

The Lord's Table

by Duane Troyer

This sermon delves into the significance of communion, exploring the what, how, when, where, who, and why of partaking in the Lord's Supper. It emphasizes the importance of examining ourselves, judging rightly within the congregation, and the balance between grace and holiness in communion practices.

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Description

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Transcript

Greetings in Jesus name. I too am thankful for the ability to gather out here under the sunshine amongst the sound of the birds and the grazing sheep and all the, or the many good things from the Lord. A few weeks ago one of the brothers requested or suggested that we need a teaching on communion and what it is and why we do it the way we do it.

And so I've been thinking about that for the last several weeks and I'd like to give a teaching on that today. I have a lot of notes but I'll try to get through them in a timely way. I'm going to read here in 1 Corinthians 10 to start with, starting in verse 16.

Let me start in verse 14. It says, Therefore my beloved flee from idolatry. I speak to wise men.

You judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless? Walter, does this sound right? Does it sound good? Okay. It's fine with me.

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body. For we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation of Israel.

Are not those who eat the sacrifice as sharers in the altar? What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they

sacrifice to demons and not to God. And I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we not stronger than he? We are not stronger than he, are we? I'll stop right there. That little passage is somewhat of an outline.

I would like to talk about the what, and the how, and the when, and the where, and the who, and the why. Hopefully the why has just kind of come through the whole thing. I learned this saying when I was young that said, I keep six honest serving men.

They taught me all I knew. Their names are what, and why, and when, and how, and where, and who. But often the biggest question of them all is like why? Sometimes we can answer all the others, and if we don't have the why, and I don't have a large part of this message designated to why, but I hope it, I hope it comes through from the beginning to the end.

And this little passage outlines it. Like he says, he says there in verse 16, is not the cup of blessing which we share in the blood of Christ, is not the bread which we break a sharing, or some, that I think the King James translation uses communion, some use fellowship for the word sharing here, which we break the communion in the body of Christ. And so, and so let me just start with saying that communion is a word that we often use for this, for this thing which might otherwise be called the Eucharist, or the word Eucharist means Thanksgiving, or the Lord's Supper, or the bread and the wine, or the bread and the cup, or the, the, the scriptural, in scriptures the word communion is, is the word koinonia, which is, which more often gets translated as fellowship than communion.

Sometimes it gets translated as communion, and sometimes in fellowship. And so just, just kind of bear that in mind, like communion and fellowship, scripturally speaking, is the same word, is the common sharing, or, or partnership, or participation. I think the word communion is derived from two words that mean common union.

But I feel like in our, by our day, or at least in our circles, like the two, the two words communion and fellowship have taken on a slightly different meaning. They're, they're very close, but they're, like if, if someone says I long for fellowship, at least I, and I think probably most of us would get the impression that this guy longs for, longs for, for daily, or at least close to daily, or weekly, or whatever, interaction with people, like fleshing out life together, working with each other, eating meals with each other, having activities with each other, ministering, praying, all these things with each other. That's, that's usually the impression I get when somebody says they long for fellowship.

When somebody says they long for communion, the impression I get, usually, is that they, they are saying they desire to participate in, in, in the ritual, or sacrament, that is called the Lord's Supper, or, or the Eucharist, or, or we call it communion. I don't think it's wrong that we use that word. I just think when we read Scripture, especially, we have to keep in mind that, that the Scriptural writers who wrote in Greek used the word koinonia, whenever we read the word communion, which, which is only in Scripture a few times.

But, but what I want to talk about today is, is what we would call communion. It's, it's that thing that Jesus instituted when he kept that last Passover with his disciples. The, the subject of, of, of the more broader term of fellowship is, is another subject in itself, and it's not, it's not separate from this, but it's just, I, I

specifically want to talk about this other thing that the Lord instituted.

So, let's, let's take a look at what happened there. I'm, all four, all four Gospels give an account of this. I'm going to read mostly out of the one in Luke, in chapter 22, and I might, I might, I'll, I'll try to add some of the things that the other Gospels write that Luke doesn't write, and I'm mostly, I'm, I'm not going to talk about the whole event from the beginning of the Last Supper to the, till, till out into the Garden, but, but this, this little portion between Jesus told his disciples, I want you to go prepare the Passover to the time when they went out and walked out toward the Garden.

Chapter 22, Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put him to death, for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas, who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him. And they were glad to agree to give him money. So he consented and began seeking for a good opportunity to betray him to them apart from the crowd.

Then came the first day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it. And they said to him, Where do you want us to prepare it? And he said to them, When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water.

