

Covenant Community

The Lord's Supper: Celebration of the New Covenant
Dr. David Platt
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THE LORD'S SUPPER: CELEBRATION OF THE NEW COVENANT **Luke 22:7-23; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Luke 22. We're going to jump into the Word a little bit earlier than we normally do in our worship gathering, so that we might respond to the Word in the Lord's Supper that we celebrate in just a minute. Luke 22, let me invite you to pull out those notes from the Worship Guide that you received when you came in. I want to start by connecting what we've just celebrated in baptism and what we are going to do in the Lord's Supper. Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In fact, I want to go back real briefly to the end of last week and extend a little bit on where we left off, maybe even clarify a little bit. When we were talking about baptism, we were looking at, "When should I be baptized?" What we saw in Scripture was clearly, as soon as you trust in Christ for salvation, you should be baptized. We added on to that, as soon as you can best publicly claim your faith in Christ through baptism.

The reason we added that...we didn't get to elaborate here...the reason we talk about baptism as a public act is because of what we had seen in New Testament picture in Acts, picture in the letters of the New Testament, that baptism is a public act. Baptism isn't a private thing. It's not something we do on our own. There's a reason why, at the end of last Sunday, if you are a follower of Christ who has not been baptized, I said to you, "Put 'B' on the back of that portion in the Worship Guide or go talk to somebody at the Access Corner." There's a reason I didn't say, "If you are a follower of Christ who has not been baptized, then get home, get in your tub and do this as soon as possible. Don't even wait. Just come and jump in here right now." There's a reason we didn't do that, because baptism is a public act. It's something we do to identify, not just with Christ, but with the body of Christ.

Now, we have pictures. We have pictures like Acts 8 when Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch riding in the chariot there. The eunuch says, "Hey, there's water." And Philip says, "Okay, let's go get, let's go do baptism." That's the exception, not the norm, in the New Testament. What you see, like in Acts 2, when all these people get saved, they are getting baptized, but they are getting baptized into the church. There are contexts much like Acts 8 around the world where there's not an established church, particularly in unreached areas where people, well, there's not a body of Christ yet. This is the beginning of the body of Christ there. So, there's pictures of that in Scripture, but when you look at places like Acts 4:4, Acts 13:48, you see people who believed, and it doesn't say that moment they found as much water as they could and went and got baptized.

This is why, if by God's grace, I were to have the privilege of leading somebody to faith in Christ tomorrow, I would not say, "Okay, well let's find a lake as soon as we can." I mean, it's getting a little cold outside, but even...even if the weather's great, I would not say that because this is something we do in the context of the church. I would say to that person, "I want to encourage you, next step as you've trusted in Christ, is now to be baptized in the context of the local church, and we need to begin that process immediately."

So, the aim there was to say, "Okay, this is something we publicly do. We need to do that immediately, as soon as possible, so let's begin that process." Now, it's at that point, people might think, "Well, process? What do you mean 'process'? Like, if you've got a believer, and you've got water and you do baptism, there's no process to it. We don't see a process in the book of Acts." Well, when I mentioned process and told you to put "B" on the back of that tear off portion of the Worship Guide or talk to somebody in the Access Corner, this goes back...there's a lot of differences between where we find ourselves today and where they were in the first century, so to speak.

One major difference is, in that context, to be baptized, to be identified publicly as a follower of Christ was huge. You'd lose your life. That's the way it is in many contexts around the world. Over a couple thousand years though, you bring this whole picture into our culture, and this is what we talked about last week. There's a lot of confusion about the meaning of baptism. There's a lot of people who think baptism is necessary for salvation. There are other people who think, "Well, baptism is just an optional extra or just a religious thing to check off on the routine list." So, what we've done in the context of this faith family is we've said, "We want to make sure that anybody who steps into those waters to be baptized has as good a biblical understanding as possible about the gospel and how baptism represents the gospel. How we're not baptized in order to be saved."

The last thing I want, as the pastor of this body, is to be baptizing somebody and, in their mind, they are thinking this is what they're doing in order to be saved. Similarly, I don't want them to be thinking, "Well, this is just a routine thing you do. It's just an optional extra. This is just something as a child I do to please my parents." Absolutely not. That's why every child who is baptized in this faith family will go through a whole class where they will sit down with somebody, a brother or sister in this faith family, and they'll talk about what salvation is, what the gospel is, and what baptism is.

Why, anybody who's baptized in this faith family, before they're baptized, will have an opportunity to sit down with a brother or sister in this faith family and just make sure we're on the same page biblically about what the gospel means and about what baptism means. That's important, because we want to guard the beauty of this picture and the biblical nature of this picture of baptism. So, if you're a follower of Christ and have not been baptized, and you might have heard that last part, and you might think, "Well, as soon as I can best do this publicly, well, I'm just going to...I'm just going to wait until it's best for me then. I'm going to wait till it's more comfortable for me."

