

The Lord's Supper

by Mack Tomlinson

The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death and a celebration of His love and sacrifice for us, and it should be observed personally, prayerfully, and with a focus on Christ's love and sacrifice.

Duration: 34:41

Scripture: Luke 22:19, John 6:48, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Topics: "The Eucharist", "Christian Worship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of elevating our view and observance of the Lord's Supper, highlighting its significance as a high and holy observance for every Christian. The message delves into the symbolism of the bread and cup, representing Christ's body and blood, and the invitation by Jesus to partake personally in remembrance of Him. It encourages a prayerful and consecrated approach to the Lord's Supper, viewing it as a time of fresh covenant with the Lord Jesus.

Transcript

This day, my goal is for each one of us to have our esteem, our view, our estimation, and our observance of the Lord's Supper to be elevated. How high and wonderful is your view of the Lord's Supper? Or for you, as for so many, has the Lord's Supper been a secondary thing that's tacked on at the end of a meal, at the end of a sermon, at the end of a service, and it doesn't have its significance with us that it should have. The Lord's table observance ought to be a very high and holy, wonderful thing to any church, to any Christian.

And so, let's look at this. We'll read first from John 6, then we'll go to 1 Corinthians 11. And so today, as you listen, I want you to benefit and I want you to take in a higher and a holier and a more joyful view of and appreciation of the Lord's Supper.

Let your belief in this, let your love of this rise today, higher than ever. John 6, the familiar words beginning in verse 41, we'll read verse 41, then we'll go to 48. The Lord Jesus really set the stage here when He spoke to the Jews about what must happen for any person if they are to have eternal life.

They must eat His flesh and drink His blood. And this sets the stage for that symbolism He gives later in the upper room that we'll read about in a moment in 1 Corinthians 11. John 6, verse 41.

The Jews then complained about Him because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. If you go back up to 33 and 35, He had said the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life, He said in verse 35.

Then go down to verse 48. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the man in the wilderness and are dead.

This is the bread which comes down from heaven that one may eat of it and not die, and never die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

And the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead, he who eats this bread will live forever. 1 Corinthians 11, we'll begin reading in verse 23.

1 Corinthians 11, 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread. And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat. This is My body, which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner, He also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim or you show forth the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, notice it's not saying an unworthy person can't take it, because no one can take it then, none of us are worthy. In an unworthy manner, how you observe it.

Whoever observes, whoever eats this bread, drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

When the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples came to Jerusalem that final week, on this day when they were going to observe the Passover meal, it is not just another day at the office for the disciples and for the Lord Jesus. A very special event is upon them. It's the last Passover meal.

And I do use that word, the last Passover meal, because who had initiated the Passover in the Old Testament? Jehovah. Jehovah Jesus. He had started it, which was a picture of Him.

And here now, in His last week here on earth, before His death, the week of His death, is the last Passover meal. There will never be another real one, because the real Passover, the man himself, is here to fulfill all that the Passover represented. So this Passover meal, as the Lord Jesus Christ is going to

observe it with His disciples, He changes it into something else, something brand new.

He changes it from the old covenant Passover memorial into the new covenant memorial meal, which is a memorial. It is a remembrance supper regarding Him. The old is gone.

He's fixing to be the Passover lamb. It is sacrifice. He's going to fulfill all the Old Testament types and shadows and symbolism.

And so this meal, the Lord's Supper, is what Jesus calls this bread and this cup. Those were His words. The cup, the bread, this cup, this bread.

In Acts, it's referred to, very possibly, as the breaking of bread. It continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in the breaking of bread and prayer. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, calls it the Lord's Supper.

And he also calls it eating the bread and drinking the cup. And it's been referred to throughout history as communion, as a sacrament by sacramentalists that believe you get some special grace automatically just by doing it. And that's not what the Bible teaches.

It's been called remembering the Lord. So, let me give you a context. Let me give you a summary of the context of this event.

If we went back and read in the Gospels, we would see the order events are that the Lord Jesus has finished. He's cleansed the temple. He's finished His teaching.

And He's going to the upper room with the disciples. Judas has begun to plot how he can betray the Lord. And Jesus tells His disciples, go into the city and you'll meet a certain man and you tell him, the teacher says, my time is at hand.

