

# Body and blood - bread and wine

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[ 0 : 00 ] Third of these Sunday mornings at the subject of the Lord's Supper.! Order our church life to honour and please the Lord as much as we can.

So this evening we'll turn to discuss this a little bit. I've got a few questions I'd like to raise for us to think about. Excuse me. The text that we were working from previously was like this text.

So this is one of the gospel texts. While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it. Gave it to his disciples and said, Take and eat. This is my body.

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them saying, 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 tell you I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you. In my Father's kingdom. And without wishing to stretch your patience, let me remind you of the things that we looked at previously.

[ 1 : 36 ] We've said that Jesus was feeding into that. There's the little summary of what he said as he offered them bread and wine. Feeding into that, all the thoughts of the Passover.

All the thoughts of that covenant sealing meal in Exodus. I think it was Exodus 24. Where they ate and drank with God.

This was the blood of the covenant. Feeding into that, the thought of having a meal with God. God's hospitality. Feeding into that, the thought that the Passover would have of a single act of history with life-changing power.

And this single act renewed and remembered each time the Passover was commemorated. Jesus was picking up on the idea of covenant as...

I pause halfway through a sentence. Could somebody get me a glass of water just in case I begin to croak? In the vocal sense, rather. Covenant as a relationship of powerful commitment.

[ 2 : 43 ] That's what covenant is in the Old Testament. And Jesus is picking up on that in the New Covenant. And he's also picking up on the idea of something that's shared together.

Making us a group, a people. A people affected by something in the past. In the same way as perhaps we might say, who was invaded in 1066 by the Normans?

And we might say, the Brits here would say, us, we, we were affected. We were constituted different people by that single event in history.

And there's also the whole matter of participation and involvement in what's going on. So you remember I suggested you might like to change socks with the person next to you.

And you thought, that's a very bizarre idea. I'm not up for that. But eating a body and drinking wine is also quite a strange thing to do. And if you agree to do that, you are saying something and participating in something and receiving something.

[ 3 : 53 ] And then we also said that Jesus Christ, in comparison with those things in the Old Testament, is better. So his blood is better. He's the better lamb.

The covenant is better. The sacrifice is better. The promises are better. And also, we pointed out that the supper has this forward-looking aspect.

Every time it's mentioned, there's something forward-looking, which I think is different to the Passover. And something else is about to happen.

Oh, yes. Last time I said that the supper, the center of the supper, is actually not the supper. The center of the supper is what Jesus said when he said, I am the bread of life.

I am the bread of life. He didn't say the supper is the bread of life. Make sure you eat the supper. It says, I am the bread of life. The supper will remind you of me. And you might remember that he enlarged on that and actually said, it's not just bread is the way to think of me, but flesh.

[ 5 : 03 ] My flesh is what I give for the life of the world. And my blood. Very strong sacrificial language.

So let's take away the bread and the picture of flesh and replace it with the cross. So the supper is about the cross. Jesus Christ dying on the cross, which is what we sung about.

These are the facts as we have received them. Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried and raised again on the third day. And the supper points us to Christ and him crucified.

The reality of the supper is the cross. The reality is not something magical happening to the bread or happening to the wine.

Those things point us to the reality, which is Christ and what he has done for us. The Christ who bids us come and eat at his table. So that is a sort of reminder of what we've looked at so far.

[ 6 : 09 ] And I thought today we would look at the other classic texts, in particular the one in 1 Corinthians 11. So if you'd like to turn to 1 Corinthians 11, verse 17 and onwards, we're going to take a trip to Corinth.

One of my favorite Anglican preachers, Dick Lucas, this would be his watchword. He'd say, before you preach this, brother, you must take them to Corinth. So we're going to go on a trip to Corinth. Here we go. This is a letter to one of the first churches, one of the earliest, as I understand, one of the earliest documents in the New Testament.

This is how things were right at the beginning. Corinth was a seaport. So it had all the trade and the cosmopolitan nature and I guess a bit of the rough and ready nature of a seaport.