I mean, the reality is to be baptized in front of 2,000 other people is a bit of a daunting thing. We've had a variety of folks who have been in this faith family who have said, "I need to be baptized. I know I need to be baptized, but can't we just do a private thing with just a couple of people around?" The reason we don't do that is because baptism is a public thing. Why we do baptism in the context of the body gathered together for worship is because that's what Scripture seems to indicate.

This is identification with Christ and His church. I can think of one person who was very, very nervous about the whole picture of being baptized in front of all these people and is a sweet, precious teenage girl. Her parents very concerned about this whole picture. We moved forward. We said, "This is a testimony to your faith family, albeit a pretty large family, but a faith family, who has identified with you in this whole picture of baptism." She went forward with that, and to hear her parents share with me afterwards about what impact that had on her spiritually to overcome some of the fears and some of the hesitation that was there for her good, for God's glory.

So, that's why we do baptism in the context of public identification with the church. That's why we would add there at the end, "As soon as you can best publicly proclaim your faith in Christ." So, if you're a follower of Christ and have not been baptized, let me encourage you to begin the process immediately. You can put "B" on the back of your card this morning, that tear off portion of the Worship Guide and put that in the offering basket. Or, come talk with somebody in the Access Corner back here. Don't delay. Baptism is an obedience issue. I, in no way, want that last part of what we looked at last week to be kind of an out. "Okay, I can wait until I'm most comfortable." The reality is, if you are looking for what's most comfortable, then there's question about whether or not you've actually come to Christ at all. This is no longer about our comfort level or our preferences. We're surrendered to Christ. When He says, "Be baptized", this is an obedience issue. So, let me encourage you to be obedient in that area.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper ...

Okay, enough of last week's sermon. Let's ring in this week's sermon. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. You've got at the top of your notes, "How do they relate?" Baptism...follow along here...baptism demonstrates our initial identification with Christ and His church. Baptism demonstrates our initial identification with Christ and His church. The Lord's Supper celebrates our continual identification with Christ and His church. To use some of the imagery that we looked at last week, we talked about baptism as almost like a wedding ceremony in which we publicly declare that we belong to Jesus.

Well, if you look at it that way, just to follow that imagery, the Lord's Supper is like anniversary celebrations. Whether every month, every week, every year, you renew your vows, and you renew your commitment to each other. That's the picture that's being accepted, represented here in the Lord's Supper. You ask any wife in this room if it is important for her husband to remember their anniversary, and you will hear a universal answer to that. Yes, it's absolutely important.

In the same way, it's important not to neglect the Lord's Supper. This is the only act of worship in the New Testament we have prescribed instructions for. "This is how it should be done. This is what you are to do." It's called "communion", "the Lord's Table", "breaking of bread". "Eucharist" is a word that's often associated with that. That comes for the Greek word for "thanksgiving" that we see in 1 Corinthians 10. What I want us to do this morning is look at two primary passages, Luke 22, when Jesus has the Last Supper with His disciples. Then, we're going to go to 1 Corinthians 11, and we're going to see how Paul reminded the New Testament church of how the Lord's Supper was important and needed to be done, and how it was to be done. Then, we're going to step back, much like we did last week, and think, especially in light of the different backgrounds that may be represented in this room, "Okay, what does Scripture teach about the Lord's Supper?"

Luke 22:7; Luke 22:7. This is on the eve before Jesus is going to be crucified.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all

furnished. Make preparations there." They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

All right, flip over to the right, 1 Corinthians 11. Go past John, Acts, Romans, you come to 1 Corinthians 11. That was the meal that Jesus had with his disciples before He was crucified. Now, come to 1 Corinthians 11, and we'll start in verse 17. We have to get the context of Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper here in 1 Corinthians. Paul is writing this letter...just so you know, when you read these verses...when you read these verses, you are going to hear them talking about meals that you celebrate together. What would happen is, they would have fellowship meals together. They would have meals together as a body...intended to have as a body of Christ together, and he's talking about the Lord's Supper in context of those fellowship times they would have together. Listen to what he says in verse 17.

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the

Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

God, we pray, as we anticipate taking the Lord's Supper together, that you would teach us by your Spirit, through your Word, what this meal means. God, we pray that you'll give us clarity, especially as we come from different backgrounds, that you would help us to understand what you have taught through your Son and the meal He had through His disciples and through what the New Testament church has done since the first century. God, we pray that you would help us to honor, elevate and recognize rightly, the significance of the Lord's Supper. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Questions About the Lord's Supper ...

