *justice for vulnerable, protection for the unborn, human flourishing for all*
- Thank you for the many professing Christians on this small island of 174K
- Against nominal Christianity
- Against sexual sin and the breakdown of marriage/family -- 86% of children born out of wedlock

- For churches to love and care for single moms
- For those seeking to evangelize the throngs of tourists
- Churches --faithfulness to communicate and receive God's Word
- Send laborers into the harvest

Pray for the sermon

SERMON

On October 31, 1517 a hot-headed German monk named Martin Luther published a list of 95 grievances against the unbiblical practices of the Roman Catholic Church, usually called the 95 Theses. That simple act of defiance turned the world upside-down.

You simply cannot explain our modern world without understanding the influence of Martin Luther. His influence impacted everything from religion, art, music, language, family, economics, law, the role of government, the influence of the individual, and more.

Five years after nailing the 95 Theses, Luther explained the real power behind this earth-shattering Reformation . . .

“I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends . . . , the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.”

1500 years before the Reformation began, the world was again being turned upside-down. That’s the accusation that was made in **Acts 17:6 — *“These men . . . have turned the world upside-down.”***

Once again, we'll see that what really turned the world upside-down wasn't the personalities or power of the early Christians. It was the power of the Word of God.

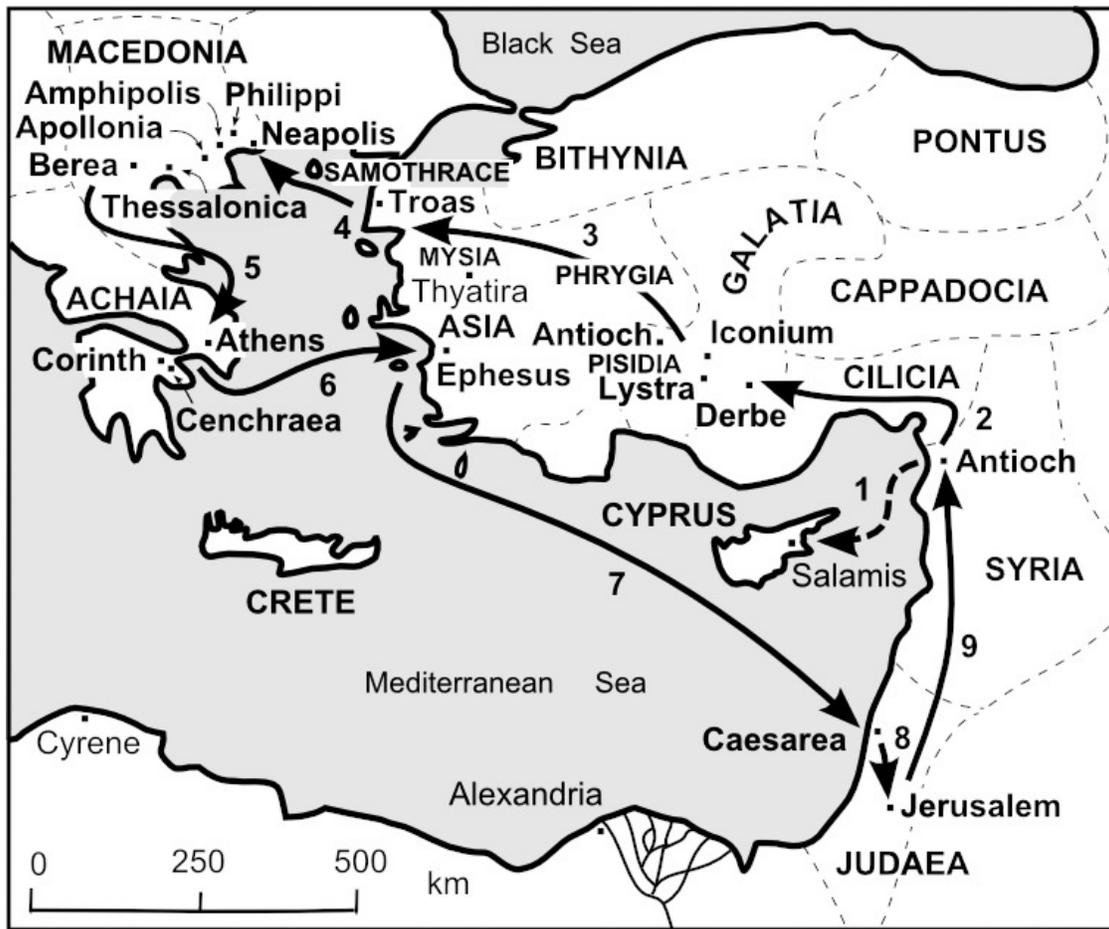
Turn to Acts 17 (page 1100)

At this point in the book of Acts it's been about 15-20 years since Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, but before He ascended into heaven He left His people a mission.

