

Introduction: Millions of people around the world will partake of the bread and cup of communion this morning. It is a privilege Jesus invites all who follow him to enjoy. Just as some of the greatest and most intimate moments of our lives are experienced gathered around a table for a meal, so the same is true for Christians when we gather around the table of Christ.

“The Table of Christ”
Luke 22:1-30

Trans: And for a practice that some churches observe weekly, we should ask ourselves if we truly understand the significance and depth that the Lord’s Supper provides. This morning in the Gospel of Luke, we are going to see a picture of what it means to experience all of the privileges of having a seat at the table of Christ. But before we’re introduced to Christ’s table, we first read, once again, of Christ’s rejection...

Read 1-2:

- We have now reached the climax of Luke’s gospel with the week of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.
- We know the religious leaders have been trying to take Jesus out, but the question is: How will they get to Jesus? The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees have all taken their turn at but to no avail.

Read 3-6

- With a major twist in the gospel, we find that Jesus will be handed over through betrayal from the inside...one who walked with Christ, heard his teaching, seen his miracles, known his love!
- It’s one thing to be brought down by an enemy, but it is unthinkable to be betrayed by a friend. We also see this is part of a larger cosmic battle... Satan has been trying to destroy Jesus since his birth in chapter 2 and his temptations in chapter 4, and now it appears that Satan has orchestrated what will lead to a fatal blow.

Trans: But while the religious leaders and Judas were working out their plan of destruction, verse 7 shows us there are *two plans* at work. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and is working out his plan of salvation. Listen carefully to vv. 7-20.

These final moments Jesus spent with his disciples were momentous for them, and they are momentous for us. We are going to focus this morning on the significance of this meal Christ instituted we call the Lord’s Supper, or Communion, or the Eucharist. These are synonymous terms, and we will cover the significance of each as we work our way through the text. What does it mean to share in the Lord’s Supper? The first thing we need to do is . . .

I. Understand the Lord’s Supper Depicts the Drama of the Gospel.

In verse 15, Jesus says: “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Why?

The Passover

- The Passover was a great time of celebration for Israel as they remembered their birth as a nation when God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt. He did so by sending ten plagues on Egypt. The last and greatest plague was the plague of death on all of Egypt’s firstborn children. On the night God sent this plague, the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice a goat and place the blood over the doorway of their home, that death might Passover their homes and spare their children.
- The Passover and subsequent exodus into the Promised Land provided a foretaste of the greater and permanent redemption to come.

Trans: Jesus was so eager to share in this meal before he suffered, because in his suffering he would demonstrate that he is the true and better Passover lamb.

Jesus is the True Passover Lamb

- This meal symbolizes his great sacrifice on the cross. This is why we can say that the Lord’s Supper depicts the drama of the gospel. It retells the story of what Christ did for us and how the Passover was fulfilled in him.
- John the Baptist said in **John 1:29 “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”**
- Jesus answers once and for all how our sin can be dealt with before a holy God! All who look in faith to the blood of Jesus are spared from the judgment of God and the death we deserve, just like the children of Israel on the night of the Passover.
- The elements of bread and the fruit of the vine graphically portray the redemption that is found through the suffering of Jesus. This is why Acts 2:42 calls the Lord’s Supper, “The Breaking of Bread,” because his body was broken for us. Jesus’ flesh was torn as he was flogged with a whip and as three nails pierced his hands and feet.

- His body was broken *for us*, and the cup, representative of Christ's blood was "poured out *for us*." He died in our place. Substitutionary atonement is the heart of the gospel.
- PLACEMENT: So, let's be clear: the Lord's Supper is for all who receive the work of Christ's atoning death. When we observe communion as a church, we invite all who call Jesus Lord and follow him. We do not limit it to those who are official members of our church, but we do limit it, as Jesus does, to those who receive his work for us on the cross.
- You say, "Well, that's exclusive!" To which I would say, "Who would really want to identify with Christ through the Lord's Supper, if they have not confessed him as the Lord of their life?"

Jesus Brings the New Covenant

- Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the OT promises and he ushered in a new and better covenant.
- The new covenant is foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34: "**Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**" (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

In order for us to partake of the Lord's Supper rightly, we must understand how it tells the story of the gospel! #2...

II. Be Motivated by the Gospel when you Partake of the Lord's Supper.

- The Lord's Supper is packed with meaning. It holds so much potency for strengthening our faith that NT scholar Jonathan Pennington compares the Lord's Supper to someone striking hot metal with a rod of iron. When that happens, many sparks fly! Each aspect of communion is like a spark designed to illuminate and invigorate our faith.
- How does the gospel motivate our participation in Christ's table? We see the primary command Jesus gives in verse 19: "Do this in remembrance of me."