All right, questions about the Lord's Supper. Before we dive into them, especially this first one, remember, our goal is to be as faithful to Scripture as possible. There are a couple points, even in this first question, where it might seem narrow, even inhospitable, to say that some people should not partake in the Lord's Supper today. Now, there are people in this room who should not take the Lord's Supper. It will seem inhospitable in some ways because we have tried to make everything in the church, including this, as accessible to as many people as possible. However, in the process, we've missed the entire meaning of what Christ has said the Lord's Supper is for.

Who should participate in the Lord's Supper?

So, let's follow along and say, "Okay, we are going to sacrifice what is popular to what is true in Scripture." Who should participate in the Lord's Supper? First, believers share in the work of Christ as they partake of the Lord's Supper; believers share in the work of Christ as they partake of the Lord's Supper. Jesus obviously shared this meal with His followers in the context of 1 Corinthians 11 here. This is a letter written to the church, to the church of God in Corinth. Every time we see "communion", "breaking of bread"...the verse at the top of your notes that we didn't look at, Acts 2:42, it says what the early church devoted themselves to. "*The church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" All throughout the New Testament, the picture is the Lord's Supper being celebrated in the context of the body of Christ. The church, the covenant community of God, does this.

In fact, look back one chapter to the left in 1 Corinthians 10. Look in 1 Corinthians 10; look at verse 16. Listen to what Paul says there when he talks about the bread and the cup and the body and blood. He says in verse 16, "*Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?*" You might circle...you saw it twice. "Participation" in verse 16, mentioned twice. That word, "*koinonia*"...it's something we share together. It's something we have in common; we have in common, we're identified...only followers of Christ identified with His body and His blood. That's what is symbolized in the fact that we do this only in the context of the church.

So, believers share in the work of Christ as they partake in the Lord's Supper. Those who have trusted in Christ, who have trusted Christ in His blood shed on the cross to cover over

their sins, whose lives are united with Christ as God, Savior, King, Lord over their lives. That's who shares in the Lord's Supper.

At this point, I would even add that a lot of folks would take a step deeper, and say, "Only baptized believers should celebrate the Lord's Supper." The reasoning here is fairly simple. Even to use the analogy we've talked about, if baptism is the wedding ceremony, so to speak, and the Lord's Supper is an anniversary, it would make no sense to have an anniversary without a wedding. If baptism is an initial identification with Christ, then why would you have continual identification with Christ if you refuse to initially be identified with Christ?

So, even to take it a step deeper to what we're going to talk about in just a minute, in the Lord's Supper, we reflect on any, every area of disobedience in our lives. We bring those to the forefront, and we repent, and we turn from those things. It's what's represented in what we do in the Lord's Supper. We talked about last week how baptism is an obedience issue. So, if this is an area where someone is being disobedient, and they are not in the process of making sure that happens soon...going to be baptized...then, it would not make sense. They would, in a sense, desecrate the Lord's Supper. If we are continuing in disobedience in that area of our life, but we are participating in the Lord's Supper every time it's offered, while we're living in willful, continual disobedience.

So, that's why I would say, very clearly...and we've talked about this last week; even already a little bit this morning...when it comes to the Lord's Supper, this is something we do. Some of you, many of you marked "B" and are in that process or in the process of being baptized. So, I would not say that you cannot participate in the Lord's Supper today, because you have not been baptized. Praise God for your obedience in that area. If you have not taken steps in obedience in that area, then I would encourage you to do that as soon as possible. I would even add...I'm praying that there will be people in this room today who, for the first time, trust in Christ, today. Trust in Christ to cover over your sins. Trust in Christ as the Lord of your life.

If that's the case, if you do that today, then I would say, yes, this is a supper to celebrate together, even though you haven't been baptized. I would say you need to do that as soon as possible, in obedience to Christ, but you can certainly celebrate the Lord's Supper. So, believers share in the work of Christ as they partake of the Lord's Supper.

Well, what about people who don't know Christ, who haven't trusted in Christ and aren't going to trust in Christ today? Well, unbelievers, there's a difference. Believers share in the work of Christ as they partake of the Lord's Supper; unbelievers see the work of Christ as they watch the Lord's Supper. As I mentioned, I would encourage you, if you have never trusted in Christ to do that today...and we'll talk about that more later...but if you are not ready to do that, if you still have questions about that or just plain and simple, you're not there, then, what I would invite you to do is when the bread and the cup are passed by you, just to take that plate or that container with the cups and just pass it to the person next to you, but do not get the bread or the cup.

This seems a bit harsh, again, a bit inhospitable, but the clear teaching of what Scripture is saying here is that if you were in here today, and you have not united your life with Christ, trusted in Him for your salvation to cover over your sins, and you've not submitted your life to Him as Lord, God, King over you, then, it is not a meal that you are to participate in. Instead, Scripture says, instead of sharing in that, partaking in it, I would encourage you to see a people, see a covenant community who are celebrating what Christ has done in their

lives. Nobody is going to single you out. "Hey, this guy didn't pick it up." Or, "This lady didn't do this."

