

Growing through the Lord's Supper

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Date: 27 January 2013

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[0 : 00] We have been looking at the subject of living and growing in the Christian life. Living the Christian life, keeping the Christian life going, is not a small topic in itself.

! Growing in the Christian life is something we want to be fruitful, we want to be changing and we are given to understand that as we are growing in the Christian life. As we go on with the Lord, we will change and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. What have we said? Well, so far we have said this.

We began by saying that if you want to grow something, you have got to put it in good soil. And the only soil that there is for a Christian is Jesus Christ himself.

That our lives need to be rooted, not in church, not in being religious, not in things, but in Jesus Christ.

[1 : 07] We are to be rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ himself. And then we said that there are positive things that we can do.

It isn't something so spiritual that only God does this and we just sit and do nothing. So we talked about the importance of the word of God and prayer.

And there was that little song which says, read your Bible, pray every day, which is good advice. It doesn't say exactly that in the Bible.

But what it does say would be a good way of putting it into practice, to read our Bibles and to pray every day.

And then we looked at the matter of the community of Jesus Christ. We're not meant to be like the Lone Ranger.

[2 : 02] I don't know whether anybody can remember the Lone Ranger. Anybody remember the Lone Ranger? Me and Julie can remember the Lone Ranger. The Lone Ranger was a cowboy. He was a goody. It was in the days when you were allowed to have goodies and baddies.

And he was a goody. You could tell that because he had a white hat. And he went and solved every problem pretty much by himself. Well, not exactly, but pretty much.

Christians aren't expected to live the Christian life like the Lone Ranger. We're meant to live the Christian life in a community together to help one another, to encourage one another, to bear one another's burdens, to pray together, etc., etc.

And there was a verse in the Bible which said something like this, Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but encourage one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

He says, get together. And if you remember, I gave you the example of coals on a fire. And if you put them together, the fire burns brightly. If you separate them, then each coal, each burning coal goes out.

[3 : 16] And Christians are a little bit like that. And today, I want to look at the Lord's Supper. It's a subject we hardly ever look at. I have to say that it has been the subject of much controversy over 2,000 years of church history.

And the idea of solving all that, all that 2,000 years of controversy in about half an hour that we have this morning is, we're probably unlikely to do that.

But we can at least make a start. The Lord's Supper, the bread and the wine. It is the thing that Jesus commanded.

Well, Jesus commanded a number of things. He commanded, go into all the world and make disciples, didn't he? But I'm thinking this is the particular outward thing.

The particular, if you like, almost like a ritual. Something that you do. There are not many things that Jesus commanded like that.

[4 : 23] The baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just those two particular outward signs. The particular outward thing that Jesus commanded.

He commanded his church to do this. He didn't command everybody to do it. He commands everybody to have faith in him.

But he doesn't command everybody to have the Lord's Supper. He says, this is something for his church to do. Not just to think about. But to do. Do this in remembrance of me, Jesus said.

And it has of a limited validity. It is till he returns. It's something for this age of the church. And it will be fulfilled in the world to come.

But this is something. The particular outward thing that Jesus commanded his church to do. Till his return.

[5 : 24] So let us turn to Matthew 26. Does that make sense so far? That's just the introduction. I hope it makes sense. Yep.

Yep. Yep. Yep. Yep. Now, let's look at the original text. So please turn to Matthew 26.

This is where it comes from. And let's see, if we can, what it actually says. Matthew 26.

And thank you to Chris for reading it. If we look in the context of it, at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, at the beginning of chapter 26, this is how it leads up.

Jesus says to his disciples, As you know, the Passover is two days away, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified. The chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas.

[6 : 39] And they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. But not during the feast, they said, or there may be a riot among the people. So if we go back to that bit, we have Jesus' lethal enemies plotting against him.

Just two days away, things are moving towards their fulfillment. And Jesus' enemies are plotting. How can we arrest him?

How can we kill him? We also have, as part of the story, the next bit, verses 6 to 13, in which Jesus has his devoted followers.

And this story, if you just scan your eye over it, Matthew 26, verses 6 to 13, is this woman who has a jar of very expensive perfume, and she pours this on his head.

And we're told that this is a beautiful thing, which she does, verse 12, when she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.

[7 : 45] I tell you the truth, whenever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. So that's something we're to remember as well. Jesus had people plotting against him.

He also had people who loved him. And this woman is an example of that. She loved him so much, she took this very, very expensive perfume, and ruined the whole lot, if you like, by pouring it over Jesus.

