



Series: The Person and Purpose
Title: Christ's Meal

Date: January 29, 2023
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1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-29¹
(OT: Ex 12:1-13; NT: Mark 14:12-25)

BEFORE TEXT

- Today, going to talk about LS → Worth noting at start that church can be kinda **confusing**...
 - Use weird **words**: Propitiation, justification, sanctification.
 - Have weird **practices**: Pray → Sing → No assigned seats yet everyone sits same spot.
 - Believe weird **things**: Certainly things that go against what's popular in our culture.
- If you're new to church – or our church:
 - Want you to know we're aware of that – that church can be confusing!
 - Personally try to communicate in a way that isn't too churchy.
 - Hope you'll always feel freedom to ask if something doesn't make sense.
 - Might just find that what was weird at first becomes beautiful in time.
- And for those who've been in church forever – maybe this church your whole life – let's be honest and say we don't always understand *why* we do things we do!
 - Don't want you have vague sense of guilt that should somehow know more than do.
 - Don't want us to be confused when we gather.

Transition: So, let's talk about LS!

- Reached that point in Mark where Jesus gives it to his disciples.
- Something we do as a church nearly every week → We'll do it again in a few moments!
- But what's it all about?!?! Let's read **1 Cor 11:23-29** together.

CONTEXT: The Importance of the Meal

- Striking, isn't it, that Paul wants us to know exactly when first Supper took place.
 - **V23: The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread...**
 - **Few hours:** Friend will betray him with kiss → and then he'll be arrested.
 - **Next day:** He'll be flogged/mocked → denied/tried/crucified.
- **On eve of unimaginable suffering** where your attention be? We'd understand, wouldn't we:
 - If Jesus were distracted...
 - If needed some time alone to prepare...
 - If wanted disciples to encourage/strengthen *him* for all that lay ahead.
- But here he is focusing not on himself → but on us...
 - Do you see his heart for you?
 - In moments he has left, wants to give one last gift.
 - A gift of grace to church he loves.

Transition: What is this gift? What is the nature of LS?

- One way to answer that question is to look at some of the words Bible uses to describe it.
- Our passage gives us three of them...

CONTENT: The Meaning of the Meal

1. The LS is about THANKSGIVING

- **V24: Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it...**
- Greek word here = *eucharist*, which means THANKSGIVING: One of the names given to LS, particularly in Episcopal/Catholic churches → Comes directly from the text.
- Highlights that while sense of solemnity to meal – natural when considering body/blood of Jesus – NOT time of lament but of celebration – *time to give thanks to Jesus*.
 - When we come to eat/drink we come to say thank you.
 - Not in forced way → like child coerced into writing TY Notes!
 - Genuine/heartfelt way, we say: **Thank you, Lord Jesus.**
Thank you for breaking your body on the tree; Thank you for shedding your blood for me. If not done so, I'd be stuck in sin/shame → But you have saved me, and I'm eternally grateful. And now you are with me – walking with me, providing for me – thank you for your love.

Summary: As we eat this meal in a moment → fill your heart/mind with thanks!

2. The LS is about REMEMBERING

- Term used twice in these verses – once for each element:
 - **V24: This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.**
 - **V25: This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**
- What does it mean to remember?²
 - In **WESTERN** thought – way you and I think – “remembering” means *recollecting*: bring to mind something that happened in the past.
 - But in **OT/JEWISH** mindset “remembering” meant more than that.
 - “Remembering” meant to participate here-and-now in those events from the past.
 - Call to remember is call to drag events of past into present/live in light of them.
 - Think of an **anniversary celebration**...
 - Don't merely remember the big day...
 - Enter into the memory → *celebrate past for what it means now/future.*
 - That's what we have in LS:
 - Not merely intellectual recalling.
 - But active **participation** in events of past.
 - Term **participation** actually used to describe LS: **1 Cor 10:16: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?**
 - Not just called to remember historical reality of cross:
 - Called to bring reality into present/participate in it now.
 - Celebrate what it means now/future → live in light of it.
Sit at table with Jesus and remember our love.
 - In **SIMPLER TERMS**, as you take bread/cup: **Enter into what they mean for you.**
 1. Eat/drink and be **ASSURED** of God's love.
 2. Eat/drink and enjoy **PEACE** of conscience with God.
 3. Eat/drink with **JOY** in the Holy Spirit.
 4. Eat/drink and experience his **GRACE**.
 5. Eat/drink and know that you will **PERSEVERE** to the end.

Summary: As you take the bread/cup – fill your heart/mind with remembrance!

3. The LS is a about PROCLAIMING

- **V26:** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you **proclaim** the Lord's death until he comes.
- Proclaim means to state/declare/testify → LS is a proclamation in at least 3 ways:
 1. **The elements themselves.** The BREAD testifies to his broken body, CUP speaks of his spilt blood. *Both sing of the gospel: everything you need is here before you, so come receive Christ in faith.*
 2. **The LS is a proclamation bc it is always accompanied by the preaching of God's Word.** We never separate Word from Sacrament. WHY? *Bc meaning/worth of the elements can't be appreciated without the retelling of gospel.* Bread/cup only find their proper meaning as we hear of body/blood... as Lord's death is proclaimed.
 3. **LS is a proclamation in elements/word → but also in you yourself: you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (V26).** As you take bread/cup you TESTIFY TO THE TRUTH of the gospel. You say: "I believe these things are true → I'm here in this place, eating this meal, bc I believe in Jesus too."