Follow him into the house that he enters, and you shall say to the owner of the house, The teacher says to you, Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large furnished upper room. Prepare it there. And they left and found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him. And he said, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, by the way, if you read the other Gospels, I can't quite figure it out. Some of them make it sound like... So I'm pretty sure they ate a full Passover meal. They had lamb, I think, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and whatever else was in this meal.

Some of the Gospels make it sound like while they were eating this meal, he got up and did this thing with the bread and the cup. Some of it make it sound like after the meal. After the meal was done, he did this thing here.

Take this. And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he said, take this and share it among yourselves. For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.

And when he had taken some bread and given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

But behold, the hand of the one betraying me is with mine on the table, for indeed the Son of Man is going as it has been determined. But woe to that man by which he is betrayed. And they began to discuss

among themselves which one of it might be who is going to do this thing.

Somewhere in there, and I also can't determine for sure, according to John's Gospel, he washed their feet. Kind of sounds like it was after supper, but it could almost sound like it was before he broke the bread. But I don't think that's all that significant.

Except I think there is some significance in that there was something that Jesus did with the bread and the cup that was different from the meal. And I might get to some of that later. And so there was foot washing.

And there was other teachings. They had this teaching about who's the greatest in the kingdom. If you read John's Gospel, while they were there, before they went out to the Mount of Olives or the Garden of Gethsemane, there is John about all the teachings from John 13 verse 21 to the end of John 17.

All happened there in the upper room. There's the teaching about the vine and the branches and the fruit of it and the abiding in him and the promise of the Holy Spirit. And there's the teaching, the whole prayer of John 17 of how people should be one like he and the father.

That's all in there in the upper room. They also sang a hymn according to several of the Gospels. And then they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And so here was this annual meeting of the Passover, a Jewish holiday, perhaps the greatest of Jewish holidays. It was the Passover, the first Passover, which was back there in Egypt when the Jews were delivered from the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians. This is like a pivotal event in the Jewish history.

And so it stands to reason that the holiday they kept every year, the celebration, commemoration that they kept every year was like the pinnacle of feasts or the greatest of feasts that they kept. And so here was Jesus. I'm pretty sure you're pretty familiar with the Passover, but they had instructions how to do this.

They took a lamb, a spotless lamb, no blemishes of the first year. They slew it. They caught the blood.

They put the blood on the doorpost and around the doorjamb. They ate the lamb, its head, its legs, its entrails with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. And they were supposed to have their shoes on their feet and their staff in their hand.

They were supposed to be ready for a sudden departure. And all these things that there was, they were supposed to purge their entire dwellings of any kind of leaven. It was not only not supposed to be in the bread they eat, it wasn't supposed to be in their houses.

They were supposed to totally get rid of it. And even in the feast afterwards, like it was a seven day feast, and for that seven days, no leaven was supposed to be in their houses. They had to get it out.

They could bring it back in after the seven days, but they had to get it out for that commemoration. And so that's a few things about the Passover. So here was this Passover feast was coming up.

And Jesus wanted to keep this feast one last time before he died. And he wanted to do it with these twelve disciples. These were his most intimate companions.

They were the ones that for three years he had been fleshing out life with. There was intense partnering. There was intense discipling, common sharing, and fellowship that they had day in and day out.

And now they're eating this Passover, and either while they were eating the meal or right after, he takes this bread and says, take and eat this. This is my body. He says, this is my body which is given for you.

And one of the gospels says, he says, do this in remembrance of me. And he took the cup and he said, drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

I think the disciples had to make a connection with the words that Jesus used, with what Jesus had said earlier sometime. I don't know how much earlier, somewhere in those three years, but I don't know where in the ministry, but the things that are recorded in John 6 where Jesus said, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no part in me. And this was such a hard saying that many people left him, but these twelve stuck it out.

Like, where else can we go? There's no other place to go, and they stuck it out. Now Jesus used this very, very similar language, and I think they must have been able to draw some kind of connection to that. I've heard, though I haven't been able or I haven't spent a lot of time to research this, but the little bit I've done I haven't found much, but somebody once told me, I think it was Brother Buddy once told me, that it would have been a common practice when they kept the Passover and they passed bread to each other to say, do this in remembrance of the Lamb.

They were together to remember the first Passover and the deliverance out of Egypt, slavery, bondage into the land flowing with milk and honey. So they were remembering this and they gave this bread around and said, do this in remembrance of the Lamb. And now Jesus gets up and he passes this bread to his disciples and he says, do this in remembrance of me.

If that's true, I think that's powerful. I think it would have like sunk real deep into the disciples. It's a big statement.