I want to be as clear and as blunt as possible. It does not matter how many times you've been in church. It doesn't not matter how many times you have taken this meal at the appropriate time in church. It does not matter who you are with or what you want to communicate to the people around you. If you have not trusted in Christ for salvation and submitted to Him as the Lord of your life, then this is not a meal that you are to participate in, partake of today. It's a meal that you are to observe; to observe a community of people who are celebrating what Christ has done in their lives. I hope you will see a clear picture of the love of Christ in what we are celebrating. Who should participate in the Lord's Supper.

Where should we have the Lord's Supper?

Second, where should we have the Lord's Supper? This is simple, but we can miss it if we're not careful. The only biblical requirement for where we should have the Lord's Supper is in a gathering of the church. The gathering of the church. 1 Corinthians 11, four different times. Verse 18, "*In the first place, I hear that when you come together...*" Verse 20, "*...when you come together...*" There's two times we're seeing this phrase, "come together". "Come together," verse 20. At the end of this chapter, verse 33, "*So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry he should eat at home, so when you meet together...*" There's the fourth time, "*...it may not result in judgment.*" The whole picture, the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 is the context of the body of Christ coming together.

In fact, you look at 1 Corinthians 11:29, there's debate and discussion about this verse. It says, "*Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself.*" There's a lot of people who believe that's a specific reference to the body of Christ, the church. That you don't eat this meal without recognizing the body of Christ around you, which is part of what Paul is addressing here in 1 Corinthians 11.

Regardless though, much like baptism, in Scripture, the Lord's Supper is not a private thing we do. It's not something we do on our own, in our prayer closet or in our quiet time. The Lord's Supper is something we do in a gathering of the church, when we come together. It's a corporate, communal celebration of something we do together. We'll see why that's important later on, because it's something we do as the body of Christ, not just as individual followers of Christ. So, where should we have the Lord's Supper? The only biblical requirement is the gathering of the church.

When should we have the Lord's Supper?

The next question: When should we have the Lord's Supper? Now, Scripture is not explicit on an answer to this one. Scripture doesn't give us a command, "And you are to do it at these intervals or at these times." Only thing we have in these verses that we just read, look in 1 Corinthians 11:25. Paul said, "*In the same way, after supper he took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant of my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'*" Then, he says in verse 26, "*For whenever you eat this bread, whenever you drink it or whenever you eat it...*"

Some translations, the NIV here, says, "Whenever you drink it" or, "whenever you eat it". There are other translations you might have that say, "As often as you drink it", or "as often as you eat it". That's really more true to what the original language of the New Testament is saying here. There's a picture of this is something the New Testament believers did regularly. As often...you're getting together, so as often as you eat the bread and drink from the cup. So, the only command that I would say we have in Scripture is we observe it

often. We observe the Lord's Supper often. This is a regular, normal practice of New Testament believers. We are supposed to observe this command often.

Now, some people in this room come from backgrounds where the Lord's Supper has been celebrated on a weekly basis. So, that's where the question comes in, "Well, what about weekly? Should we do it weekly?" There's a basis for that. In fact, you can go with me to Acts 20, let me show you this verse. Just take a left back through Romans to get to Acts. Acts 20:7. We do not have a command that says, "The Lord's Supper needs to be celebrated weekly." However, we do have at least a hint here in Acts 20:7 that this was the practice of the New Testament church. This is something they did when they gathered together on Resurrection Day, on the Lord's Day.

Look at Acts 20:7. It says, "*On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.*" It's a picture of sharing the Lord's Supper together. "*Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.*" I love that verse. I like it. It's good. Anyway, there's not...there's laughing. No "Amens". There is just laughing. So Paul, long winded preacher; I love it. Verse 7, "*...first day of the week, we came together to break bread.*" This seemed to be a regular pattern on the first day of the week.

Now, some who don't come from backgrounds where the Lord's Supper is celebrated weekly, oftentimes, will begin to think, "Well, if we do it every week, won't it become routine? Won't it become...kind of lose the sense of being a special celebration that we have?" That's a valid question. There's always a danger of things becoming routine, but if we were to use that rationale, we might only...well, let's only sing once a month then. Or, let's only have a sermon quarterly. Don't "Amen" that. Let's only do this or that on a...on this basis. However, the reality is, something can still be very special and very meaningful and done on a weekly basis. So, observe it often.

What about weekly? Scripture doesn't mandate. This is the point where I, as the pastor of this body, need to confess and repent, because we have not observed the Lord's Supper often. I want to take full responsibility for that. We've not observed it often, and as a result, we've been out of line with what Scripture teaches. I want to ask for your forgiveness. I'm not going to go to the point where I say this morning, commit, that we are going to do this weekly, but we are going to observe this Supper often. It's what Scripture teaches.