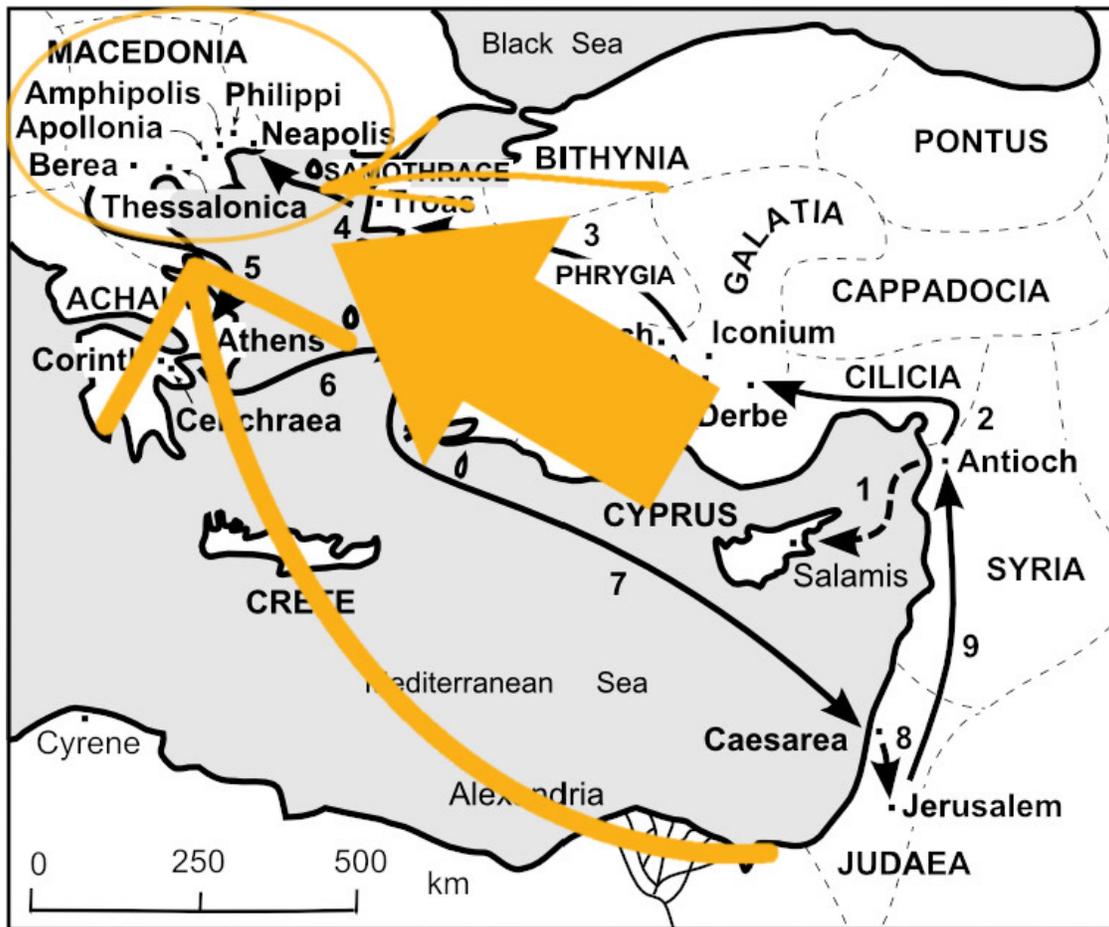
- **Acts 1:8**—*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

The first 16 chapters have been all about the fulfilling of that mission:

- Spirit descended
- Gospel spread to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria
- Now through the influence of a man named Paul, a former Christian-killer, the gospel is going to the ends of the earth
- When we left off the story in November, Paul was in the middle of his second missionary journey . . .



