Exodus 13:1-10
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

To self, "Hmm, I know I came into the bedroom for something. What was it?" To my wife, "Hey honey, why did I come into the bedroom?" "You went in there to set the alarm." "Oh, right." To self again, "Hmm, now what time was I supposed to set it for?" To my wife again, "Hey honey, what time was I supposed to set it for?" "Seven o'clock, dear." "Oh, right. Thanks." This is an ongoing interaction at our house. And when we have them I like to think that I have not forgotten something, but that I had un-remembered it. It may be that few if any of you ever have these same kind of interactions; that you un-remember things. You never ask, why did I come into this room? What am I looking for in the fridge? Why am I holding this? There are moments when I think that un-remembering is product of our own time and culture. That we are so busy and so distracted with our devices that we cannot focus. But this is not the case and we know it is not first because the command to "remember" is used more than 280 times, and because Paul's words to the Corinthians are intended to deal with a bad case of un-remembering; of un-remembering the core of what it meant to be a follower of Jesus.

This might not seem obvious when we first read Paul's words of what we call, institution, of the Lord's supper. These are words we are used to hearing on a regular basis when we come to the table. But if we were to have read what comes before and after them we can see why Paul thinks that the Corinthians had un-remembered the core of their faith. They had un-remembered it because they had become selfish and self-centered. Some people came with lots of food to church and stuffed themselves, while others went hungry. Others came to church with lots of wine, and they got drunk while others had nothing to drink. Some, who were wealthy and in the upper classes, came early and pretty much polished off the food that was meant for a communal meal, so that when the late comers, usually slaves and ordinary working folks arrived, there was nothing left to share. For Paul, this was a violation of Christian Faith 101, which is, we are a self-giving and not a self-serving community. This is where the words we read this morning come into play.

Though these words were probably the church's earliest liturgy, meaning that they had been formalized for use when the church gathered for its communal meal, or love feast, here Paul is using them in a different context. In these words, Paul sees the very self-giving nature, not only of Jesus, but of God. He does because when Jesus says, *"This is my body for you..."* and *"...this cup is the new covenant in my blood…"*, he is telling his disciples that they will find new life and be part of the new coming Kingdom of God, because of Jesus' own self-giving. And this

self-giving is not only on Jesus' part, but on God's part because Paul understood that the history of God and God's people was based on God's gracious giving of everything from freedom, to manna in the wilderness, to the gift of the Spirit. This self-giving then was to be mirrored in the self-giving of people within the community. To have faith, in other words, was to faithfully give of oneself to God and neighbor. This is what the Corinthians had un-remembered, and of what Paul was reminding them. It is also the heart of what we are reminded of every time we come to the communion table.

This leaves the question though, why does self-giving matter enough for God to remind us every time we are together? It matters for two reasons. First it matters because it moves us from being spectators to participants in God's great world transforming work. Both in Paul's time and in ours it is easy to be spectators of religion, meaning we can stand back and appreciatively watch what happens in church without really being transformed by it. When we allow ourselves to be reminded of our call to be self-giving people, and we live it, then we become part of God's recreative work…we become part of God's work to recreate the world into a place or love, peace and justice. This understanding, then brings us to the second reason for self-giving…which is that in self-giving, the world is transformed into what it was and is, into what God would have it to be. The world is not transformed into God's new creation by hatred, fear or greed. It is transformed by our self-giving just as we are transformed by Jesus' self-giving. It is transformed by our self-giving; our self-giving great and small.

To that end I want to share with you an incident that happened this week at our local Kroger's. My wife Cindy was going down one of the isle's when she saw a woman in need of assistance, because she could not reach an item. Cindy walked up to her and asked if she could be of assistance. The woman said yes, and then after Cindy had retrieved the item off the shelf, said, "Thank you. No one has been kind to me in a long time." I want you to think about that. Here is a person who evidently has not been shown kindness and who has felt the weight of the world's disdain upon her. She feels somehow unworthy of kindness. And a simple act of self-giving, of awareness gave her a renewed sense of hope. This is what self-giving does. And this is what Paul reminds us we are to do.

This then is the gift of this communion table. It has been the gift to the church for almost two-thousand years. It was a gift to the people whose names we read this morning, helping them to remember whose and who they are. It is a gift to those who will come after us and light our candles. So, my friends, this morning we have a chance to once again remember whose and who we are as we come to this table (communion table). In the breaking of the bread and pouring of the cup we are reminded of God's self-giving and of our calling to do so as well. My challenge to you then is this, as you take the bread and cup, ask yourself, how is this reminder causing me to live as a self-giving follower of Jesus Christ?