And he said, that's a beautiful thing. So that's part of it too. We have the presence of the betrayer, in verse 14.

One of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests. So all this turn of events is clicking into place, and Judas goes to arrange to betray Jesus.

From then on, it says in verse 16, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. And then we come to this meal, this Passover meal.

[9 : 03] And in verse 17, as was read to us, the disciples say, where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

And I'm going to pick out two words from that. One is preparation, and the other is Passover.

Preparation is significant, because it really shows that all of these events are not random, they are not accidents, they don't just happen somehow.

There is a sense of preparation, and it's particularly true of this meal. It's all prearranged. There's a plan being put into operation. Where shall we prepare the Passover?

And some of the details show that Jesus has been planning this all the time. And if we go on through, let's see whether I've got this all correct.

Jesus mentions the betrayer, verse 20, one of you will betray me. And in this very poignant, very poignant meal, they're all gathered round.

[10 : 20] And I think they're probably not doing much joking. They probably used to joke with each other at various times. Look at you, Peter, always putting your foot in it, aren't you? And, I don't

know, all sorts of jokes they probably made with one another.

But I don't think they make any jokes now. Because Jesus has said, I'm going to die. And that makes them a bit quiet. And then Jesus says, and one of you is going to betray me. And the translation says, they were very sad. They were hugely sad. They were struck with sadness.

One of us is going to betray you. And they say, is it me? And Jesus says, well, one of you, one of you 12, is going to betray me.

So that makes the meal even more. You know, they're thinking, they're quiet, they're sad, they're wondering, what is happening here? What is going on?

[11:32] Jesus has been so popular. He's always been in control of events. And he says, he's going to be betrayed. And then, as the Passover meal continues, our Gospel writer doesn't tell us the normal things that would happen at the Passover meal.

He picks out this very unusual thing in verse 26. While they're eating, Jesus takes bread and he gives thanks and he breaks the bread, which I understand would be the traditional way of hosting a meal.

He breaks the bread and he gives it to his disciples and he says, take, take, take, take, take, take, take and eat, eat, eat, eat, eat.

Take it and eat it. He gives it to his disciples saying, take it and eat it and he adds, this is my body. And they take it and eat it and they're thinking, what does he mean?

This is my body. He's standing here or sitting here at the table. That's his body. Jesus says, take and eat. This is my body. And then at a certain point in the meal, there is a cup.

[13:03] Verse 27. So have I got this right? As the bread, take, eat, this is my body. And then there comes a cup. He takes the cup and gives thanks and offered it to them and says, drink from it, all of you.

Drink from it. Drink from it. Drink from it. Drink from it. You notice how he sort of makes it certainly not optional. It's almost very personal actually.

All of you. Take, drink this, drink this, drink this, drink this. Drink from it, all of you. And then he says some more things that they must have wondered what he meant.

He says, this is my blood. This is my blood of the covenant. We've already got a covenant.

We've got the covenant with Moses. It stretches back years. And Jesus says, this is the covenant. We've already got covenant blood.

[14:05] We've had lambs and bulls slaughtered down through the centuries. It was all there in Exodus and Deuteronomy. And Jesus says, no, this is the covenant. This is the covenant.

This is my blood of the covenant. And he says a little bit more as well. He says, it's poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

So he's actually saying a lot, isn't he? I'm sure they wouldn't have been able to take it all in. But the words are imprinted on their hearts and minds.

Take it. Drink it. This is my blood. This isn't your blood, Lord. You've got your blood, your blood. I can see your blood there. It's in you. No. He says, this is my blood of the covenant the covenant which is poured out.

Well, it isn't poured out. Well, it will be poured out for many, for many, many of all nationalities across the world, for many, for the forgiveness of sins.

[15:23] How our nation, they're thinking, has longed for a sacrifice that can successfully achieve the forgiveness of sins.

The blood of bulls and goats has been shed day in, day out, week in, week out, for hundreds and hundreds of years and our sins have never yet been taken away.

And Jesus says, this covenant blood is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink.

So they do. And there's one other element that I think is important. He says, I'm looking forward.

Verse 29, I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Jesus is saying, that finishes one period of time and I'm looking forward, I'm looking forward to another feast, if you like, in the kingdom.

[16:35] He's not entirely clear as to when that will be but he's certainly looking forward to it. He says, this is it's this is the meal we have now and I'm looking forward to a fulfillment.