Jesus is the Passover Lamb. He is the one who liberates us from slavery. For the Jews in Egypt, it was the death of a spotless Lamb of the first year that was slain that saved the firstborn from death.

That is what Jesus is. Through his death we have the hope of eternal life. Death has been swallowed up in victory.

For the Jew, without this Lamb, it would have meant certain death for every firstborn among man and animals. It would have meant certain death. But with the Lamb it turned into victory.

Not only were they saved from death, they were delivered from this land of bondage and into a land flowing with milk and honey. The disciples got this for sure. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians about Jesus being the Passover.

In 1 Corinthians 5 verses 6-8 he says, Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, so that you may be a new leaven, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ, our Passover, also has been sacrificed.

Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. So now let's look a little bit about kind of the how and the when and the where. They're all kind of tied together a little bit.

We start getting these glimpses throughout the New Testament about how the disciples observed this. I think it's pretty clear that the Passover that the Jews kept, they kept annually. That celebration they kept annually.

But this thing we call communion is not just like an exact carryover from the Jewish Passover. And now the Christians do this thing. Let's read 1 Corinthians 11.

In verse 23 I'll start. It says, For I received from the Lord. This is Paul writing.

Paul was not one of the twelve, right? He was not there at the Passover. But this is what he says. For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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 he took the cup also after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat the bread and drink the cup. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you sleep.

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, so that we will not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

And if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come. Again here, there seems to be, we would have to read a large portion of Corinthians to get all this, but there was a lot of disorderly going on in the Corinthian church.

And Paul was trying to set things straight. It seems like they were having a meal. They were having a meal together, but there was some kind of disorderliness.

And the people were coming there for this, for to fill themselves up. And by doing that, it appears almost like maybe some people got their bellies full, and there was not enough left for the others. And he says, this is not okay.

If you guys are hungry, eat at home. I have received from the Lord that this is what you should do when you come together. That you take this bread and this cup, and you prefer one another, and you wait on one another.

The reason I think it's significant, some of these hints and clues that we have is of this cup and this wine being something separate from a meal, because there are people, there are groups, there have been down through the ages, there have been people who have concluded that the communal meal is simply eating, eating with each other. Like when we eat with each other, we're communing with each other. There

is some sense in which it is true when we're eating with other people that we're fellowshiping with.

There is some kind of sharing there. We're sharing a meal together, but there is something separate here. I think there is something other than an ordinary meal.

He says here that as often as we do this, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. We're not necessarily proclaiming the Lord's death every time we eat a meal, breakfast, lunch, a supper, whenever we eat that with other people, that's not necessarily what we're doing. This here is something separate.

This is something different from that. I think the people that have come to the conclusion that that's what communion is, is just eating meals with each other, I think they're off. I think they err.

I don't think that's what it means. How often? Like I said, this Passover lamb was an annual thing, once a year. I think for that reason, down through the ages, some groups have come to the conclusion that it should be once a year.

Some people have stepped it up a notch to have it twice a year, just to make it more often, or some people do it monthly. We here do it weekly. We take every first day of the week.

If there's nothing amongst us that is not peaceful, we take this every week. I'll try to explain why I think we have that preference. Though I will admit that from Scripture alone, I don't think that I can't make a clear-cut case for this.

I think the local church, the local congregation, at least has some liberty to decide those things, but I think we have clues, and I think we ought to try to follow the patterns that we do have good examples from in the early church and the apostles. There's clues that we have that they got together the first day of the week to do this. One of them is in Acts 20, verse 7. It says, On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began speaking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

Now, I know that could be read in different ways. Though I think there's a clue there that says, On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread. I think that's a clue.

I think that's a clue of a practice that they had. I know you could read this to say, On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking. As if it was, we were together that day, and once we were all together to break bread, Paul began this talking.

Even the breaking bread, I think that's a term that doesn't, I may be wrong about this, but I don't think it always means this Lord's Supper thing. I think that term sometimes got used for just common meals. Again, I'm not sure.

Like in Acts 2, where they had this intense fellowshiping with each other, that the church was young, the disciples were preaching, the people were coming to Jerusalem, they were sharing all things common, they were going from house to house, it says, breaking bread daily. Either it was saying they were just sharing their meals with each other, which is what I think it's saying, or they were taking the Lord's Supper on a daily basis. So anyway, I think there's a clue there in that verse in Acts 20, verse 7, but it's kind of hard to make a case as a stand-alone verse.

We get into the early church writers, and the very early church writers, and we start seeing this. They had this common practice. When possible, when severe persecution didn't prevent this, when they were able, like they'd get together the first day of the week, it's when they came together to break bread, to commemorate the Lord's death, to lay in alms, whatever the Lord had provided for the week, we start seeing that in the early church, really early on.