Summary: As you take the bread/cup:

- SEE gospel proclaimed in **elements**.
- HEAR gospel proclaimed in **word**.
- MAKE gospel proclaimed as **you** testify to its truth.

Transition:

- What's the LS about? These 3 things at least: Thanksgiving/Remembering/Proclaiming.
- Before we eat this meal together, let me close by answering some common questions before leaving you with 2 quick encouragements...

CONSEQUENCE: The Eating of the Meal

QUESTIONS

1. Do the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Jesus?³
2. Why do we do communion every week?⁴
3. What do we think about "virtual communion"?⁵
4. Why do we use grape juice?⁶
5. Why do we not come forward for communion?⁷
6. Should you take communion if you're not a Christian?⁸
7. Should children take communion?⁹

2 FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS

1. Examine Yourself

V27: Whoever... eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person **examine himself**, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

- Possible to eat and drink in an **unworthy manner**.

- Serious WORDS with serious CONSEQUENCES...
- Makes us **guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord (V27)**.
- So, we're told to **examine ourselves**.
 - Not examine each other → not an opportunity to point the finger!
 - We're not to judge/accuse → we're to look at ourselves.
- ASK: Am I coming in a worthy manner?
 - How do you know?!
 - It's a little unnerving, right???
 - It's very important I do this, but I'm not exactly sure how!!!
 - Important to demystify question → *We do that by connecting to all that's come before*.
 - Purpose of meal is to give thanks/remember/proclaim.
 - You come unworthily if you come without doing those things!
 - You come unworthily if you come **without THANKSGIVING**
 - You come unworthily if you come **without REMEMBRANCE**.
 - You come unworthily if you come **without PROCLAMATION**.
 - It's the nature of the Supper that tells us how to come.
- So, examine yourself...
 - Am I just going through the motions, thoughtless, blasé?
 - OR: Am I **giving thanks** to Christ? Am I **remembering** the Son? Am I **proclaiming** his death until he comes?

2. Having examined yourself... you must COME.

- It's wrong to come thoughtlessly but it's also wrong not to come.
- We see this too often → Xns who feel they shouldn't come:
 - Guilt over recent mistakes/sin...
 - Shame over events that have happened in their lifetime...
- To broken sinners, Jesus says: **Do this...** (V24) and again **Do this...** (V25).
 - LS is not optional activity → We're commanded to come.
 - In the midst of sin/brokenness where else are you meant to turn?
Never let your sin keep you from your Savior.

CONCLUSION

- **John Duncan** was Scottish pastor back in 1800s → ministered in denomination I grew up in.
 - Story told of young woman who sat weeping as LS served in his church → bitter tears of guilt/shame over person she was/things she had done.
 - When bread/cup came to her, she let them pass her by → fearing she would be eating/drinking unworthily.
 - Watching the scene unfold, John Duncan made his way over to her, set the elements in her hands, and said, "*Take it, Lass! It's for sinners.*"¹⁰
- This meal is for those in need of grace → SO COME!
Give thanks, remember, proclaim...

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- John Mark Comer, *Gospel of Mark*.
- William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*.
- Tim Keller, *The Decline and Renewal of the American Church*.
- Tim Keller, *Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*.
- Donald MacLeod, *Christ Crucified: Understanding the Atonement*.
- Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*.
- Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*.
- Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*.
- N. T. Wright, *How God Became King*.

Endnotes

¹ This sermon draws heavily from Donald MacLeod, *A Faith to Live By*, 253-266.

² This section is based on Dustin Crowe, *What Does It Mean to Remember Jesus in the Lord's Supper?*, accessed [here](#) 1/28/23.

³ No – but something happens! Jesus meets with us by faith.

⁴ There's freedom over question of frequency – different churches do different things. Since the New Testament church seems to have administered communion whenever they got together (see Acts 2:46), we prefer to do it nearly every week.

⁵ The proper context for communion is the gathered church: the phrase **When you come together** used 5x in **1 Cor 11** (17b, 18b, 20, 33, 34). Our denomination sanctioned virtual communion during COVID but has since stated that it is no longer permissible. So, come! For shut ins, we'll come to you!

⁶ It is not a sin to drink alcohol. Some churches do in communion and there's nothing wrong with that. Since some people have struggles with alcohol, our practice has been to use grape juice so as not to be a stumbling block to them.

⁷ Different ways of serving emphasize different aspects of the meal. For example, coming forward emphasizes proclamation, while eating together as a family emphasizes communion. Our church has had different practices throughout our long history. Happy with our current practice for now.

⁸ No – Bible says it is only for Christians. Which also makes sense – if the meal is about thanksgiving, remembering, and proclaiming the gospel, it would be weird for an unbeliever to take it.

⁹ Goes back to the question of faith. Age is not determinative, faith is. In our church, we encourage our kids to complete the Communicant's class before taking Communion where they

will have the opportunity to better understand their faith and have opportunity to make public profession as members of the church. That was my own practice in our family. We have chosen 6th grade as the minimum age for the class but realize that other churches may make different decisions. Therefore, if a child has previously taken Communion at another church, we would allow them to continue taking Communion here to not create confusion for them or a stumbling block to their faith.

¹⁰ There are various versions of this story to be found online. [Here](#) is one example.