This is a fundamental part of New Testament worship. It's the only active worship that we have prescribed instructions for in the New Testament. As a result, we need to place high priority on coming together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. So, I will appreciate your forgiveness in that and look forward to seeing how that plays out in the context of this faith family.

How should we understand the Lord's Supper?

Next question: How should we understand the Lord's Supper? Last week we talked about infant baptism. This week we're going to dive into another area of controversy in church history. I hope we can do this in a way that it's true to Scripture and respects various traditions, but says, "Okay, how can we best be faithful to what Scripture is teaching here?" This is...this is really important.

How should we understand the Lord's Supper? A traditional misunderstanding is that in the Lord's Supper there is a change of substance that results in salvation; a change in substance that results in salvation. The two dollar theological word here is "transubstantiation". Note, I didn't put that as a blank for you to write down. You can just hear that one. You can write it down if you want. If you want to take the challenge, but

"transubstantiation". This is the traditional Roman Catholic understanding of the Lord's Supper. I say traditional, it was not adopted officially until early 13th century, but...and this is something, again, I, in no way, want to caricature or misrepresent. I have no desire to caricature or misrepresent what the Catholic Church teaches about the Lord's Supper.

Having lived in New Orleans for four or five years, surrounded by a very predominantly Catholic culture with many Catholic friends and spending time with different priests and studying Catholic documents, and I want to quote specifically, just to be as true as possible to what the Catholic church teaches, but this is important here. The official Roman Catholic teaching is that in Eucharist, in the mass, the bread and the wine actually become...there is a change of substance where the bread and the wine actually become the body and the blood of Christ. This is one of the reasons, primary reasons why, for centuries, people, parishioners, so to speak, did not even participate in drinking from the cup, because only the priest would drink from the cup because, if the cup were to spill, the wine were to spill, it would be spilling the blood of Christ, and it was too great a risk. So, for many years...and that's why, because there's a change of substance here, so that Christ is physically present in the elements.

Now, follow here because this is where I want you to realize this is bigger than just a theological discussion of a piece of bread or cup of wine. This has huge ramifications for understanding the gospel and salvation, because if Christ is physically present in the bread and the wine, then to receive communion is to receive Christ. It's an exact quote from catechism of the Catholic Church. "To receive communion is to receive Christ."

Now, communion has ramifications for our understanding of salvation. I want to quote directly here from the catechism of the Catholic Church. "By consecration, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread of bread and wine..." Listen to this: "...Christ himself living and glorious is present in a true, real, and substantial manner. His body and his blood with his soul and his divinity, which is why..." I mentioned this just a second ago, "...to receive communion is to receive Christ Himself, who has offered Himself for us.

This is...this is important, even with how we do communion then, because if there is a real transformation that happens here, a change of substance...this is why only priests in the Catholic Church, traditionally, will lead in communion, because, well, we read, "only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so they become the body and the blood of the Lord."

So, here's what happens. "When we take communion, communion with the body and blood of Christ..." Listen to this. "...increases one's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins and preserves him from grave sins." Let me read that one more time. We won't get into the distinction between venial sins and mortal sins in the Catholic Church, but, "Communion with the body of Christ increases one's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins and preserves him from grave sins." Did you catch that? "Forgives sins." Take the meal, receive Christ, and obtain forgiveness. There is forgiveness that is obtained in the receiving of Christ in communion, which is why, as a sacrifice, the Eucharist is offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead. To obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.

Now, the reason I want to quote from those things specifically is because I want us to see how we understand the Lord's Supper directly affects how we understand the gospel and salvation. This is what the Reformation was all about, because reformers came on the scene and said, "No, we don't do anything to receive Christ. It's by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone you receive Christ. It's not something we do that we take these steps in

order to have grace infused to us. No, we trust in Christ." This is why the Council of Trent responded to the Reformation. To quote directly, Section 6, Canon 9, official teaching of the Council of Trent says, "If anyone says that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to mean nothing else is required in order to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be anathema." Which means condemned; let him be condemned. "If anyone says that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be condemned, anathema. If you say faith alone is necessary for justification, nothing else you have to do to obtain the grace of justification, let him be anathema."

This is why I want to camp out here for these couple of minutes, because I want us to realize that what we're doing in the Lord's Supper is not obtaining grace. Grace is grace because it is not obtainable. You don't earn it. You don't do anything to receive it. It is given. That's why it's grace. It's given freely and why faith is the God ordained means for salvation. It is because that it doesn't involve what we do. It is faith in what He has done. He has lived the life we could not live. He has died a death as a substitute on our behalf on our behalf, so that when we trust in Him, His righteousness is granted to us. It is beautiful, marvelous grace, and as soon as we add one step to do this in order to receive grace, then we undercut grace.