I'm not sort of looking with sadness and saying, well this is it guys, all come to a sticky end. He's saying, this is a moment but there is a future that I'm looking forward to.

Okay, that's what it says in Matthew's gospel. Now, I think I have identified the main points that Matthew makes.

so we're now going to look at Mark's gospel and Mark chapter, I think it's chapter 14 and it would be an excellent thing to go through this very carefully.

I don't think we have time to go through it extremely carefully but we can at least go through it. Mark 14 so if you look at Mark chapter 14 you will notice the same thing at the beginning of Jesus' lethal enemies.

[17:56] Mark 14 sorry nice and loud 1020 page 1020 Mark's gospel gospel the same thing the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

So when Mark tells us the same thing he says yeah same key ingredients Jesus lethal enemies are plotting against him.

So I'm just going to put a tick there because that's the same in Mark's gospel. And then the next story that Mark tells us Mark 14 verse 3 onwards is the same one about the woman with the expensive perfume and Jesus says according to Mark yes this is a beautiful thing and whenever the gospel is preached people will read this story and remember this beautiful thing that the woman did. So that's the same actually in Mark's gospel the devoted follower. And in Mark 14 verse 10 we have Judas Iscariot arranging to betray Jesus.

So that's the same as well. So we've got that confirmed. And in Mark 14 verse 12 we have the same thing from the disciples.

[19:19] Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover? The same idea of it all being prepared. So I'm just going to put a tick on my list on the screen and I'm going to follow down to the time where they're sitting around the table verse 17 and they're eating and they're just as quiet as when I described it before and then Jesus says I tell you the truth one of you will betray me one who is eating with me and they're all saddened and one by one they say surely it's not me it's not me that's going to do that horrible!

then in verse 22 while they were eating Jesus took bread gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples saying take it this is my body see the same thing take it I'm giving it to you take it take it this is my body and then verse 23 then he took the cup gave thanks offered it to them and they all drank from it wording slightly different but the main points are exactly the same verse 24 this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many he said to them doesn't say forgiveness of sins but he says the blood of the covenant verse 25 I tell you the truth I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God hope so

I'm just pointing out we're not going on one isolated text we've got two texts now which say very substantially the same thing and I take it that where there's a little extra in one or a little extra in another that Jesus actually said both of those things it's just that one writer has decided to keep his account manageable one way and another writer another way let's turn to Luke's gospel let's turn to Luke's gospel chapter 22 so you want to go forward in your bible could you get sorry please 1057 page 1057 so this is Luke's gospel and chapter 22 we have the chief priests and the teachers of the law at the beginning we have

Judas at the beginning in verse 4 we don't have the woman pouring out the expensive ointment so if I use a red pen we've got the lethal enemies we've got the betrayer we have a lot about preparation verse 8 go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover where do you want us to prepare for it and all the things that were combining to the prearranged plan verse 13 so they prepared the Passover verse 14 when the hour came Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table and he said to them I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer for I tell you I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God interestingly two things here Jesus says how important this supper is to me

I eagerly desired to have this meal with you this is a very important time for us together it's a crucial time and I eagerly desired to do this because I'm going to suffer and he says the thing about hope there will be a future feast this is just in between there will be a future feast so I'm going to put a tick against the future hope that I've written on the screen and in verse 19 we've already had one cup in verse 19 it says he took bread gave thanks and broke it he gave it to them saying this is my body given for you do this in remembrance of me now you'll notice actually the word remembrance hadn't occurred in the other two accounts but it does come here so let me put that there memory

remembrance remembrance remembrance how do you spell it remembrance remembrance so [24 : 35] Luke is the one who actually uses that word in that point and then in verse 20 after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood you notice new is I don't think new was used before so I'll put new that helps explain things doesn't change things it helps explain things it's the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you doesn't mention the forgiveness of sins at that point but the idea of betrayal is there the hand of him who's going to betray me is with mine on the table and that is what Luke says does anybody know if we go to John's gospel which chapter we would go to for John and the last supper the answer is