I'm going to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. So they go and do that. And so they come together, the Lord Jesus and His disciples come to observe the individual Passover meal that so many homes in Jerusalem and in Israel were observing because this was the week of Passover.

And so, many were doing that in their houses that night. And here in this house, in an upper room, the one who is Himself the Passover Lamb is going to observe this symbolic meal with His own church, with His disciples, with His followers. And in doing so, He's going to change it forever from the Passover to a Gospel celebration, to a Gospel feast, to a Gospel meal, to remember Him who is the Lamb who is offered.

Now many of us, and examine yourself if this is true of you, many of us have all too often had a much too low secondary view of observing the Lord's Supper. Perhaps you grew up in a church that was very ritualistic and it was a hocus-pocus kind of thing. Or perhaps you grew up in some setting that it was kind of just a dead ritual and it didn't mean much.

It was done once a year, twice a year, maybe quarterly. And it was just a small thing, an appendix at the end of the service. So my question for you this morning is if you're a Christian, answer this in your heart.

How meaningful has the Lord's Supper become to you? How meaningful is it? How special is it? When you realize the church is going to observe it and partake of it, is your heart excited? Do you see it as the most significant thing it could be in a sense in worship along with singing the praises of God, along with the ministry of the Word of God? It took me years to grow into seeing the beauty of the Lord's Supper. And

as the years would pass as a Christian, there would be times and moments whether in a service or at some conference, I never observed it as a conference, but maybe hearing preaching, I'd have these moments when I would realize the Lord's Supper is a lot more important than I've ever realized. And maybe two years later, I would feel the Lord's Supper is supposed to be a lot more meaningful to me than it is.

And so my appreciation and my treasuring of it and my view of its significance and the wonder of it and how central it is grew and heightened where God's grace has enabled me and a number of us to see this is very special to observe what the Lord Jesus Christ instituted. Now think about this. How many times is a believer to be baptized? Once.

We have one scheduled next month. So that will be talked about later, but if you're a Christian and you've never been baptized, immersed in obedience to Christ, and you know you're a Christian, you need to see us about that because we will be observing the ordinance of baptism in just over a month. But a Christian is to be baptized not over and over and over again, but once.

But, the Lord's Supper, as often as you do this, you proclaim, you display, you show forth, you celebrate my death until I come again. So this is the one ordinance Christ has given us that the church is to be repetitive about. We're to do it regularly.

We're to do it worshipfully. The Lord's Supper is to be for the church and for you as a Christian and for me, a high and a holy observance. It is to be, according to the New Testament pattern and teaching, central in the life of the church's worship.

It's special. It is a celebration. In fact, it's an anniversary.

Think about that. I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll talk about that in a little while.

It is a celebration and an anniversary of the most important event in redemption. Now you might say, well, the resurrection is certainly in there right away. Don't nitpick me.

Just follow me here. The event of our Lord's death, His atoning work, is the central, important event of redemption. Because there couldn't be a resurrection without His death.

And there couldn't be benefits from His death without the resurrection, so they go together, don't they? But the Lord's Supper is about His death. You do show forth my death until I come again. The church and every Christian must elevate this ordinance, the Lord's Supper, to its great and joyful importance always.

You ought to bring every first Sunday of the month when we're having the Lord's Supper, you ought to prepare your heart. You ought to come with the mindset we have the high and joyful and holy privilege of celebrating the Lord's Supper together as a church. I get to do it before the Lord as I take it and as I partake of it.

So this morning let's think clearly about the Lord's Supper in a fresh way about this glorious ordinance. Think with me and then we're going to observe it. What's involved? Well, let's think first of all about the elements.

How many are there? There's two. Lee's telling me. Two.

There are two elements. Items. The items involved in the Lord's Supper.

It's amazing the simplicity of this in the New Testament. The church historically, the Catholic church and other high churches have made it something into this fanciful, ornate deal that it wasn't meant to be. The elements, the items of the Lord's Supper, the items are two.

Bread and wine. The bread and the cup. Jesus said this bread, this cup.

Two elements are only central to this meal. There aren't to be ornate pictures or flowery speeches. No extravagant liturgy that the church is to go through.

No big rituals. No, Jesus and His disciples came to observe this meal. They ate the Passover meal.

And in their minds, they knew what the significance was. And from that meal, Jesus takes bread and He takes the cup. He lifts them off the table of the Passover meal.