It was back in that ancient world where they had Roman and Greek gods and goddesses. And unlike what you would see in our streets, in their streets, you would see temples to this god, temples to that goddess.

[ 7 : 28 ] And that would be the way in which the culture was. If you wanted to do trade, you would be associated with one god or goddess.

And even meat, the meat trade would be associated with a pagan god. And as my understanding is that when the meat was, when the animal was slaughtered, that would be involved with a ritual sacrifice in honour of some god or other.

If we go to Corinth and talk to people, they would be affected by Greek philosophy. The Greeks in those days loved wisdom.

I have a sneaking suspicion that Greeks today also love wisdom and think they are very wise people. And they can look back and say, we invented democracy, etc, etc.

We invented philosophy. It's all ours. But in those days, they would have been very keen on wisdom. And one of the things that they were a bit uncomfortable with the Apostle Paul was he didn't seem to be very wise.

[ 8 : 38 ] And the gospel message didn't seem to be very wise. And if you'd pushed it and perhaps oversimplified it, Greek philosophy would have said, spirituality is not to do with matter.

It's to do with spirit. And that has all sorts of implications for the Christian message, not least the resurrection. They lived in a city of sexual permissiveness.

So, nowadays, people use the word progressive. Who knows what progressive means? I think it means casting off traditions.

Well, in that sense, they would have been a progressive city with all sorts of sexual things going on which might even shock us these days.

Maybe, maybe not. In Greek thinking, strength and pride are honourable.

[ 9 : 42 ] And you would be very foolish to admit weakness or have anything that looked like humility. They'd mock you for that. And you can see that there's a clash coming up with Christianity on that point too.

So, that's Corinth. It's a little quick visit to the sort of things they were thinking, the sort of situation they were in. And it wouldn't surprise us then, would it?

when we read the letter to the Corinthian church to realise that they have lots of issues. And the issues, in many ways, come up because of the sort of people they were, the sort of thinking they had, the sort of place they lived.

Well, I'll try and not go down all those alleys. But, what I will say is that it affected the way they did the supper. Now, they did do the supper.

However, he's not complaining that they'd forgotten about it. So, in chapter 11, verse 17, he says, in the following directives, I have no praise for you if your meetings do more harm than good.

[10:49] In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, such and such, such and such. So, they are coming together and they are eating the Lord's Supper.

So, he's not complaining they don't do it. But, they do have various problems. So, one problem would be, okay, I used to go along to the temple of such and such Greek God, Roman God. I'm a, I don't know, civil engineer. Civil engineers have the patron God of such and such. So, what happens to that? Do I give up on that?

can I even eat the food that was, the meat that I bought that I know was slaughtered as part of a pagan sacrifice?

How do I cope with that? And in chapter 10, verse 21 and 22, he will deal with that a little bit.

[11:50] Well, no, he will deal with it head on. In chapter 10, verse 21, 22, he says, if it's a question of going on to the temple, and eating at their feasts, you can't eat at the Christian feast and eat at the pagan feast.

Chapter 10, verse 21, 22, he says, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too. You cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

He says, that's just a madness. It's provoking God. You're trying to rouse him to jealousy or have a strength contest to say that you're stronger than he is.

That's one of the problems. There's also the problem of what happens when they have their meal. So you can see it in verse 21.

This is chapter 11 now. Verse 21, as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. And this whole thing of pride and superiority, it's all the way through Corinthians and it shows at the Lord's table.

[13:04] So some people are saying, you know, we've brought our bring and share to the bring and share and we'll just sit with our friends and eat our bring and share and the people over there, do we really have to join in with them?

If you put it into modern days, you'd say, well, we're from da-da-da, they're from the estate and we've got nice food and they've got food that we look down on and let's not join together in that. And maybe it worked the other way around that the people would look up and say, you know, they don't even know they're born, those lot. So division was a big problem and that's mentioned in chapter 11.