We remember Christ's sacrifice (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

- When Jesus says, "This is my body," we understand him to be speaking symbolically and metaphorically, not literally. In other words, the bread and the cup point to a more significant reality, the body and blood of Christ."
- This is where our understanding differs drastically from the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation, which holds that the physical elements of bread and wine are miraculously changed, at the level of their substance, into the body and blood of Jesus.
- Why do I bring this up? Roughly 77% of our city would identify, to one degree or another, with the Catholic Church. So it's important to understand the differences, not to mention, people ask all the time...
- Do we really think the disciples thought for a split-second, when Jesus said "This is my body," that the essence of the bread he was holding, transformed into his physical body? After all, he is the one who said "I am the light of the world; I am the door; I am the vine." They knew these were all metaphors for a deeper spiritual reality.
- What is more serious is the view that Christ is sacrificed in the mass again and again and again and again.
- **The Council of Trent** declared: "**The Mass may be properly offered according to apostolic tradition for the sins, punishments, satisfaction, and other necessities of the faithful on earth, as well as for those who have died in Christ and are not yet wholly cleansed.**"
- Now, what's the problem with that?
- "**And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.**" (Hebrews 9:27)
- "**He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.**" (Hebrews 7:27)
- "**And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**" (Hebrews 10:10-14)
- "**It is finished.**" (John 19:30)
- App: So when we come to the table, we remember Christ's once for all, perfectly sufficient, sacrifice for our sin.

- Now I realize we often suffer from spiritual amnesia, so I hope you would agree that we cannot recall this enough. And why is that? Because meditating on the love of God compels our love back to God and our love for one another. Pretty good reason if you ask me, but there is much more.

We participate with Christ (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? (1 Corinthians 10:16)**
- We identify with him. We show we are one with him. We commune with Christ in communion.
- Just like we receive Christ by faith initially, so we continue to feast on him daily by faith through receiving his word, and so we renew our fellowship with him by faith as we partake of communion.
- We meet Christ in communion because he has invited us to come to experience again the glories of the cross and in doing so our faith is strengthened. This is a healthy spiritual exercise that is designed to build us up!
- This helps us understand that this more than simply a symbol. When we partake, we are built up spiritually, edified.

We participate with one another (1 Cor. 10:17).

- To participate with Christ is to necessarily participate with Christ’s people. This is a family meal. Christ has not simply saved me. He has brought salvation to many, and the many come together to celebrate what he has done for *all* of us.
- We never see the Lord’s Supper being observed in isolation or outside of the local church in the NT.
- **“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:17)**
- Just as the Passover celebrated God’s covenant with his people Israel, so the Lord’s Supper celebrates God’s new covenant with his people, the church. Devotions, nope. Small groups, nope.
- So as we participate with Christ, our shared commitment to him deepens our bonds to one another. This is why the dialogue in vv. 24-28 follows. A failure to count others more significant is a failure to grasp the gospel.

We proclaim the gospel (1 Cor. 11:26).

- **“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).**
- The ordinances are means of publicly professing our faith in Christ. When we open the Word, we preach the gospel to the ear. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we proclaim the gospel to the eye. We see a representation of Christ’s work.
- When someone asks why you were baptized and why you participate in the Lord’s Supper. The simple answer is: “Because of who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he has asked me to do.”
- Every time I walk down the aisle, I am saying to the world: Christ has died and Christ is risen, and Christ will come again, and this reality has literally changed every yoctogram of my life.

Trans: All of this happens when we partake of the Lord’s Supper. So . . . by all means, we must

III. Partake of the Lord’s Supper in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel.

How should we partake? In what spirit?

With humility

- The sacrifice of Christ humbles us because we understand it is so undeserved. The Son of God would shed his blood for me?? So we should partake of communion in a manner consonant with the cross of Christ. That’s why Paul instructs the Corinthians to examine themselves and reflect the gospel in (1 Cor. 11:20-22; 27-29)
- Each time we should examine our lives, confess our sin, and practice repentance. The frequent participation in the Lord’s Supper should serve as a great catalyst to holy living. Christ died for my sin. How can I live in it any longer?
- We should not only come with humility, we should also be filled

With gratitude.

- “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word that translates the action of Christ when he took the break and “gave thanks.” (Luke 22:19)
- In like manner, when we come to the table, we thank God for the sacrifice of Christ. How could we look at the cross and not be moved with deep gratitude and praise!

- That is why we should also partake . . .

With delight

- The gospel should move our affections. There is joy in our fellowship with Christ. [Some of Jesus' last words to his disciples are found in John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:11)]
- So what does this mean for us today? It's okay to be sober-minded and reflective when we partake of the Lord's Supper, but it is also okay to have a smile on your face and great joy in your heart, because we have every reason to celebrate what he has done.
- Do you love the gospel? Do you find great delight in what Christ has done for us? Then the same should be true when we partake of communion. I have to admit. The churches I grew up in observed communion quarterly. Four times a year. In my humble estimation, that is not enough! Why? We want more of what we love. Plain and simple! In fact, we are praying about upping our frequency as a church.
- So we partake with humility, gratitude, delight, and great . . .

With hope.

- He mentions the kingdom of God four times, twice here and twice more in verses 29-30.
- In this forward-looking dynamic of the Christ's death, we hear the ring of victory and triumph.
- Jesus says there is a meal to come... (Luke 22:16 & 18), the Wedding Feast of the Lamb where we will sit down with Christ and dine with him in the kingdom of God. (Rev. 19:6ff)

Conclusion: So let's review: **In partaking of the Lord's Supper, we . . .**

- 1) **Remember Christ's Death.**
- 2) **Proclaim the Gospel.**
- 3) **Share in our Fellowship with Christ and one Another**
- 4) **Have our Faith Strengthened**
- 5) **Pursue Holiness**
- 6) **Express Gratitude**
- 7) **Joyfully Anticipate His Return**

What is our response? Simple. **The Point: Come to Christ's table with your heart full of the gospel.**

I want to invite you to . . . Come to Christ *and* Come to His Table.