In the spirit of Super Bowl Sunday, let's make it a bit easier for you. . .



Let's join the Apostle Paul in his visits to Thessalonica and Berea and notice together how God's Word turns the world upside-down.

The Word turns the world upside-down . . .

1) When it's Faithfully Communicated

- Before we unearth some principles from Paul's teaching, need to understand what's happening in the synagogue in Thessalonica.
- In Acts 13:15 Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch in Pisidia where they were invited to speak in the synagogue as something like guest preachers. That is not what's

happening here. Paul isn't invited to speak in Thessalonica, he's just showing up where people are talking about important things and he's talking about Jesus.

- ***So these principles aren't meant to be applied first and foremost in the pulpit, but wherever people talk about important things: in coffee shops and parks, in living rooms and at water coolers, at fellowship groups and at family dinners.***

How do we faithfully communicate God's Word?

Speak Clearly

- *You can talk about Jesus and the Scriptures all you want, but if they don't know what you're talking about it doesn't help anybody*
- **Verse 2—“...he reasoned with them from the Scriptures...”**
 - Paul is communicating reasonably and clearly
 - It actually appears that Paul is using a *sylllogism* to communicate the Gospel
- **Major Premise—*Messiah must die and rise***
 - **Read 3a** -- "the Christ" isn't Jesus' last name, but the Greek word for the Jewish term *Messiah*
 - This would require significant time and effort since the Jews did not believe in a suffering Messiah
- **Minor Premise—*Jesus died and rose***

- **Conclusion—Jesus is Messiah**
 - **Read v. 3b**

- **Point**—*not that you need to learn formal logic, but you DO need to learn how to communicate God's Word clearly*

- **Let's speak God's Word clearly to the lost.**
 - **You can't reject a Gospel you don't understand.**
 - I'm convinced the problem for many unbelievers around us is not that they've rejected the Gospel, but that they've *never heard* the Gospel presented clearly

- **Let's speak God's Word clearly to each other.**
 - "Put the cookies on the lowest shelf"
 - Learn to communicate clearly to kids!

If we're going to faithfully communicate God's Word we must . . .

Speak Authoritatively

- We live in an age that questions everything and everyone that claims to speak with authority. As a result it's very easy for us to shy away from saying anything definitively.

- **Paul doesn't seem to have that problem . . .**
 - **Verse 3**—*"Jesus is the Christ"*
 - He doesn't say "I *think* Jesus is the Christ" or "Jesus is my Christ"

- **Let's speak God's Word authoritatively to the lost.**
 - Doesn't mean rudely or without love. But it does mean we ought to speak with authority.
 - Whether you believe this or not it *is* true. Whether you believe in Him or not, you *will* see Jesus and you *will* bow before Him.
- **Let's speak God's Word authoritatively to each other.**
 - Church in Nineveh, Indiana with female elders . . . awkward van ride
 - When one of us wanders into some personal sin or theological error let's not hem and haw with one another. Let's lovingly speak the truth!

If we're going to faithfully communicate God's Word we must . . .

Speak *Persuasively*

- Most of us (myself included!) are skittish to actively try to persuade people to repent and believe the Gospel. Unless, of course, there's a wide open door and someone is basically *asking* to be persuaded.
- **Paul doesn't seem to have that problem . . .**
 - **Verse 4**—“ . . . *some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas . . .*”
- **Let's speak God's Word persuasively to the lost.**
 - **2 Corinthians 5:10-11** -- *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore,*

knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

- We know that God ultimately has to persuade hearts, but we should still seek to persuade people to repent and believe
- **Let's speak God's Word persuasively to each other.**
 - Anticipate objections

If we're going to faithfully communicate God's Word we must . . .

