

THE BRIDE: THE LORD'S SUPPER

MT. 26:26-29 | 1 COR. 10:14-17 | 1 COR. 11:17-34

We're continuing in our series called The Bride and if you're new with us we're taking a little bit different approach for this series, and what we're doing exploring what God's word has to say about the church. We're studying what's called ecclesiology (say, "ecclesiology"). God has some very definite ideas about what the church should look like and how it should function and if we want to honor God in the way that we do church and if we want God's blessing on our church, then we need to do everything we can to make sure we're functioning according to God's design. And I have been so encouraged by folks who have come up to me and said, "So much of this is new material and I'm just soaking it up—you're helping us really see how important this stuff is." And we've talked about church structure, and membership, and baptism, and today we're continuing with a meditation on the Lord's Supper.

Now if you've been in the church for a while you've heard of the Lord's Supper but for someone who's brand new to Christianity, you can understand how this might seem strange—middle of the service see people passing out juice and crackers and you may be sitting there wondering, "I get the juice and crackers for pre-school but I didn't know they had snack in the adult service, too? This church has snack time!" And it's called the Lord's Supper, but we're having it in the morning...so a lot to take in when it comes to the Lord's Supper, but in this precious meal is a treasure that God has given his church for a variety of reasons that we're going to talk about, and I trust that as we do God will work in us to help us grasp the grace and spiritual refreshment offered to us in this meal. **PRAY!**

The Lord's Supper: What, Who, When?

Read. Mt. 26:26-29. So here we have the Last Supper where Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. Right off the bat, you'll notice that Jesus says the wine is, "my blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins." And so we need to understand that the Lord's Supper is...

- The New Covenant meal instituted by Jesus consisting of bread and wine. (Mt. 26:26-29) And it involves 2 elements—bread and wine that were also a part of the Old Covenant meal. God gave Israel a special meal, right before an event known as the Exodus where He would miraculously deliver them out of Egyptian slavery. And when you get to Exodus 12, God has afflicted Egypt with 9 plagues that displayed his power and superiority to the Egyptians Gods but he saves perhaps his most potent for last. And in this last plague, God announces that he is going to kill every firstborn in the land, unless the door of their house was covered with the blood of the Passover Lamb, and if it was the Destroyer would pass over the house and spare the child. And so to commemorate this grace and the deliverance from Egypt that would follow God gave them a meal—the Passover—that would serve for years to come as continual reminder and abiding monument to their deliverance form Egypt.

- The Old Covenant meal was the Passover. (Exod. 12)

You see God passed over his people's sins in the Old Covenant by allowing animals to die for people's sin instead of people dying for their own sin. But the blood of animals could never take away sin. They could only delay punishment. And that's what makes this new covenant—Christ's body and blood—so special. Jesus isn't offering himself so that God would continue to Passover sins as he did in the Old Covenant. Jesus has come to fully and finally pay for the sins of God's people once and for all. God has fully, finally, and forever, passed over my sin, because he didn't passover Jesus He rained every last bit of his wrath due my sin and your sin on Christ and he drank every last drop of God's wrath turned the cup over and said, "it is finished." Jesus slaughtered by god as the spotless Passover lamb—so that everyone covered by his blood could go free! That's what we're celebrating this supper and as such it is a meal for...

- The Lord's Supper is a meal for believers only. (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

Partaking in the covenant meal is only for those who are in the New Covenant Community. Last week we talked about baptism and said that baptism is the initial sign of someone who has entered the New Covenant. It's the entry rite that declares that you have been born again into God's people. Which means that baptism should almost always come before the Lord's Supper.

- Should normally come after baptism. (Acts 2:41; Mt. 28:19)

This seems to be the pattern in the text. For example, in Acts 2:41-42 Luke records, "So those who had received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3000 souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers." Again, we see this pattern in the Great Commission text, Mt. 28:19 where we're instructed to make disciples, baptize them, then teach them to observe Christ's commands" We can't be too dogmatic about this, I can think of a variety of situations where the Lord's Supper before baptism could be acceptable, but those are rare—we should be making every effort to follow the pattern we see in the NT—Baptism happening once declaring "I've trusted Christ", Lord's Supper happening over and over again saying, "I'm still trusting Christ."

- Should take place "often" (1 Cor. 11:25-26)

That's why Paul uses the language, "Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup..." This is something that happens repeatedly, there are a variety of opinions about what "often" means. The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper every Sunday, some churches celebrate it once a quarter, we celebrate it once a month I wouldn't mind doing it more often. Some people feel life if you do it to regularly it's not as special. But we teach the Word, Pray, Sing every week—we'd love to baptize every week—and doing so doesn't diminish those things. In the same way the Lord's Supper is not special because of how rarely it's observed, it's special because of what it represents. Well what does it represent? What exactly is going on when we take the Lord's Supper? Great question and if you had asked me when I was young, I would have said, "I'm trying to find the biggest piece." But I want us to see, in the text, 5 elements that are critical in forming the way the we think about and approach the Lord's Supper.