And Paul says, actually, the only good thing about your meeting, if we can say it's a good thing, the only thing that I can think of that turns out positive is in verse 19 where he says, no doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you has God's approval.

It shows up which of you God does approve of. That's the only positive thing that comes out of the mess of you guys at Corinth taking the Lord's Supper.

[14:20] So these are the sort of problems that are going on and the way he deals with it is to go back to basics and I'd like us to look at the basics like this.

So I'd like us to look at Paul's tradition and when I say tradition, I'm using it in a different way to usual. I'm saying what he handed on and what he hands on is history and the past, remembering in the present, looking forward to the future.

Then I'd like us to look at the way the people participated, the people partake and I like to say that their partaking is assumed and accountable and together and meant to be praiseworthy.

so we'll take those one at a time. So let's take the tradition bit first and what I'm picking up on there is that in verse 23, 1123, he says, what I received from the Lord, what I also passed on to you.

So the claim he is making here is that this supper thing is not something he's invented, it's something he's received and he's handed it on, it's a tradition in that sense, he's heard it from the master and handed it on intact to the Corinthians.

[15:43] So what is this tradition? Well, just breaking it down into its bare bones, I would say the first thing is the history in the past. So, I received from the Lord, verse 23, what I also passed on to you, the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, 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 after supper he took the cup saying, etc. So he, the first part is history in the past. this is what Jesus did. It doesn't actually say the place although we know the place but it is a particular time on the night that he was betrayed. He did this particular thing.

He took, he offered, he said, he said. And so there's definite words, definite actions and also a definite reference.

Jesus was saying this bread, let me just look at it, it is in verse 24. The bread, this is my body which is for you.

[ 17 : 12 ] So he refers, he says the bread is to be understood to refer to my body. Now please don't get too hung up on the word is.

Is it there? This is my body. Martin Luther got very hung up on that. If it is the body, then it is the body. Scholars tell us that in the original language that Jesus spoke, he would not have used the word is, so that's put in later for translation purposes.

And we would, and Jesus isn't saying any more than when he says I am the door for the sheep. He's not saying he is a door and he's not saying that the bread is his body so much as it refers to his body.

This is what we're to think of as we take this bread. And likewise the wine, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And the reference is not to the supper but to Christ. I want you to think of me, I want you to think of my body, my blood.

[ 18 : 28 ] And if you think of the timing, he's looking forward, saying the time when my body is broken and given for you will be on the cross. The time when my blood is poured out will be on the cross.

He was looking forward. Of course we're looking backwards. So, first thing, history. Point in history. Particular point in history.

The supper is about that. The supper doesn't first of all point us to ourselves. It doesn't first of all say, now as you sit down I want you to think carefully how you're feeling this morning.

It says I want you to think carefully about the body broken and the blood shed. It doesn't point to us. It doesn't point to a ritual. It doesn't point to a timeless truth.

It doesn't say I want you to realize that what goes around comes around or I don't want you to think that God is love. I want you to think historically and specifically to this rock as it were stuck in history.

[ 19 : 32 ] That event all those years ago. The specific finished work of Jesus Christ. That's what it says. Focus on that.

History in the past. And I could ask whether you are happy with that. Whether you would say, yeah, I'm very happy to make the bedrock of my life, not what I'm doing now, but what Jesus did at that time, at that place, for those hours when he died on the cross, I am content to say, that's the bedrock of my life.

And I look back on that and I'm more than satisfied to do so. Because that's what the supper is inviting us to do. History and the past. Second thing, remembering in the present.

So Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me. Verse 24, do this in remembrance of me. And in verse 25 he says, whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

And it goes on to say, verse 26, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. So it's not just a history in the past, but it's something that we are to remember in the present.

[ 20 : 53 ] We keep coming back to it. This idea of coming back to something is quite an interesting, indeed a powerful idea. So we habitually remember people's birthdays.