So, in the Lord's Supper, what we're doing is we're not receiving Christ. We're not receiving grace that's being infused into us. We're celebrating grace that has radically transformed us. This is a biblical understanding: A symbolic meal that reflects salvation. There is no indication in Scripture, whether it's in the Gospels, in John 6, or in the letters here, that His body and His blood are physically present. Even in the context of Luke 22, which we read a moment ago, when He says, "This is my body" or "This is my blood", that word, used many times in the New Testament, is translated "represents". "This represents my body, represents my blood."

In the same way, Jesus would use pictures. "I am the door." "I am the vine." "I am the light." It's a representation of a much deeper reality, a glorious reality, and He's saying that, "This is my body" when His body is right there in front of them. "This is my blood" when his blood is in His veins. There is no indication in Scripture that, in order to obtain the benefits of Christ, that we need to eat and drink of something that physically is transformed into His body and blood where His is, in the language that's used, sacrificed over and over and over again. The picture is there is a sacrifice that is once for all, and in the Lord's Supper, we celebrate that sacrifice. The bread represents the body, and the cup represents blood. Symbolic meal that reflects salvation. What we are doing today in the Lord's Supper is not being done to earn salvation; it's being done to celebrate salvation. That's what we're seeing in Scripture.

Why should we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

So, how should we look at it in that way? Well, that leads to, "Why, then, do we celebrate it? Because there's a lot of...it raises the stakes. If we need to do this in order to receive Christ, yes, we need to do this as often as possible. "Well, why do we need to do it often, if it's just a reflection?" Here's why: First, to remember. Foundationally, the Lord's Supper is about remembering. Look back in 1 Corinthians 11:24. This is what Paul emphasized, what Jesus emphasized. "*When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'* After supper he took the cup, saying, '*This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.*'"

The Lord's Supper is foundationally about remembering. When we take the bread, we remember the body of Jesus. We remember the body. We remember the fact that God committed the ultimate act of condescension and took a robe of human flesh upon Himself. He became a man, and He suffered, and He died in a body. We remember the body of Jesus, and we remember the blood of Jesus. When you take the cup, you remember the blood of Jesus. The blood that was shed on the cross that is now sprinkled over your hearts to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and to give us access to God. That inaugurates a new covenant with us.

This is so important, ladies and gentlemen. The Lord's Supper is not about channeling. It's not about imagining. It's not about dreaming. It's not about meditating. It is about fixing our thoughts on a focused point in history, on a real body that was given; that was beaten and scourged and spit upon and nailed to a cross and real blood that flowed from that cross. We fix our thoughts on that reality. We remember.

It's the same picture in the Passover when the old covenant, they would have the Passover meal as a remembrance. They would remember the night when they put blood over the doorposts of their homes, and God passed over, did not bring judgment on that home because there was a blood of a lamb over that. They remembered, every time they celebrated the Passover meal, they looked back, and they said, "Yes, God delivered us by the blood of the lamb from underneath His judgment." Jesus says, "This is a cup of a new covenant, and you remember. You look back, and you remember when my blood was shed to bear the wrath of God against sin. When my body was given as a sacrifice on your behalf. This is my body given for you." Remember...concretely, remember the body of Jesus and the blood of Jesus. Fix your thoughts on the cross, so when we have the supper in a moment, that's what we're going to do. We're going to fix our thoughts on a real crucifixion and a real body and real bloodshed.

In the process, why do we celebrate this meal? To reflect. What else do we do? We remember, and we reflect. We reflect, first, on our sin. We reflect on our sin. 1 Corinthians 11:27. 1 Corinthians 11:27, "*Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself...*" That's the key term here. Verse 28, "*...examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.*" I think it's serious. "*For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.*" Did you catch that? Not fallen asleep in the sermon. That's not what this is talking about. He says, "Some of you are weak and sick, and some have died, because they did not treat the table in a worthy manner. That's strong.

That's strong enough, parents, when the bread and the cup are passed, not to say to your child, "Well, just...he hasn't trusted in Christ, but just take it. You can eat it." No. They need to see the seriousness of this. It's not to be handled tritely, casually. This is why every single person in this room, including myself, before we take that bread or that cup needs to seriously ask the question, "Do we realize what is happening here?" Reflecting on our sin. There's nothing casual about that. This is so not another routine that we do with a check off box; something we do just to get to the end of the service. It was nice we did that. No, this is a reflection, a serious reflection on our sin.

The Lord's Supper involves deep confession of sin. We...we are looking at the cross and the reality of the cross. As we look at the cross, we don't just see some distant relationship to us; we see on the cross our sin on Him. Before the cross is something done for us, we must see the cross as something done by us. This is a representation in all of the horror that is

represented in the body and blood on a cross. It is a representation of our sin: My sin, your sin. It is that we're recalling, not just our sin in general, but our specific sin. It's the things that we have said this last week. It is the thoughts we have had that are not pure. It's the images we have looked at on the Internet or on TV. It is the actions we have taken. It's the bitterness we have felt. It's the gossip. It's the way we have indulged in wealth and ignored the poor. It's all of these things brought to bear. We reflect on our sin. It's why it's such a serious thing. We examine ourselves.