The Purpose of The Lord's Supper: 5 Elements

- Celebratory remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. (1 Cor. 11:24-25)

- "Forgiveness (blood) through substitution (body)"

In Luke 22 Jesus instructs John and Peter to go make preparations for Passover in the upper room of some guy's house. This was meal that they had celebrated for years to remind themselves of their deliverance for Egypt. But when Jesus takes the bread and the cup, he uses the words remembrance, but he doesn't say anything about the Exodus! He talks about remembering himself. And right here, Jesus takes a meal that for centuries was designed to commemorate the Exodus and changes it to a meal that is now designed to commemorate his sacrificial death and the forgiveness it secures. And both components, sacrifice and forgiveness are essential parts of the picture Jesus is giving to us in the Lord's Supper. In fact you could summarize this picture the Lord's Supper in three words, "Forgiveness through substitution".

Don't miss this, in Lk. 22:19 Jesus breaks the bread, and says "this is my body given for you." This is the language of substitution. You should be on this cross-absorbing God's wrath for the sin you committed, but I'm going to take your place. Tomorrow afternoon I will be nailed to a cross that you deserve to be nailed to—I will be your substitute and God will break me instead of breaking you. This is my body—broken for you—so we have the sacrificial component in the bread and the but then the second part of the picture and that is the forgiveness we receive as a result of this sacrifice. We see this in Mt. 26:27, "And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it 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.'" This is good news. This is why Christ is being sacrificed so that our sins could be forgiven. And it's why the Lord's Supper is something

that we celebrate. The Lord's Supper is not just a time to close our eyes and feel sorry for Jesus and bad about ourselves. It's a time where of course we're reminded of our sin, but a time where we should be filled with joy and gratitude for the forgiveness we've received. This is why the Lord's Supper is commonly called the Eucharist. And it comes from *eucharisteo* the Greek word meaning "to give thanks", just as Jesus did as he instituted this meal. And when we take this meal we're reminded of the love poured out for us and partake with an awareness of our sin and at the same time a gratitude that that sin has been forgiven all of this pictured in the Lord's supper: "Forgiveness through substitution."

- A participation in Christ and all of His benefits. (1 Cor. 10:14-17)
 - 4 Views: Transubstantiation (Rome), Consubstantiation (Luther), Spiritual Presence (Calvin), Memorial (Zwingli).

In 1 Cor. 10:16-17, "The cup of blessing that we bless is it not a participation in blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" And it's now that we arrive at what is by far the most controversial topic when it comes to the Lord's supper and has been the focus of endless debate all the way back to the church Father's in the early 2nd century—what is the nature of Christ's presence in the elements? In what way are we participating in Christ in the Lord's Supper?

And as you look at Church history you see a variety of answers. Some believed the bread and wine were actually the body and blood of Christ. This is the view that our Catholic friends hold today called transubstantiation. And for Roman Catholics, when the priest begins the institution narrative the substance of the elements is transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ—that's what he said isn't it?

Others saw it differently, Martin Luther held what came to be known as consubstantiation—where Christ is physically in the elements but they haven't been transformed. Like a sponge the water is everywhere, but the water is not the sponge.

Then there were folks like John Calvin who said, how can Christ be *physically present at all* if he's at the right hand of God? Besides when the disciples ate the Lord's supper, surely everyone left thinking they had eaten bread and wine, but no one left thinking they had physically eaten Jesus. So Calvin argued for a spiritual presence and this is where I'm inclined to land—both the spiritual presence and purely memorial view are represented in the Baptist history.

The text doesn't say the cup we bless is a remembrance but a participation—the Greek word there is *κοινωνία* meaning partnership or communion. And that's why so many have referred to the Lord's Supper as communion because we are participating communion with Christ. And there's certainly mystery here but to say that God is spiritually present in the elements would be similar to say that the Holy Spirit is in your heart...we don't mean physically but spiritually and in taking the Lord's Supper God has designed for you to experience his grace in a uniquely powerful way.

Have you ever teared up singing a song or voicing a prayer not because you're sad, but because in that moment you're experiencing the presence and grace of God in a uniquely powerful way? And I think it's in that way that God is spiritually present in the Supper offering a unique experience of the grace given to us in the Gospel. So it's a celebratory remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, a participation in Christ and all of his benefits...