I'll read a few things out of the Didache. On the Lord's own day, this is the 14th article, on the Lord's own day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks, but confess your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. However, no one quarreling with his brother may join your meeting until they are reconciled.

Your sacrifice must not be defiled. For here, we have the saying of the Lord, in every place and time, offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a mighty king, says the Lord, and my name spreads terror among nations. In article 9, it says, regarding the Eucharist, give thanks as follows.

First, concerning the cup, we give thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David, thy servant, which thou hast made known to us through thy servant. To thee be the glory forever. Next, concerning the broken bread, we give thanks to thee, O Father, for the life and knowledge which thou hast made known to us through Jesus, thy servant.

To thee be glory forever. As this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and then when gathered became one mass, so may the church be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forevermore. Let no one eat and drink of your Eucharist, but those baptized in the name of the Lord.

To this, too, the saying of the Lord is applicable. Do not give the dogs what is sacred. So because of these things, I think, because of these clues, because of the pattern that we see early on in the church, I personally, though I have to call it a strong preference, not a clear command from the Lord like we desire to take it often, weekly, the first day of the week.

By the way, I have no desire in trying to, I have no desire in trying to tell you, when I want to talk about what communion is, I have no desire to talk about whether it's transubstantiation, consubstantiation, receptionism, memorialism, all the terms that get used. I just think these words aren't in Scripture, and like all the things that are at least to some extent a mystery from the Lord, I would just so much rather prefer to just take the words as they're recorded and believe them with a childlike faith. One of my favorite quotes is from Conrad Grebel.

He said, I believe the word without a complicated interpretation, and from that belief I speak. If Jesus said, take, eat, this is my body, and take and drink, this is my cup, or this is my blood, I have no problem believing that. Where else should I go? If one of them says, you're doing this in remembrance of me, I have no problem with that.

And I'm not saying there's no importance in any of this, I'm just saying that I would prefer, I just want to stay away from the word without a complicated interpretation. What's Paul say? The endless words and arguments that cause strife. I think people are prone to be either very super mystical or very super logical, and that's why some of this bickering kind of thing happens.

For some, it's approached by such a mystical approach that it errs on the side of superstition, and for some, such a hard logical approach that it errs on the side of just cold, logical, mathematical exactness. I

think the truth is somewhere in between there. In the 1500s, when the Anabaptists rose up and the Catholics were, the whole Catholic Church was a superstitious bunch, and they believed and taught as doctrine that when this bread is blessed, that it is the body and the flesh of Christ.

They taught it to such an extent that the individual couldn't touch it. The priest had to put it in the person's mouth. It was too holy, too sacred for a man to touch it.

They did this practice where they would take this bread and they would bless it, and now that it's blessed and it's become the actual flesh of Christ, people would bow to it, and they would put it on a thing, and they'd walk down the streets, and people would bow to it. This was one of the ways they hunted heretics. They had guys watching, and whoever didn't bow to this was likely a heretic, and they'd catch them and question them and examine them.

Because of how far out superstitious people can get, there's no wonder that the Anabaptists, in refuting and countering that, wrote some things that I would sometimes think err on the other side of just making it sound like it is merely symbolic. I totally believe it's symbolic. I look at the words of Jesus, and I just don't want to stand here and say it is merely symbolic.

I'd rather just receive these words the way the disciples said when he said this thing that turned others away, and they said, we have nothing to say against you. There's no other place to go. Now, I want to get into the who, and this is the difficult one.

This particular aspect of communion is deeply intertwined with what we believe about so many other things. It is intertwined with what we think communion is, which we're discussing today. It is deeply intertwined with what we think the church is, which is a subject in itself, with what we think it means to be a Christian, which could be another sermon.

It is totally and very much affected by our view of denominationalism within the church. It is totally and very much what we believe about church, secondary church membership, and a whole host of things. Should we decide and judge who can eat at the Lord's table? Think about that for a little bit.

This is the Lord's table. Can we judge that? Can we decide and have a say in who eats there? That's a huge thing. It's a hard thing.

It causes much fear and trembling. I feel like people look for an easy way out of this, because it is such a hard thing. You have a thing called open communion, and you have a thing called closed communion.

Open communion is that thing where it is open to whoever wants to come and partake of it. Whoever says they are right with God and feels right about it can come and partake of this Lord's table. That would be the one easy way out of making any judgments.

The closed communion is another easy way out, and we decide that our communion is only for those who want to eat at the Lord's table. If we have a local congregation, it's those in our local congregation. Possibly some exceptions to maybe a visiting preacher from another denomination.