Sometimes we forget people's birthdays, but quite often we remember people's birthdays. Birthdays, and we're quite happy to do that. We say, I'm glad to remember that you were born. And we celebrate that.

It's a good thing to do, isn't it? In UK culture, we remember the end of the First World War on the 11th month of the 11th...

Oh dear, there's a lot of 11s, aren't there? The day of the 11th month, 11th hour, something like that. And we're remembering the cessation of war and the sacrifice that that took.

And maybe if you're from a different country, you have something like that. If you're from Northern Ireland, you'll probably remember battles and victories that other people in the UK have long forgotten, but they'll be very much alive to you.

[ 22 : 05 ] Remember wedding and adversaries, and sometimes memory brings to us unhappy things. And keeps that alive, doesn't it? And we can't quite escape the unhappy thing that we

remember at such and such a time of year.

So in what I'd say, good ways and perhaps arguably not so encouraging ways, memory keeps something alive.

And I think you could also say that memory makes us who we are. We are the people that were born at such and such a day.

We are the people who were delivered by such and such battle, such and such war time. We are the people who have suffered such and such a loss.

Those memories make something alive and powerful in our lives. Jesus is specifically saying that he wants Christians to be people who keep coming back to the cross.

[ 23 : 13 ] That's the point of it, isn't it? Do this in remembrance of me. Keep coming back to the cross. So there's a sense in which Jesus says, yes, you pray, give us this day our daily bread.

So you're thinking about, Lord, help me put the kids to bed tonight. Lord, help me with all those difficult people at work today. Lord, help me do my essays and get them handed in. All these sort of daily things.

But it's also profoundly true that Jesus says, what I do want you to be defined by is the fact that you remember something that happened all those years ago.

This is to be kept alive in the present. This is to spread its influence, its brightness, if you like, over our lives, week by week, month by month, whatever.

So the second thing was remembering in the present. And the third thing was looking forward to the future. So there is this forward reference, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[ 24 : 24 ] reference. And in the gospel references, it will be something like until I drink new in my father's kingdom. That's a forward reference.

I won't drink this again until I drink it new in my father's kingdom. This looking forward is profoundly important for the Christian life.

So here's Paul saying something about this in Romans chapter eight. And he says, what's the Christian life? It is waiting eagerly for the redemption of our bodies, looking forward to something that hasn't yet happened.

Waiting eagerly for, he says, our adoption as sons. That is to say the redemption of our bodies. It hasn't happened yet. Our bodies are not yet redeemed.

Our hair still goes grey. We still get degenerative diseases. These are not new bodies. These are the old ones. We're looking forward to the redemption of our bodies.

[ 25 : 28 ] And he says, in this hope, we're saved. That's part of what it is to be a Christian, to be saying, I'm pinning my hope on something that hasn't yet happened. I'm waiting for that.

I'm sort of in the waiting room of that. Peter says, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

What are we saved into, says Peter? What's the new birth about? It gives us a living hope, and it's something for the future and we're looking forward to that and pinning our hopes on that.

And John says, 1 John 3, 3, everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. All the different he's there, anyone who has hope within himself purifies himself as he, Jesus Christ, is pure. But it's a hope, you see.

[ 26 : 39 ] The Christian life isn't saying we've got it all now, and if it doesn't seem to be happening all now, we're going to be very disappointed. It says, well, we're bound to be disappointed because we're not pinning our hopes on this world, pinning our hopes on the world to come.

And this is one of the great Corinthian mistakes. In Greek philosophy, you see, because matter is pointless and useless, the resurrection hardly makes sense at all, because the resurrection is a material body being brought to life.

And so some of them would say, oh, the resurrection has already happened. This is it. This is resurrection. Don't look forward to anything else. This is it.

The resurrection has already happened. Nothing else worth waiting for. And of course, Paul has a real go at them at that, doesn't he? He says, well, how can you have Christian message if you don't have resurrection?

You know, if you say there's no resurrection, Christ can't have been raised, you won't be raised.