Speak Consistently

- This past week I listened to a lot of old Coldplay albums from the early 2000s (20 YEARS AGO!!!) And then I listened to some of their newer albums and it's amazing how much their music changed through the years
- It's been about 20 years since the beginning of Acts, but the message is exactly the same no matter *who*, no matter *when*, no matter *where* . . .
 - **Verse 3—“Jesus”**
 - Paul doesn't begin by telling the Jews they should eat BLT's with Gentiles and start worshiping on Sundays
- **Let's consistently talk to the lost about Jesus**
 - **1 Corinthians 2:1-2** —*“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*
 - What your lost friends/family need is not more morality. They don't need to clean themselves up. They don't need more religion. They need *Jesus!!!*

- **Let's consistently talk to each other about Jesus**
 - “Wait a minute! We just spent two weeks talking about abortion and racism! Why don't we just talk about Jesus like Paul told us to?”
 - In 1 Corinthians Paul also talks about division, church leadership, church discipline, lawsuits, sexual sin, marriage, food, church worship services, the Lord's Supper, etc.
 - Paul is explaining how we should understand all these things in light of the truth about Jesus
 - Tried to use same approach no matter what the sermon topic is

If we're going to faithfully communicate God's Word we must . . .

Speak *Boldly*

- In both Thessalonica and Berea those who speak God's Word face opposition
- **1 Thessalonians 2:1-2** -- *For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.*
- **Let's speak God's Word boldly to the lost.**
 - **All of a sudden culture feels highly intolerant to Christianity** -- there's nothing new under the sun!!!
 - *A Gospel proclamation that is never offensive is never authentic!*
- **Let's speak God's Word boldly to each other.**

- Again, speak the truth in /love, but sometimes we need to speak hard truths to one another.

If we're going to faithfully communicate God's Word we must . . .

Speak *Lovingly*

- Speaking boldly doesn't mean being a jerk!
- **Ephesians 4:15**-- "*. . . speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ*"

If we're going to faithfully communicate God's Word we must . . .

Speak *Persistently*

- Temptation to give up
- **Verse 2**—"*three Sabbath days*"
 - 2, not 3 words in the original language: "*three Sabbaths*"
 - The word *Sabbath* can mean the 7th day, or a period of 7 days
 - Either way, Paul persisted! He didn't shake the dust off his feet after one time.
 - And even after he has to flee the city at night because of persecution, he still writes two letters to the believers there to help them grow
- **Let's speak God's Word persistently to the lost.**
 - One of my greatest joys is hearing your testimonies of conversion—never heard one of you share that God radically saved you the first time you heard the Gospel
 - Don't give up!
- **Let's speak God's Word persistently to each other.**

- **Isaiah 55:10-11**—“*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*”
- The power is not in us, but in God’s Word, so persevere!
- ***I have seen some of you change in amazing ways that only God’s Word can do!***

God’s Word turns the world upside-down when it’s faithfully communicated.

*The citizens of Thessalonica create an uproar and Paul and Silas escape to Berea in the middle of the night. And there we see the other side of the coin. There we see that **God’s Word turns the world upside-down . . .***

2) When it’s Faithfully Received

How do we faithfully receive God’s Word?

Receive it Openly

- **Verse 11**—“*...more noble than those in Thessalonica...*”
- Word literally referred to someone with good breeding, but in Paul’s day it was used to refer to someone who was open-minded
- **Not a Christian: *thank you for being so open-minded***

- Seriously! *You could be heckling me, etc. but you're listening*

If we're going to faithfully receive God's Word we must

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Receive it *Eagerly*

- **Verse 11b** — *“...they received the word with all eagerness...”*
- **Christian**, do you long to hear God’s Word?
- **PBC Family:** *I see this in you! You gather excitedly every week to listen to this foolish preacher talk for almost an hour about God’s Word! You wouldn’t do that week after week without eagerness.*
- **Continue!** *Be eager in your Bible intake during the week. Be eager to receive God’s Word during your SS or Fellowship Group. Arrive expecting God to teach you and change you!*

If we're going to faithfully receive God's Word we must

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Receive it *Carefully*

- **Verse 11c**—*“...examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so...”*
 - Paul is preaching something that seems *new* to those steeped in traditional Rabbinic Judaism, so the Bereans examine Paul’s words against the words of Scripture

- **Friend:** *not everybody holding a Bible is speaking the truth! Examine the Bible!*
 - Whenever you're listening to Bible teaching, as much as possible have your Bible open and follow along
 - We're not asking you to check your brains at the door, but to examine what we're teaching
- **PBC Member:** *one of your responsibilities is to ensure that PBC teaching agrees with Scripture*
 - Galatians written to the saints

If we're going to faithfully receive God's Word we must
 . . .