There's various degrees to how those things work out, but the idea that it is only for those who we are in intense fellowship with all the time. By saying that, people are usually not saying that, at least with their mouth, they are usually not saying that, oh, we're not saying there's no other Christians. These are just the ones that we'll take communion with.

Some very cultic groups might say, these are the only ones. It's found here and nowhere else. But that couldn't be said of a lot of people who practice what I would describe as closed communion.

We've rejected those conclusions. We've rejected the ideas of denominational lines. We've rejected the idea of secondary church membership.

We believe that the Lord's table should be open to all those of the Lord, and closed to all those who aren't. That principle ought to guide us through the decisions that we have to make. Jesus taught, like in John 10, he taught things like, my sheep hear my voice, and I have other sheep, and I'll bring them in, and there'll be one fold and one shepherd.

He doesn't intend there to just be a whole bunch of different folds who can do things, who can decide these things for themselves, but he wants his people to be one fold under one shepherd. Jesus taught things like, if we reject one of these little ones, we've rejected him. That's very serious.

He says, whatever we've done to the least of these, my brethren, we've done it to him. The Didache says, anyone coming in the name of the Lord must be welcomed, but after that, test him and find out. You will use your discretion, either for him or against him.

So it should be with much fear and trembling that we forbid someone from participating in the Lord's table. At the same time, we have other instructions and other scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 5, it says, for I, on my part, though absent in the body but present in the spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this as though I were present.

In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled and I with you in the spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened.

For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast not with old leaven nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people.

I did not mean at all with the immoral people of this world, with covetous and swindlers or idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother, if he is an immoral person or covetous or an idolater or reviler or a drunkard or a swindler, not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside God judges.

Remove the wicked man from among yourselves. He talks about leaven, leavening a whole lump. Remember what I said about the Passover and how they were, to celebrate this thing, they were supposed to totally purge their dwellings and their whole, I do not know about their whole land, maybe, at least their dwellings were supposed to be totally purged of any leaven.

I think there is a strong type there. In 1 Corinthians 10.21 he says, You cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons.

Paul says in, maybe somewhere in 2 Corinthians, I believe, where he talks about, Have no koinonia with the unfruitful works of darkness. No fellowship, no communion, have no common sharing, no participation, no partnership with the unfruitful works of darkness. In the book of Jude, Jude is giving the church a stern and a strong admonition.

He says, There are men who have crept in, and they are ungodly men, and here is what they do. They are spots in your love feast, while they feast with you without fear. And so, when we have ungodly people participating in communion, it pollutes it, it blemishes it, it spots, it makes it worse.

It spots and blemishes in our love feasts. The Didache says, Let no one eat and drink of the Eucharist but those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. To this too the saying of the Lord is applied.

Do not give what is holy to the dogs. That comes from that passage in Matthew, where Jesus said, Cast not your pearls before swine, and don't give what is holy to the dogs, lest they turn themselves and rend you. And I think that is, over the years I've thought a lot about that passage, and I really think that is what he is talking about.

He's not talking about, Don't speak a word of God to a man to an ungodly man. Okay, so sometimes you're maybe trying to share the gospel with somebody and he just gets angry at you. And maybe it's a good idea to just use some wisdom and think, Well, now's not a good time.

But that is not what he's talking about when he says, Don't cast your pearls before swine. I don't think. And the clue is in that he says, Lest they turn and rend you.

How do we get rendered when we give something to somebody? Is it not when we baptize people who ought not be baptized? Is it not when we give and partake or participate in the Lord's table with those who are dogs, who are swine, and we bring them in to the benefits of the church? And those people, once they're within, they start rending the thing apart. It might have some broader applications. A lot of the things that Jesus said was this broad stroke of an application that is an absolute universal truth.

I think that principle that he gave has a broader application than what I just said, but I think this one is for sure in it. And so it should be with fear and trembling that we invite someone, just like it should be with fear and trembling that we forbid someone from partaking in the Lord's table. It should be with fear and trembling that we invite someone to partake in the Lord's table.

And though it may sound controlling, like we have been given this grave and solemn charge to guard the Lord's table, that these ungodly people that want to creep in cannot defile and pollute this. We've been given that charge. It's great.

It's severe. It makes me fear. There's another category of people that should not take communion that I would not necessarily entirely classify as ungodly and not in the faith.

And that is a brother who has a quarrel against another. Things come up with people within the fold. There's whatever.

It starts with an ill feeling, a misunderstanding. It starts with an assumption. It starts with whatever.