The whole thing's complete nonsense, isn't it? If only in this life we have hope, we're to be pitied more than anybody else.

[ 27 : 53 ] So it's very important, this looking forward to the future, that the Christian life is not fulfilled here on earth. It's begun. And that's why Paul can say in his second letter to the Corinthians, we walk by faith and not by sight.

We don't yet see what the world will be. We don't yet see what we will be. I don't yet see what you will be. But we live trusting God's promises that one day we will see.

We don't see it all yet. the books are not balanced here. When I say the books are balanced, I mean to say that the end of a year, the accountant will say, this is what's owed, this is what's come in, it ought to balance out, job done.

The Christian life doesn't work like that until the last day. And to put it rather bluntly, Christians should not be surprised to run at a loss until that great day.

So the martyrs, the great men and women of faith who were killed, who suffered, who had all sorts of deprivation, if you said to them, what makes this all worthwhile?

[ 29 : 23 ] They would say, well, at the moment, to be honest, nothing. I've lost everything. But, on that great day, then it will be worthwhile.

There will be a great reward. When I see his face, when I hear what he says, does it say something up there? Enter into the joy of your Lord. Does it say, I can never see it because of the loud speaker?

That's what makes it worthwhile. That's the future. Then it will be worth it. And the supper reminds us of that. And I could ask whether you're content to do that, or whether, I mean, I hope you wouldn't prefer a version of Christianity that makes everything sorted out now.

That's a sort of health and wealth Christianity. You'll be wealthy, healthy now. God doesn't promise that. He promises it will make it all right in the end. And the supper will look forward to the end.

So those are the three things about the tradition. History and the past, remembering the present, looking forward to the future. Let's go on to not what he's, the basics that he lays out, but what he wants of the people who partake.

[ 30 : 34 ] And this is going to be that it's assumed, that it's accountable, that it's together, and that it's praiseworthy. So we'll take those one at a time. So it's assumed. He has lots of things to criticize the Corinthians for, and he's not ashamed to do that.

But there is no criticism which says you must take the Lord's Supper, why aren't you doing that? They do it. And this is very early on in the Christian history, and we, I think, must assume that that's what they did.

That's how things got off as they started. They just do, that's what Christians do, they do the Lord's Supper. you wouldn't say to the scriptwriters of Midsummer Murders, oh by the way, do include a murder this time, won't you?

Don't just make it a love story. And they would say, well, it's Midsummer Murders, there's a clue in the title, there's always murders in Midsummer Murders, there's actually several of them usually, because that's what it is, that's what they do.

And, you wouldn't go to Jeremy Clarkson and say, I'm a little bit concerned, when you do your next Top Gear, you will remember to include cars in it, won't you?

[ 32 : 02 ] And you say, that is so ridiculous, however Jeremy Clarkson speaks. We always do that, that's what Top Gear is about, we always have cars and we do stupid things with cars and we think we're fantastic doing it, that's what we do.

And Christians do the Lord's Supper, that's what we do. That's the one thing that Christians do do, they do the Lord's Supper. It's assumed, and I keep on asking this question, have we quite got that? Because they got that, they at least got that, it's assumed. Number two, it's accountable, it's accountable, there is choice and responsibility, there is praise and there is blame in the Lord's Supper.

So to take the Lord's Supper is to enter a world of choice and responsibility, of praise or blame. So I thought about the time that we went to Switzerland and we had a hire car, and it was a really nice car, it did all sorts of things, the wing mirrors sort of when you got in it the wing mirrors went ooh, like that, and the suspension did things as well, you got in and it went it's amazing this car, I paid all my money to hire it for 10 days or whatever it was, and they said, oh you do realise that if you get the slightest scratch on this, you're liable up to 2,000 pounds, and I thought, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on a minute, what am I getting into, what am I driving away, and of course they say, if you wish to be protected, you can take out an extra premium on this, have you had that experience

with hiring a car, you just suddenly realise you're taking on more than you thought, and I think we paid the extra premium actually, did you think you could get into that wonderful car and it just didn't matter, well no it does, because if you scratch it, there's praise or blame, if you get into a train at London

Road station, there's no barriers, you just walk onto the train, the train door's open, in you get, and do you realise that the moment you do that, you've sort of entered a contract by which the company will come to you and say, where's your ticket?