And He takes these two items and He turns it into a new covenant meal about Him. That's what He does. The simplicity of it.

The single focus of the two items. And when we have the Lord's Supper, that's what we're dealing with. Two items.

The bread comes to you and to me. The cup comes to you and to me. And we have these two items that are the focus.

They're the representatives. They are the meal that make up the Lord's meal, the Lord's table. So that's the elements.

Then there's the meaning. When we eat that bread, it doesn't become anything else other than that cracker, does it? When we drink that juice, it remains juice. It doesn't become mystically something else.

It doesn't become religious. It doesn't become sacramentally turned into something that you get something by eating it and drinking it. No.

The meaning, Jesus said, this bread is My body. And He's saying this represents what I'm going to do momentarily. This cup is the new covenant in My blood.

So Paul called these elements the body and the blood of the Lord. Paul also calls it, maybe collectively, the cup of the Lord, meaning we partake of this representatively when we partake of this meal. So the meaning is that it's a memorial.

It's symbolic. It's kind of like when you have a special meal with a wedding anniversary or a special meal at a wedding reception or rehearsal dinner. It's not about the meal.

It's about what you're celebrating, right? I mean, not that people would serve this, but you could have hot dogs and chips. No, every woman is cringing right now. My point is, it's not about what you're eating.

There's no certain food people serve at such anniversary meals. It is about what the event you're celebrating. That's what you're gathering about.

So the Lord's Supper, the cup and the bread are representative. When we partake of it, we're remembering the Lord Jesus Christ. We're reproclaiming His death, Paul says.

We are celebrating. We're rehearsing. We're returning to the reality that this act of His death, His shedding of His blood accomplished my redemption.

And I'm remembering this today. I'm returning to the fountain of grace that brought salvation to me. I'm returning to the fountain of love that washed me of my sins and has forgiven me.

And I'm celebrating His life, the giving of His body whereupon sin was deposited. I'm celebrating the shedding of His blood which became the atoning payment for my sins. I'm celebrating these two today.

I'm finding fresh refuge in the fact that it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but it's according to His mercy He saved us. I'm celebrating the fact that not all the blood of bulls and goats on Jewish altars slain can give the guilty conscience peace or take away the sin, but Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all my sins away. I'm celebrating the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ once for all for sinners like myself.

The redemptive act is what we're celebrating representatively. His physical death. His blood offering.

So, the elements are two. The bread and the cup. The meaning is a spiritual meaning of redemption.

And that's what our hearts focus on when we are observing the Lord's Supper. But then I want you to think of something we rarely ever think about. And that is the invitation by the Lord to all of us to the Lord's Supper.

What did He say to the disciples? He takes the bread, He takes the cup, and He says, take and eat. Drink. All of you drink from this.

His invitation. He said in Luke's Gospel, with desire, with strong desire, I have desired to eat this meal with you. Now listen, beloved.

Never forget this. Whenever you come to the Lord's table as a Christian, the Lord Jesus Christ has called you to take that meal with Him. Today, He desires to sup with you by His Spirit as you observe the meal.

His invitation. His desire is always there to eat this meal with us. A regular, consistent, desired invitation.

And when the church observes the Lord's Supper, it is the head of the church, Jesus Christ, serving the table and saying, come and dine with me. Eat these things in remembrance of Me. Partake of Me while you partake of the bread and the cup.

His desired invitation toward you. We should welcome the Holy Spirit into consciously our personal observance of the Lord's Supper. Do you ever think of this enough? Or do you just take it, eat it, drink it, kind of passively get through it? Yeah, you think about the Lord's death.

And perhaps you pray, but He is inviting you to eat this meal with Him. And He's in the presence of His church when we observe it. And if He told us to ever be doing it, as often as you do this, you're proclaiming Me.

He's in our midst. We should partake of Him personally. And I'm going to say more about that in a moment.

Jesus said, take and eat. Drink this cup. The observance of the Lord's Supper is always to be viewed by us as the Lord desiring and inviting us to dine with Him in the meal.

Now here's another reality. I referred to it earlier. The Lord's Supper really is an anniversary celebration.

Last weekend, Linda and I celebrated our 39th anniversary. We've done it 39 times. One year, we were sitting in our son's baseball game, and we looked at each other and we said, we forgot today's our anniversary.