And there's this thing that happens, and all of a sudden it escalates to a quarrel. There is a level in which that person is out from underneath the Lord at the time, and yet I don't necessarily think he's this ungodly

man like I was describing earlier. And yet, until that gets resolved and until that thing has been made right, that person also defiles the Lord's table.

Jesus said in Matthew, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. The Didache says, when you assemble to break bread, no one quarreling with his brother may join your meeting until they are reconciled.

Your sacrifice must not be defiled. The question comes up, but are we not instructed to just examine ourselves? Very true. Corinthians says that a man must examine himself, and he must not take of this in an unworthy manner.

But that instruction, to examine ourselves and not take this in an unworthy manner, does not conflict, but rather harmonizes with the instruction that we have to judge what is within. It does not conflict, but it harmonizes with the responsibility to purge out the old leaven. You know, if we think back about that last Passover that Jesus kept with his disciples, we could make a case for the closed communion idea.

We could say, well, Jesus had other people who received him and believed him. There were a number. It had dwindled over this time, but there were quite a few women.

There were quite a few people, and yet he desired to just keep this with his 12 most loyal, that the people he had really, really shared a true koinonia with over the last three years, like with those 12, he wanted to keep this Passover. So we could make a case for it. But you know what? We could also make a case for open communion, because he participated with Judas, and he knew that he was a betrayer.

Like, of the worst of all people in the world, like of that man, it was said, it would be better if he wasn't even born. Jesus supped with him. I don't think, you can share what you think about this, but I don't think we can make a case for either one out of that instance.

I think Jesus was instituting something new. He was giving his, like he did often when he told his disciples many things, when they were just those 12, and he planned that those 12 would then go and instruct the church, and lead the church, and spread the faith. So he was doing that.

There was scripture that needed to be fulfilled. Scripture about the one who eats with him, kick, you know, what's it say? Something like, turn to heel against him, something like that. I think if we look at the entirety of scripture in the rest of the New Testament, we find that it's not really consistent to make a case for either one out of just what happened there at the Last Supper.

So we must examine ourselves, and we must judge those things within the congregation. Do we always hit it right? Do we always hit that mark? I am sure that we don't always. But we have things we can aim for, right? We have this truth, or this bullseye, this belief that those who are in the Lord ought to participate, and those who aren't ought not.

And we can shoot for that. And if we aim for that, we may or we may not hit it. If we shoot at that a hundred times, we may not always hit it a hundred times out of a hundred times.

But if we don't aim for that, we'll definitely not hit it. And so I think there's these principles that must be established, that we've talked about. And I'll give a few of my own opinions about this.

I'll get to a little bit of that later that I was thinking right then. But I have this opinion that when things aren't obvious, it's something that's just not obvious. There's someone amongst us, and we're not certain.

There's maybe a lot of question, but it's not obvious to everybody. I believe that those who have been given charge of oversight and shepherding the flock ultimately need to judge those things. And I think they bear the greater responsibility.

And there are risks either way. And the under-shepherds, if you would call it that, will have to give an account to the chief shepherd. They'll give an account for the souls among us.

These are hard things. These are things that cause much fear and trembling to me. After all, sometimes wolves come in sheep's clothing, and devils come as ministers of righteousness.

And though sheep never come in wolves' clothing, sometimes they're wild and skittish. Sometimes they're stubborn and crippled. They haven't learned to trust anybody.

Sometimes sheep butt heads come in. It doesn't make them not a sheep. And to some degree, we all carry responsibility.

But the more responsibility you carry, the more fearful it is. The shepherd of actual sheep, he takes a risk if he leaves a sheep out there. If he's bringing his sheep into the corral, let's use that as an example of inviting people or bringing people into the Lord's table.

If the shepherd is bringing the sheep into the corral, if he leaves the shepherd out there, out of the corral, it's very, very risky. But if he brings a wolf into the corral, it's very, very risky. And so there's these risks that we carry.

These are the kind of decisions and judgments that we must make, and we must be humble. We must first judge and examine ourselves. We must love our brother more than ourselves.

We must love holiness as much as we love peace, and we must love peace as much as we love holiness. We must love righteousness as much as we love mercy, and mercy as much as we love righteousness. We must be as ready to call people to repentance as we are to forgive them, and as ready to forgive them as we are to call them to repentance.

I believe that God has given us authority, has given the church authority to make judgments, to bind, to loose, but that he also meanwhile understands our limitations, and that if we judge as rightly as we understand, with humility without respect of persons, without favoritism or partiality, without a desire for selfish gain, without the fear of man, that he honors those judgments. Even if it's not perfectly right. To be right is important, but to be charitable is more important.