[ 34 : 18 ] Oh I didn't know I had to have a ticket, the door's just opened and I got on, no you've got to have a ticket, and if you don't have a ticket, you're liable to a fine of whatever, did you think it was free? Likewise with the Lord's Supper, did you think that you just take it without realising you're saying something, you're making some sort of commitment, you're entering some sort of covenant, if you like, and Paul says in verse 17, your meetings do more harm than good, I have no praise for you in this, your meetings do more harm than good, so it does something, he said I would really like to praise you for it, I'd like to say what wonderful meetings you have, how much they help people, but he says what I actually say is your meetings, so you have them eating, but it hurts people, it harms people, it damages spiritually, and in verse 27 he says whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord, so he says that there is a way of eating which is unworthy and brings judgment, that's what he says isn't it, there will be guilt and judgment, he says quite a bit about that, he says in verse 29, someone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the

Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself, and he says some of you have been weak and sickly, maybe some have died, he says that's God's judgment because you failed to realize how significant it was to take the Lord's supper, it was like you getting into that hire car with the wonderful wing mirrors and just driving it into a wall and then parking it by shunting other vehicles and you thought that didn't matter, well he says is this an accountable meal, the Lord judges people and if you were to flip back to chapter 6 there is something going on in verse, no that's the wrong, I think it's chapter 5 verse 11, chapter 5 verse 11 where he says that there are people within the fellowship who are behaving in extraordinarily immoral ways, they don't realize it, they're rather proud about it but it is immoral, and he says you can't have that, you need, there's an accountability there, and he says in verse 11 not to associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, a swindler, with such a man do not even eat, and that affects the

Lord's supper, it means that if you can't eat with people who say they're Christians but are behaving in that inconsistent way, you certainly can't have them at the supper, because that's sort of eating squared, if you like, so there is an accountability at the supper, this is the whole business of excommunication that you might have heard of and you might have thought this is just medieval mythology, but there is something in the Bible about saying if somebody says they're a Christian but behaves in such an inconsistent and outwardly grossly inconsistent way, they should not come to the Lord's table, they should not be communicating, they should not be in communion, so you put them out of that, so you can't come, that's excommunication, that's church discipline, and he says it's an accountable meal, okay let's not do the nuclear option of church discipline, but he says make sure that when you come, he's not saying make sure you're sinless, he's not saying make sure you're perfect, but he says make sure that you are genuine, genuinely putting your faith in Jesus Christ, genuinely doing that in fellowship with the other people around, it's an accountable meal, examine oneself before eating of the bread and drinking of the cup, third thing, it's a together meal, thing, and in Corinth, the things that Jesus said about the meal, all of you eat the bread, all of you drink the cup, and as I was reminded as Chris read in chapter 10, because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one loaf, it's a together thing, and in Corinth, the problem was not so much that people were absent, but the groups were divided from one another by unconcern, lack of consideration, selfishness, pride, bread, and so as they ate, one group said, well we've got ours, you know, it'll go cold if we don't eat it now, so we're setting off on eating our part of this, presumably some sort of bring and share meal, and other people perhaps couldn't afford to bring anything, and were sitting there hungry, and the two, there was no connection between them, some of them were getting drunk, some of them were perhaps stuffing their faces, now verse 34, he says, if anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together, it may not result in judgment, so I don't know whether he's saying if you really want to stuff your

face, stuff your face at home, and be more dignified when you get together, I'm not quite sure, I think that one through, but the point is that they weren't doing it together, they were just separate cliques, divisions, individuals, and he says to do this, verse 22, is to where am I, to despise the church of God, and humiliate those who have nothing, he says that's a very terrible thing to do, together at the supper, but not really considering one another, and he says this is the church of God,