John doesn't actually mention the last supper as such he does have a chapter about unless unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you I think that's perhaps why John doesn't have the last supper as such the bread and the wine there are two other chapters that mention this we'll look at 1 Corinthians chapter 11 it's mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 but we'll go to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 simply because of time in fact we might look back at 11 at 10 in a moment 1 Corinthians 11 and this is Paul talking to the early church about what has become for them a settled meal this is what they do and in it's got a name now in chapter 11 verse 20 he thank you whatever you just said that's the page 1 Corinthians 11 verse verse 20 1 Corinthians 11 verse 20 he says when you come together he has criticisms they're eating something but he says you couldn't really call it the Lord's Supper you ought to be able to call it the Lord's Supper but you can't really because you do it so badly that's what he's saying 1 Corinthians 11 verse 20 when you come together it is not the Lord's Supper you eat for as you eat each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else one remains hungry another gets drunk don't you have homes to eat and drink in he says you're doing it so badly you're not noticing one another you're being so selfish about it it ought to be the Lord's Supper that's the name of it but the way you do it you've you're not doing it right but interestingly as he says to the church in a nutshell what is what is going on this is what he says verse 23 this is what I received from the Lord and this is what I passed on to you the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed you notice that historical reference the night of betrayal he 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 very like the wording of Luke in the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me so we get remembrance twice there so this is the way

Paul has has got it this is the way he says these are the essential parts of it which I'm passing on if you boil it right down and he says in verse 26 whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death yeah that's what it's about the Lord's death until he comes you notice that future looking forward it's a so there's a very similar pattern here and I will look back at 1 Corinthians 10 just go back one page and what we notice here is as he refers to the Lord's supper the fact that when you're when you're taking the Lord's supper you are involving yourself with the Lord or the Lord is involving you with himself verse 16 is not the cup of thanksgiving this is 1 Corinthians 10 16 for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ because there is one loaf we who are many notice the many there are one body for we partake of the one loaf and he's making a number of points there but we just notice that he's saying there's something going on when you take the bread and the wine you are participating you are joining yourself with you're involving yourself you're saying this is me this is me and the

Lord so those are the texts and really and truly there are not more very many more texts than that those are the texts please notice there is not a single mention of a priest did you notice that there is not a single mention of getting a priest to do this it just says you guys you do this you eat bread you drink wine that's what you do so various things that you think you might think are there but they aren't there so what I would like to do now is bring you seven or eight comments on the text that we've read that's all I want to do so here we are comments and observations which I hope will be helpful number one this meal goes back to Jesus himself this meal goes back to Jesus himself it is not a human invention it is not that some church or other said oh we'll do that what a good idea we haven't got a photograph of Jesus we'll do a meal instead it is not a human invention it is Jesus who said Jesus said that's what I want you to do guys it's not a particularly protestant thing the protestants don't have a monopoly it's not a protestant invention it is not a Roman catholic invention it is not a Greek orthodox invention it is Jesus who said to all his followers you do this it goes back to Jesus himself number two it goes back to the one off sacrificial death of

Jesus that's what it goes back to though that night what was going to happen a day later it goes back to the time when people were plotting the death of

[32 : 15] Jesus it goes back to those hours where this woman went and poured stuff over his head and Jesus said that's exactly right because I'm going to die in just a few hours time that is a very appropriate thing to do!

it goes back to all the emotions and the fears and the pressures of that one occasion when the Son of God died on the cross for our sins Paul himself says on the night that Jesus was betrayed that's what it goes back to the blood that Jesus is speaking of is the blood of Good Friday it's the blood that was poured out not all the time not ever since the foundation of the world but the blood that was poured out on one occasion on one day when the king of kings had a crown of thorns put on his head when the king of kings was nailed to a cross when the king of kings was put between two thieves and they made fun of him and spat on him and whipped him the day when the sky went dark because of what was happening the day when

Jesus cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me it goes back to that one one off once sacrificial death where good Friday blood was shed and one body was crucified and later raised from the dead it goes back to that one sacrifice which sorted things out forever item two item three originally the idea of body sorry bread body wine blood!

Originally there is a strong association but there is not a confusion as Jesus stood there his body no he wasn't standing he was sitting down at the table or lying down at the table there's his body and there's his blood here's the bread here's the wine Jesus says I want you to associate these things but they're not the same thing don't confuse them that's my body this is bread but the bread sort of is like my body or symbolizes my body in the same way that Jesus said I am the bread of life I'm the bread of life he said things like that I am the gate didn't mean he was made out of wood he meant that the things that gates do in a sense he does the things that bread does he does the things that this particular bread symbolizes and means is like his body he's making a strong association he's not trying to confuse the two things as if they're the same chemistry or something like that if you want to say it's not literally that would be one way of saying it he's not saying this bread is literally my body because his literal body is there he's saying there's a strong association strong association so please let us not be unclear about this that when we have the communion the bread is bread and the wine is wine well actually it's not even wine it's usually fruit juice but it doesn't become anything different there's no magic about it but