So we could decide this is all too hard, because indeed it is hard. And we could decide we're going to look for an easy way out, and we could start practicing closed communion, and thereby separate ourselves from Christ. Or we could decide to practice open communion, and join ourselves with the devil.

Or we can stay on this narrow and difficult path, and with a single eye on Christ, commune with those of like precious faith. In summing things up, communion, or the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper that Jesus instituted as he kept it there in the last Passover with his disciples. Jesus is this Passover, and they celebrated it with the bread and the cup on the first day of each week.

When we take this bread and cup of blessing, we show the Lord's death till he comes. We remember it. We become members again of it.

We should aim to participate in the Lord's table with those who are baptized in the Lord, and are at peace with the brethren. We should not participate in the Lord's table with those who are not in the faith, and those who have fallen into sin, or those who have a quarrel with a brother. We should examine ourselves to see if none of these above things are found in us.

We should judge those things within the congregation, and withhold communion from any that are not in the faith, practicing sin, or in a quarrel with a brother. In short, it should be open to those in Christ, and closed to those who aren't. The visitor, who we know little of, that comes in the name of the Lord, the Didache says, we should assist such a man as much as we can, even just a little, and this is now my own words, even just a little, by showing acceptance, sympathy, and mercy.

We will bless him and us, but we have to remember that if someone is not a child of God, and we accept him in, we're not blessing him at all, neither are we blessing us. Another thing, and this is my opinion, not a commandment from the Lord, due to the immense charge and responsibility of a local congregation, and especially the overseers of it, to both include and exclude souls from the Lord's table. I think it is wise for someone to wait until they're invited to the communion table before we go, and when I explain that, I'm not talking about that every time we keep the Lord's table, those who we are in intense fellowship with, and regular fleshing out life together, that they would always need an invitation, but what I'd be talking about is, if we go visit another congregation, if we gather with other people, even people who we think are good brothers to commune with, and we go visit them, we should not carry a presumptuous spirit of, I'm right with God, I want to participate in your table, unless they invite us.

And in the same way, I think we ought to remember that when people come here, and we ought to either, we ought not to just try to let them figure this out on their own. We ought to invite them, or give them a reason why we don't. I'd like to do better than that.

We ought to confess our sins before we take in the bread and the cup, so that our sacrifice be pure. We must not esteem the table so lightly, that we can easily abstain from it, while we must not esteem the brothers and the purity of the sacrifice so lightly, that we can easily partake of it in an unworthy manner. We ought not to do that.

And like the wheat that was on the hills and gathered and broken into one loaf, may God's people unite from every tribe and nation to be His body. And like the clusters on the vine that were crushed into one vessel and purified for the cup, may we also be pressed by the love and severity of God into sanctification and purity. And may the lamb that was slain receive the reward of his sufferings.

Let's pray. O God in heaven, we ask you to be with us and give us understanding and wisdom and guidance and direction as we walk this narrow way. I pray Lord, that you would help us to not lose sight of the truths and the principles that you've set before us.

Help us, guide us, in Jesus' name. Amen. Just open it up for comments and corrections.

Anything else you'd like to share? Probably happens to everybody, but it seems like for some reason it happens to me a lot that throughout my days I hear something or pick something up and then I quote it a bunch and then years and years later I finally do a little research and figure out I've been saying something

wrong. I think that thing you quoted might be one of those things, Dwayne. I think when I try to share that thing that got taught to me one time, it's something like, yeah, I once heard a study or a teaching about the Passover and the Seder and you can look at the events and there's like four cups and you can tell which cup it was when he said, this is the covenant of my blood.

And there were certain meanings and things that were said and verses that were read. And the thing that I have been able to qualify is, they think, it seems like it's the third cup that he says, this is the covenant of my blood and that was called, there's four cups, and the third one's called the cup of redemption. And they quote the scripture that is pretty interesting that says, the Lord says, I'll redeem with an outstretched arm, which is pretty amazing that the Lord redeemed us with outstretched arms.

But I have, as I've tried to verify that thing, Dwayne, I can't find like a specific quote that he took and quoted and stuck himself in there. But, and it might be there and I just can't, unless somebody's teaching that thing, it's hard to find that. But in general, for sure, everybody knew they were there to remember the historic Passover.

And even if he wasn't playing with words, it was still extremely bold of him to say to do that in remembrance of him. I just want to clear that up. Thank you, Dwayne, brother for that message.

I was blessed by it. And thanks for your words there, buddy. Our family has participated in a Christian Seder a few times, I think four times.