- An expression of our *corporate* unity in Christ. (1 Cor. 10:14-17)
 - Not simply an intensified private devotion time.

1 Cor. 10:17, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." Notice his argument here. He's saying that what makes us one—what makes us united—is not our race, common experience, shared interests, similar life stage—what makes us one body is that we're all

partaking in the same bread. We're united to one another because we're united to Christ. I wish we could all literally eat from one loaf. And there's such a beautiful visible picture of unity here.

Too often we approach the Lord's Supper as an intensified quiet time with other people in the room. Where we draw a box around ourselves and try to have a private worship time. No! This is thoroughly corporate meal. When Paul talks about the Lord's supper he uses the phrase "when you come or gather together" 5 different times in vss. 17-34. That's why we never see the Lord's supper being taken privately by an individual (we don't take it in small groups) because as we all eat of the one bread, we're visibly symbolizing that we're united by one Christ. And our shared participation in his body is what makes us one.

In fact Paul is so serious about making sure this unity is properly expressed, in 1 Cor. 11:27-28 Paul says that we should examine ourselves before we take the Lord's supper to make sure we partake in an unworthy manner drink judgment on ourselves. And while this commonly thought be examination for personal sin, if you look at the context, the clear emphasis is on sin that has caused strife or division in the body. People were showing up early and eating to their fill and leaving people who came later with no food. Paul's saying this isn't about you getting your personal fill, if you're hungry vs. 22 just eat at home. This is about celebrating the fact that whether your man or woman, black or white, young or old, we're united as one body in Christ. And so before we come to the table we're to examine our own hearts and see if there is anything we've said or done that has caused any kind of friction, strife, or division in this body and if there is, then we need to make it right before we partake. We're visibly representing what unites us! Don't just close your eyes the whole time, look around the room and see every person with a piece of bread in their hand as a visible reminder of who you're united to through Christ. Celebrate God's grace in the assembly of the redeemed—the same Jesus that got you through your job-loss is the same Jesus that got her through her depression is the same Jesus that got him through his addiction—many people all united in one Jesus. It expresses our unity and next the Lord's Supper is...

- A **proclamation** of the Gospel (1 Cor. 10:26)—should say 11!!!!!!
 - A visible picture of our only hope in life and death.

1 Cor. 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." The Lord's Supper is the Gospel made visible—even the gospel in a sense made edible! And when we take the supper we are portraying to everyone watching our hope of "forgiveness through substitution." We're coming to the Lord's table to go public with our faith hold up the cup and say to world, "What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus!" In my baptism, I showed that I had trusted in Jesus and by taking this supper I am showing that he is still holding me, he is still preserving me, I am still trusting him, He is still my hope and stay! Which is why if I were to ask someone, "When is the last time you took the Lord's Supper" and they say 2-3 years ago, it would make me ask, are you still trusting in Christ? Why aren't you continuing to trust him publicly? That's what we're called to do in the Lord's Supper is go public with our faith.

- A "badge" that sets apart believers from everyone else.

Baptism and the Lord's supper are our team colors that physically set us apart. God gave Israel all kinds of outward physical symbols—from haircuts to special clothing—but in the New Covenant he's narrowed it down two—baptism and the Lord's supper. And as believers we get the privilege of wearing those publicly—representing the winning team. Not least to unbelievers who may be in the gathering. You say, "Well Chase if you just let believers take the supper and there is an unbeliever in the worship gathering, then they may feel a little bit excluded." And if you are that unbeliever I want to say with love in my heart but in no unclear terms, you are currently excluded from the hope we're singing about. "Forgiveness through substitution" is not your story yet. But it can be! And it's that hope, that Gospel, that we're proclaiming to you in the Supper—this Christ—this body and this blood and all of its benefits can be

yours if you will repent of your sin and trust Christ a Christ who came in weakness 2000 years ago but is coming back in glory! (Rev. 19:11-16)

- An anticipation of Christ's return. (Mt. 26:29)
 - "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines." (Isa. 25:6)

In Mt. 26:29 Jesus says, "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus here is talking about the Marriage Supper of the Lamb described in Rev. 19 but pictured long before in Isa 25:6 "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines." And the Lord's supper is a preview of that day. Samples at the mall with Asian food! And in the same way when we come to the Lord's Table we are sampling what we will one day enjoy in full. Bobbie Jamieson says "When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we're not just remembering the past; we're tasting the future." We're saying corporately saying, "Blessed assurance Jesus is mine—oh what a foretaste of glory divine!"

The Lord's Supper. The Eucharist. Holy Communion. A vivid picture of the unity we share in Christ and a celebratory proclamation of our only hope—Forgiveness through substitution.

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—Bobbie Jamieson