Receive it in *Faith*

- **Verse 12a**—*“Many of them therefore believed...”*
 - When what is taught agrees with Scripture, we must respond in obedient faith
- **PBC Family:** *seismic shifts here over the past few year—emphasis on discipleship, meaningful membership, corporate prayer, elder leadership, fellowship groups, etc. HOW? YOU ARE BEREANS!!!*
- **But you have faith now** because there was a moment when, by God's grace, you first believed. And that's the faith that Luke is describing in verse 12 as many repent and believe in the Gospel.
- **Friend:** *have you truly believed?*

- Explain the Gospel
- *Jesus I believe. I believe I'm a sinner. I believe I deserve hell. I believe I cannot earn righteousness. I believe that You obeyed God's law perfectly in my place. I believe You suffered God's wrath on the cross in my place. I believe You rose from the dead. And right now in this moment I'm giving my life to You. Please be merciful to me, a sinner. Amen.*
- *If you prayed something like that, God's not done with you that's not the end, it's the beginning!*

If we're going to faithfully receive God's Word we must

...

Receive it in Community

- **Friend:** *if you genuinely repented and put your faith in Jesus the Bible says you have born again.*
 - *You're a spiritual baby. And every baby needs a family.*
- **Verse 12b**—*"...with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men."*
 - They become a family! *The church is a Christian's family.*
 - Although its not explicitly mentioned here, we know from the rest of the book of Acts that the first thing that would've been done with these new believers would be **BAPTISM**

- If you just gave your life to Jesus, the first step towards entering the church family is to make your faith public is through **BAPTISM**
 - Baptism is dunking someone in water, it pictures Jesus' burial and resurrection, and it's the first step of obedience as a Christian
 - If you're a new believer, or if you've never been baptized as a believer, we would *love* to talk with you about baptism
- **Christian:** *we initially identify with God's people through baptism, but we continually identify with them through COMMUNION*
 - **Airman's Creed**—you recited it when you enlisted to identify with your fellow Airmen, you recite it when you reenlist to say “I'm still one of you. I'm still committed to this.”

LORD'S SUPPER

Bible tells us what communion is—meal to help us remember the death of Jesus in our place

- *Bread* symbolizes Jesus' body; reminds us of His sinless life
- *Cup* symbolizes Jesus' blood; reminds us of His death for us

Bible doesn't tell us how to celebrate communion

- **Trays? Shared cup? Loaf? Wafers? Tiny cups?**
- **My tradition**—*pitfall is we think it's all about “me and Jesus”*

What we do at PBC . . .

- **Jesus and you** moment as you wait for your row to be dismissed, preparing you heart for Communion
 - *Confess sin to God and (if necessary) to others*
- **Jesus and others** moment as you come to a table, one of our pastors prays over you, and you eat the bread in a small group of friends/family
 - *When your row is dismissed just walk towards the front and gather around the table in groups of 3-5 or so*
- **Jesus and everybody** moment as we take the cup together as a church family
 - *After you eat the bread, you'll walk down the side aisles back to your seat while we wait for everyone to finish then we'll eat the bread together*

More important than how we celebrate communion is who:

- **Christian:** *This is Jesus' gift to remind you of what He did for you! Receive it with joy!*
- **Not a Christian:** *Don't receive the symbol, receive the reality. If you're ready to receive Him today you can come to one of the tables and talk to one of our pastors. Let us know of your desire to give your life to Jesus and we'll happily drop everything to talk and pray with you. If you're not ready to do that today you're welcome to either remain in your seat when your row is dismissed or simply come to the table but keep your hands at your side while we serve the bread and cup.*

Instructions:

- I'm going to read a few verses from Scripture and pray
- A few minutes of examination while the piano plays softly
- We'll begin dismissing the rows
- When your row is dismissed, come to any of the four tables and one of our pastors will pray over you and serve you
- You'll eat the bread at the table, and then return to your seats via the outer aisles
- After everyone has been served we'll take the cup together as a church family

Matthew 26:26-28

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

PRAY

1 Corinthians 11:26 -- *"as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*