The beauty of it is, we don't stop there. Because we see the cross, we see the seriousness of our sin reflected in the cross, but we don't just reflect on our sin...don't miss this...we reflect on our sin, and we reflect on His promises. We reflect on His promises. Here's the beauty of the Lord's Supper. As you confess your sins, and your sins are brought to the forefront, what happens in the Lord's Supper and this picture of the blood of Christ is Jesus takes those sins, and in our hearts, He reminds us, "Covered." Sin comes to the front, "Covered." You recall a sin from this last week, "Covered. Covered. It's covered." "You don't realize how horrible that was." "It's covered."

Think of it. All of the vile images that have been looked at across this room, for those who are in Christ, covered. All the hurtful words. All of the bitterness in our hearts. Every single thing we have done that is dishonoring to God, disobedient to God, infinitely offensive to God, covered, covered, covered. He's covered it all. We reflect on this reality that brings us to our knees.

Now, don't miss...you don't get to the beauty of that until you go to the seriousness of reflection on sin. Reflect on sin and then reflect on promises. Reflect on the reality, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Here's the beauty; here's the beauty. Now, we are feasting on Christ, but not in a physical bread and wine. We are feasting on His promises. We feast on His forgiveness, because He looks at us, and He says, "Your sins are no more. I remember them no more. They're gone." "You don't realize what I did this last week." "No, I look at you, and I see the righteousness that I have given to you. You are clothed in it. I remember your sins no more."

We feast on this forgiveness, and we feast on this faithfulness. As we remember Him, He reminds us...as we're reminded of Him, He reminds us, "You are mine. You are bought at a price and you are mine." Now, we are feasting on His promises, feasting on His forgiveness, feasting on His faithfulness. This is why...don't miss this. Please don't miss this. This is why this is a supper, a meal that is for believers in this room only because the reality is, if you have not trusted in Christ to cover over your sins, then you have nothing to feast on. You have not trusted in the blood of Christ to cover over your sin, then you stand guilty before a holy God. You stand under His judgment not covered. Not covered, nothing covered. Deserving of His judgment.

That's why I urge trust in Christ by grace alone through faith alone, trust in Christ today. Trust in Christ, in your heart. In this moment, in this room now, say, "Yes, I want to be covered. Cover my sins. I trust in you as my Savior and my Lord and my God and my King and yes...yes, then they are covered." However, do not mask the reality that your sins are not covered by participating in religious routine.

We remember, and we reflect, and we renew. We renew our commitment to Christ. Celebrate the Lord's Supper to renew our commitment to Christ. That's what we talked about earlier with baptism. If you have the areas of disobedience and impurity in your life brought to the forefront, you see them covered by the blood of Christ, well then, you don't

run out right after this and continue in disobedience. You turn from those things. It's why we talked about, with baptism, it would make no sense to participate in the Lord's Supper every time it's offered and still not be in...be obedient in baptism.

The same way in the other areas of our lives. We renew our commitment to Christ. We see our lives identified with Christ, but not just our commitment to Christ; we renew our commitment to each other. To Christ and to each other. Now, this is where we are going to come back to the importance of the body of Christ in this whole thing. This is so huge in the New Testament. Even the picture of table fellowship. We've talked about this, about Jews and Gentiles, for them to come around the same table. It's huge. We don't...we don't feel the weight of that in our day, but to picture Jews and Gentiles at the same table, by all other accounts enemies, now sitting around the same table.

When you look back at 1 Corinthians 10, this was the significance in verse 17, when it says, "There is one loaf. We who are many are one body for we all partake of the one loaf." The picture in 1 Corinthians, the picture in the New Testament, is a body gathered around sharing a loaf of bread together. It's huge. Showing their identity with each other and their commitment to one another. It's what Paul was addressing here in 1 Corinthians 11. He's saying, "You have the rich who are indulging in getting drunk in the church and the poor who are hungry over here. This does not represent unity in the body of Christ. It doesn't represent what the Lord's Supper is all about, one loaf."

In many contexts around the world, I would say probably most contexts around the world, one cup, common cup. If you have been in different contexts around the world with believers, whether with Sudanese in Africa or in underground house churches in Asia, or many other different contexts, you'll find the body of Christ sharing a common cup. Expressing unity. It's an incredible picture, unity.