Jesus has put this strong association with the bread and himself and this strong association with the wine and himself but it doesn't confuse the two things so we're disagreeing with the doctrine that says that there is some sort of magical change in the bread we're disagreeing with that but we are saying that there is a very special strong association with the bread and Jesus body etc number four the meal is full of meaning in many different ways so if you wanted a clever word for it you would say it was polyvalent so if you ever read anything which says something is polyvalent you mean I know what that means it means it is full of meaning in many different ways why didn't just say so the Lord's supper is full of meaning in many different ways he says think of the

[37 : 23] Passover when the lamb died instead of the first born do you remember that in Exodus and the angel was going to kill the first born but the lamb's blood the lamb was killed and the lamb's blood was put on the door posts and when the angel was going the angel of the Lord was going to say this death is deserved here then the angel would see the blood of the lamb and say that's fine with me the lamb has died instead no further business with this house I'm going to pass on to the next one and Jesus is saying that's the meal that I'm linking my meal with it's a bit like that a bit like the Passover and there's a lot you could say about that of course Jesus himself of course is the lamb he talks about covenant he says this is a covenant meal this is the new covenant and there's a whole loads of meaning here that we could draw out the covenant is

God's promise to a group of people to bind himself to those people to save those people to bless those people and Jesus says the old covenant promised all those things couldn't do it was weakened didn't have the oomph to provide those benefits so those are the benefits that it spoke of and they only had them in part but this is the covenant my blood does those things my blood saves people my blood brings people to God my blood seals it so that these people are in the hands of God and nothing can ever take them away that's covenant that's what I do says Jesus this is what this blood does the blood is forgiveness bringing blood the blood cleanses the blood takes all the charges all the guilt all the stain all the sin all the wrong that is truly ours all the things that we've

done and thought and the blood has the power to take away every stain to cleanse every spot to wash completely there is wonder working power in the blood of the lamb isn't there this blood provides total complete unchallengeable forgiveness to the people of God this blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins and it doesn't fail to provide it the blood is poured out for many you could draw that out this is linking back to what Isaiah prophesied with the suffering servant my suffering servant will justify many we thought he'd been struck and crushed by the Lord but by his wounds we are healed the punishment that brought us peace was laid on him that all that you could bring out with that idea of the many that's in there and the idea of pouring out why does Jesus say pouring out which he does well I suppose at very least this is saying something about the fullness of this sacrifice the fact that it isn't just a few drips and

I was going to say drips and drops but that can't be right drips and drops or dribs and drabs it isn't a little bit of salvation there's a pouring out there is a fullness to what he has done it's full of meaning and I'm just touching on some of the threads that you could pull that we're meant to pull they lead in all different directions number five number five there's a strong link to kingdom future there is a strong link we do this until he comes Jesus says I'm doing this and I won't drink again until the kingdom feast when we eat this meal we're looking forward we're saying one less time we have this meal together we're one time what am I trying to say one time fewer that much nearer to the one step closer that would be better one step closer to the time when we sit down at table with Abraham and Isaac and many from the north and south and east and west and sit at feast in the kingdom of God that's what he's saying here we are but that's one step closer to that final destination number six there is a permanent expectation or if you like a permanent standing order for Christians to celebrate the Lord's supper that's why I pointed out that Jesus has this sort of proactive take eat take drink he's not saying well here it is help yourselves he's saying I want you to eat this and drink this and as Paul understood it and as the Corinthian church understood that what you do that is what Christians do it is a distinctively Christian thing singing isn't a distinctively [43 : 22] Christian thing because all sorts of religions sing and praying isn't a distinctively Christian thing because all sorts of religions pray and having scripture reading isn't a distinctively Christian thing because all sorts of people have scriptures but having the Lord's Supper the body and blood remembered in the bread and wine is distinctively Christian only Christians do that in a sense it is one thing that marks out Christians as Christians in a way that nothing else does who are you? what is you as a church?

we're the people who eat the bread and drink the wine that's what we are we're the people who hold the Lord's Supper never really think of it like that do we? but it makes sense and in order to be the church that eats the Lord's Supper what do we have to be?