And the first time we were instructed by someone who had done it historically. And it is very amazing that for all those thousands of years, possibly, they were participating in something that had remembrance and what had happened, but looking forward into something that was still to happen and didn't even know it. And then it seems to me that that realization that when Jesus took a certain piece of bread out from this cloth and said, this is, you know, my body.

And then also the third cup, like Buddy said, that their eyes just would have been like, you know, this is something they would have participated in since their youth every year. And to have it revealed what it meant now, it would have been amazing. But I just wanted to add, too, that I think in the DDK, and I could be wrong, but I think it says something about, because I think correctly Dwayne said that if we just don't know someone, but they come in the name of the Lord, that we should be charitable, but not necessarily assuming that they can receive the Eucharist with the greater body of Christ that's local.

But I think in the DDK it is written that if a person comes with like letters indicating that he is a brother and he's in good standing or something like that. I think it's in the DDK and I could be wrong. If somebody knows better than I, then I'd like to hear it.

Yeah, I don't really have a whole lot to add. I just wanted to say I appreciate the efforts of Brother Dwayne in putting that together and the many thoughts that went into it. There's a lot of things you said that I need to ponder on yet.

I also appreciate the other thoughts. I'm not sure if I, maybe I wasn't listening well enough to understand the Four Cups and the Seder and the stuff, but that's all right. Amen, and thank you again, Brother Dwayne.

Who, what, when, where, why, how? Fear and trembling. Yes, fear and trembling. So much for that.

Thanks, Brother Dwayne, for your sermon on that. You know, we do have the blueprint in the Old Testament for the temple and then the church being the new temple is a blueprint. Do all things according to the pattern.

Don't add and don't subtract. You have sacrament versus ordinance. You know, it's mystical versus, oh, it's just cold law like Brother Dwayne was saying, sacraments.

Of course, the early church, it was all mystical sacraments. Do it as Cyprian said later, do it every time you come together. Michael Sattler just said three or four times a week, take communion.

So much for that. Just a couple of comments. I just want to read two verses in Exodus.

Exodus 24, not the Passover, but when God gave Moses, when God called Moses up to the mountain, not only Moses, I mean, it's not in verse nine, just two verses. Moses went up to the mountain with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel, and it was under his feet as it was paved, work of sapphire stone, but it was like the very heavens in its clarity, verse 11.

But on the nobles of the children of Israel, he did not lay his hands for they saw God and they ate and they drank. And I've heard one translation said, for they saw God and they ate and drank with him. And of course, Jesus on the night before we betrayed, Matthew 26, again, I say, I won't eat with you the fruit of the vine until I'm in to the kingdom of God.

And so there's a connection there. I don't know, but Exodus 24, they saw God and they ate and drank with him. And we know that the outcome of Nadab and Abihu later on a strange fire, maybe they were drunk or something like that.

And they were taken right away. But it's one last comment that would be on the open communion. And I've heard it several times.

God took communion with Judas. So let's just go open communion and let God, he'll be the judge. But the counter to that would be, did the other disciples did not know then that Judas was going to betray him? Paul says the secret sins of many, they're in there, but the sins revealed will be, they'll be shown at the judgment.

So we can have some tears and unclean fish who take communion. We know nothing about, but if we do know, if we, if after Judas did sin, then we could never take communion. That's what you call Lord a false dichotomy, brother.

That's the one you used to throw on a false dichotomy. And that's, I just, I, you know, they like to throw that out for open communion, but I have to be humble. And we do have the blueprint for leaders.

So we do have Dwayne and Walter to make that judgments over other people, you know, when they come in, whether that should be permissible. Fear and trembling. The Lord be magnified.

Thank you, Dwayne. And thank you brothers for your comments. The Lord be magnified.

Yeah, I don't have much to add. I'm thankful for what was shared and as far as I comprehend it anyhow, it seemed like it was accurate and many thoughts to think about. And yeah, I appreciate it.

Thank you. I just thought it'd be good to say, I guess because of the nature of the teaching that I've heard, I mean, it'd be a big statement to say I agreed with everything that was said. But I think he did pretty well expressing the way I feel with the closed and open.

I heard a guy one time teach about the agape road and there was a ditch on either side. I think he used like, on one side was legalism, on the other side was liberalism. One is, you know, one's too much grace and one's too much judgment or something.

But it comes up like, you know, in all kinds of topics where we're forced to hold on to two different seemingly opposing things. And I think this was really appropriate. That's a really appropriate application with regard to who we share communion with.

And the part at the end about the invitation I also liked. Anyway, I just wanted to give my amen. Thank you very much.

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