Now, we are a society dominated by *Purell*. That thought just causes so many of us just to get squeamish. "Same cup? Any kind of...something we can't sanitize before it comes to me?" You laugh because you know you feel that. We joke about this; we joke about this, but don't miss it. What is it in us that rises up when we think, "Oh, I don't know about the common cup." Yes, okay, we don't want germs. We don't want you to get sick, but there is also at least an inkling in us that says, "I don't know what that person's hygiene is like. I don't know how healthy that person is." So, this is a way we kind of keep distance from them. Whether we put it on our hands before we touch them or after we touch them, or we figure out a way to wipe where their mouth was before our mouth goes on the cup. What we are doing is the exact same thing they were doing in 1 Corinthians 11 and dividing ourselves based on ethnic, social, or economic barriers and it is sinful.

We're a body. We are a family in a way...in a way that supersedes blood ties. We have such a hard time grasping that, but this is the beauty of the New Testament church. So, we're not going to have a common cup today for the 2,000 of us in this room, but I would make this practical application. If there is a brother or sister in this faith family that you harbor bitterness toward, or there is any barrier between you and a brother or sister, that needs to be dealt with. I would say it needs to be dealt with before partaking the Lord's Supper based on what Jesus teaches about worship in Matthew 5. Leave your offering there and go and be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. The whole picture of the Lord's Supper is to promote the unity of the body and to keep us from harboring bitterness or erecting barriers between one another.

We renew our commitment to Christ and to each other and our commitment to His mission. Our commitment to His mission. 1 Corinthians 11:26, "*Whenever you eat this bread and*

drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Two notes there. First, the Lord's Supper is proclamation. The Lord's Supper is not just eating and drinking. The Lord's Supper is proclaiming. When we take this Supper, even to go along with what we were just talking about with the body of Christ, that transcends ethnic and social and economic barriers, when we take the Lord's Supper, we proclaim we are a body bought from every tribe and nation and tongue, united together by the body and the blood of Christ. We proclaim, Luke 24:47-49, that Jesus has died so that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in all nations, and we want to proclaim to all nations this reality. Commitment: We renew our commitment to His mission. We are proclaiming the Lord's death, giving testimony to the gospel, until He comes.

The second part of that, which leads to this last facet: To rejoice. To rejoice because...why do we rejoice in the Lord's Supper? Because He has set us free. He has set us free. Now, that's the whole picture in the Passover, right? They were slaves in Egypt. That was the night that God delivered them out of slavery, began taking them to the Promised Land. No longer slaves in Egypt. So you remember when that happened? This is where we have to be really, really careful. Because, oftentimes, when we think of the Lord's Supper, we think of a very solemn, serious, grave, heavy time, almost gloomy. There is a sense in which that, obviously, needs to be the case. In light of what we study, this is a serious time, particularly that reflection on sin. Confession, contemplation of the cross. That is serious stuff.

However, here's the deal, ladies and gentlemen. We are not at a funeral. He is not dead anymore. He is not. He is not, even to go back to what we were talking about earlier with the body and blood, He is not being sacrificed over and over and over again. He's been sacrificed once for all. He has come to bring salvation, and He has accomplished it. It is finished.

As a result, when we have the Lord's Supper, yes, we seriously contemplate our sin, we bring it before, but we reflect on His promises, and we realize we're not in Egypt anymore. We have been set free from sin. You are no longer a slave to sin, brother and sister. So, we don't need to walk out of the Lord's Supper kind of looking down or gloomy. We walk out of the Lord's Supper with smiles on our faces because we're not slaves, we're sons. We're not enslaved to sin, the things of this world, or to ourselves, we are sons of God. We've experience sonship, and we call him "Abba, Father." We are freed from sin. We are no longer under the power, the dominion, the penalty of sin anymore.

He set us free, and we rejoice because He's coming back. Proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Turn to this one last place, Revelation 19. Revelation 19, the last book in the Bible. Revelation 19:6, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, there is a time limitation on the Lord's Supper; time limitation. Until, until, yes, in the Lord's Supper, we look back. We remember what happened 2,000 years ago on a cross. We remember, we fix our eyes, our minds on that, but we also look forward. This is not just a picture and a symbol of a meal that was instituted back then. It is a picture and a symbol of a meal that is coming then. Revelation 19:6,

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah!" For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Significance of the Lord's Supper ...

Brothers and sisters, when we take this cup, and we drink this cup together, we are looking back and remembering the blood of Christ, but we are also anticipating the day when we will share the cup with our risen Savior. Revelation 22:4, "We will see His face." We will be united with a great multitude that is roaring like loud peals of thunder in praise and glory and honor to Him.

So, we drink this cup in anticipation. He is coming back for us. This is why the Lord's Supper is so significant in our worship, because it's an essential component of new covenant worship. It shows us that everything has changed, and it's a celebratory expression of new covenant community. It's what the New Testament has said, "Do this; do this. Come together and do this to show that you are a community saved by the blood of Christ and transformed by His sacrifice."

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