We thought, what is wrong with us? So then afterward, we went and celebrated. We've celebrated 39 times. Every time you observe the Lord's Supper individually as a church, that's what you're doing.

You are having an anniversary as often as you do this. It's an anniversary meal celebrating your Lord's death for you. That's real.

That's wonderful. That is fresh. That is a glorious thing.

That's what we're doing. Now I want you to see that in 1 Corinthians where we were, verse 26, or just hear it. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming with your life, with your partaking of it, you're proclaiming, Calvary! Golgotha! The Lord dying for me.

He's in my place. All my salvation. All my hope of heaven.

All the reality of eternal life for me is in that act of His death. I am celebrating this. I'm proclaiming His death as I partake of this.

Now, let me apply this in some simple ways for you and I. How should each of us, how should you more and more observe and partake of the Lord's Supper? First of all, you should partake personally. Personally. Yes, this is a corporate meal, but each of us have to partake of it.

And when you partake of it, in that partaking, you should forget everybody else. You should forget the corporateness for a moment, because you're taking it corporately already. But you're partaking of the Lord's Supper personally.

Representatively, personally, you partake of it. You should observe it in your heart as an act of worship. You should observe it in your heart spiritually and faith Godward, Christward.

You're not partaking of it first and foremost with the church or with your wife or your family. This is you in Christ. This is your Redeemer and your heart toward Him.

You're remembering Him. You're focusing on Him. It's you in Christ.

So in the meal, as you take the elements, during the time, feed on Him. Feast on Him. Partake of Him.

Rehearse in your heart His dying for you. Rejoice in your Redeemer as you partake of His meal. This meal is personal.

Make it personal. Make it personal. Secondly, we should observe it prayerfully.

Prayerfully. Do you commune with Christ when you observe the Lord's Supper? Commune with God during the meal. Tell the Lord Jesus how you feel.

Welcome the Holy Spirit afresh as you partake during the entire mealtime. Jesus, tell yourself and respond to it, Jesus bids me dine with Him here. I need to tell Him how I feel about His saving love for me when I'm taking these elements that represent Him.

His body. His blood. They represent Him.

He's here with you. So partake of Christ as you observe the meal. Prayerfully commune with Him.

Not only personally and prayerfully, but finally, as you partake, make it a time of fresh consecration and fresh covenant with the Lord. Fresh consecration. Fresh covenant with the Lord Jesus.

You're coming to Him. You're remembering Him. You're feasting upon Him.

So, in the meal, rededicate your heart and your life to Him. Re-covenant your soul in your covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus. Romans 12, 1 and 2 is a good picture of it.

I beseech you what? By the mercies of God, there's redemptive language. The saving mercy and loving kindness of God. I beseech you by the mercies of God to what? To present yourself as a living sacrifice.

Holy and acceptable to the Lord. Bring yourself to Him because He has brought Himself to you in redemption and in salvation. And as you observe this meal, remind yourselves, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Lord, I am Yours afresh. I am Yours anew. I'm not my own.

I've been bought with a price. So I want to glorify You afresh with my entire life, with my body, which is Yours. How do we observe the Lord's Supper? Personally, prayerfully, thankfully, and with fresh consecration.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not leave His church to dead rituals. Baptism has mighty significance and spiritual meaning. And the Lord's Supper has mighty spiritual meaning and significance.

And we ought not to treat these ordinances in a lower way, but in a heightened way with great reverence, great joy, great devotion, great meaning and great significance. And that's got to come out of our hearts. It's got to come out of our hearts.

So may the Lord make this meal more and more meaningful to us. It can grow sweeter as the years go by. As you taste and see that the Lord is good partaking of Him in the Lord's table.

Let's pray. And then we're going to, as the disciples and the Lord Jesus did, they sang a hymn and then they went out. We're going to sing in a moment.

But let's pray. Father in Heaven, we thank You for the reminder. We thank You for the truth that sanctifies us and changes us and helps us as we think this morning about the Lord's Supper.

For we pray that our minds and our hearts would be renewed to celebrate this meal together as we should more and more increasingly. We bless You and we praise You. We thank You for the privilege today as a church and individually to remember the Lord and to proclaim Your death, Lord, until You come.

We praise Your name. Amen.

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