Christ died for these people, and whatever socio-economic group you are, or whatever philosophy you subscribe to, every single one of you is bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, that's what you should be thinking, to say otherwise is to despise the church of God, and humiliate those who have nothing, and he puts the same thing, I believe it's the same thing in verse 29, he says it in a different way, you're eating and drinking without recognizing the body of the Lord, I don't think he's meaning, you don't realize the meaning of the bread, I think he's meaning you don't realize the meaning of the assembly, you don't realize that we together are the body of the Lord, and you're just not treating the assembly with that respect, the body that gathers ought to be the body of the Lord, so in many meetings

[ 42 : 00 ] Christians will say all welcome, the more the merrier, but at the Lord's Supper we don't say the bigger number we can get by just getting in casual people from nowhere, it's the body of the Lord that ought to gather, so the body that gathers ought to be the body of the Lord, and the body of the Lord ought to gather, we ought to be all there, and we should honor and respect that gathering, it's a very special togetherness.

Fourth thing, it's a partaking which ought to be praiseworthy, so I'm reversing what he says, he says in verse 34, that the way you guys do it in Corinth results in judgment, and I think if he says that, we could flip the sentence the other way around and say it ought to result in the opposite of that, it ought to result in honor, it ought to be a meeting in which people go home saying, I've seen something great as we gather together, seen something glorious, seen something wonderful, been part of something wonderful.

You see, at the beginning he said your meetings do more harm than good, so flip that on its head, he's saying, I think he's saying, that meeting ought to really do good. People ought to be able to come to that meeting and they might feel a bit low and a bit miserable and they've lost focus, but as they go through the wonders of meeting around the Lord's table, eyes are opened, hearts are set on fire as the Lord meets his people at the table.

It's a general principle for the Corinthians, he keeps coming back to it, he comes back to it in chapter 14. Do stuff that builds up the church. They're quite keen on having activities that were sort of like fireworks that made everybody go wah, whoosh, like that.

But he says, no, I don't really want that. I want this to be something that builds up the church so that the whole group feels, yes, we were together in that. Yes, that's opened my eyes afresh and go home skipping and jumping.

[ 44 : 29 ] It ought to be upbuilding, edifying, elevating, refreshing, recalibrating. And I like the word elevating and that came from Reverend Ian Hamilton.

One of the old wordings of very ancient communion service says the celebrant, the chap at the front says, lift up your hearts to the Lord.

And the people in the congregation say we lift up our hearts to the Lord. God. And I'm not saying that just because it's ancient wording, it has more authority than the Bible, but it's on the right track, it seems to me.

As we gather together around the table, it should be uplifting and that we should lift up our hearts to the Lord, whether we use those words or not, and an elevating experience.

in particular, we meet at an eating and drinking occasion. And it seems to me correct to say that as we come around the table, Christ feeds us on himself.

[ 45 : 48 ] It looks like a meal and surely, spiritually, it is a meal. And as we gather, we feed on Christ. That's how it ought to be. Don't say we're always as good at it as we should be, but that's how it ought to be.

That's what the supper really is about. There are the things that we've looked at. We looked at history past, the fact of the cross, that's where we're pointed to.

Remembering in the present. Jesus wants us to keep remembering it. I think that's perhaps a clue as to how often we do this. You know, we do it before we've forgotten the last time we did it, if you think.

It's looking forward to the future. It focuses us on not on this world, but on the world to come. The partaking of the supper, it's assumed that we will do it.

It just is. It's an accountable meal. So, I would hesitate to say, but I think that some of us perhaps ought to take more seriously what's going on at the supper.

[ 46 : 50 ] It's a together meal. we should make it a great event together. And it's a praise-worthy thing. We pray and aim for Christ to bless and feed us around his table.

And may God fulfill those things in a real measure as we go forward with the Lord's Supper together. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing number 659.

Thank you.