we have to be the church that believes in Jesus Christ we have the right to come to the table if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and nothing else qualifies us and nothing else can stop us coming to the table if we are believers in the Lord I'm sure Jesus had a purpose in ordering that we should do this in saying he wanted us to do it and I think we could infer from that it is for our benefit and for our growth that's why it's good to encourage one another to come to the Lord's table I think Jesus wanted us to do that because it's good for us I mean I can tell you one reason because it's remembering and it's very easy to forget isn't it?

we forget so quickly things that are so powerful and real to us on Sunday by Tuesday lunchtime we're overtaken by something else very easily Jesus says remember I want you to keep remembering I want you to keep coming back to square one and the supper does that we come in this supper we grow via Christ because it's Christ himself who is at the centre of it and by faith because that's the way we come to Christ I've put there it's not a converting ordinance a little bit technical there was a huge debate about this in New England in the time of what's his name? Jonathan Edwards because he said you shouldn't bring your children to the supper it doesn't make them Christians and of course he was in a little bit of a pickle about this because if you'll pardon me putting it this way being a Presbyterian he believed that you could baptise children and so if they're baptised why can't they take communion?

[46 : 29] well I do agree that's a pickle because I think you baptise people who have faith and the people who come to the supper have faith it's one and the same thing and you can't so coming to the supper doesn't make you a Christian if you're not already a Christian you become a Christian by coming to Christ number seven almost finished it is not I believe an empty symbol there's whole loads of discussion on this but this is the way I would like to put it when we come to the table it's not

like just looking at a photograph where you look at it and you think oh I remember oh look at that suit god do we have suits like that in those days you don't you don't just look at it and remember you eat something and I think that's going a huge step further in terms of involvement and I put there it's not an empty symbol and this is the way that seems to make sense to me when you eat and drink something what's that saying?

it's saying that eating and drinking is sustaining us so if you're hungry you eat something don't you? if you're thirsty you drink something it does you good and very often in God's wonderful grace our meals are enjoyable as well it's not as though we're designed to run on cardboard and and just water we eat and drink things that we enjoy so I put delightful there and life giving and what I'm trying to get at here is when we come to the Lord's table it looks like a meal it looks like something that's sustaining and does us good and is delightful and life giving and it seems to me to be a bit unbelievable that Jesus should make it only look like that without actually in some sense doing the things that it looks as though it's doing Christ does not make this an empty symbol but a spiritually real symbol as we come to the table it looks as though it's sustaining us in some spiritual sense it does sustain us we come to the table and it looks as though it's doing us good and in some sense it does do us good we come to the table and it looks as though we're doing something that is delightful and spiritually we do meet Christ in a way which is delightful it looks as though it's life giving and in a spiritual sense there is it is life-giving. Christ imparts something to us in this symbol, which is not an empty symbol.

So finally, what goes on when we come to the table? I think we're probably not particularly good at understanding this. I'll include myself in this. But I've got some suggestions.

What goes on when we come to the table? I think Christ is dealing with us and saying something to us, something along these lines. I think Christ is saying, just as surely as you have this bread in your mouth, as if you're feeding on a meal, I'm feeding you. I want you to understand that as you come to the table, just think of this, the reality of it, I'm feeding you. And as you drink the wine, I am, the blood is applied to you. There is, I put, I'm washing you. I think that's the only way I can make the idea work. Christ says, as surely as you are drinking this, I do wash you. I am washing you this moment. Just be really assured of it, because it's not an empty symbol. And as we come round the Lord's table, he says, I'm giving this, just as in those days I said, come on, take this, eat this. It's me being given to you. Take this, eat this. Take this, eat this. Just as I said this in those days, take eat. I'm saying it to you now round the table. Come on, brother or sister, you feel so terrible. You feel as though you've let me down so much. But I'm saying, come on, take and eat. I'm feeding you. I'm imparting myself to you even as we do this. Do you see what I'm trying to say? I think the believer is saying something. The believer is saying, I need Christ.

Christ, I need to feed on him. Can't manage without him. And in taking the meal, I'm saying, yeah, I'm signing up for that. And as we sit round together and we look round at one another, we're saying, well, guys, we're all in this together. We're all sinners. We're all saved by grace. We all need the Lord Jesus. And as we take the bread and drink the wine, we're saying, all those promises that Jesus offered, I'm up for that. I take it. I receive it. I'm not refusing it. I'm not saying it won't work for me. I'm humbling myself and saying, those promises, they're for me. I do take and I do receive them. And we're saying things like this. He had to die. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. There is no plan B. As we come round the table, we're saying, I need this. I need a saviour who died for me. I need somebody whose blood was shed and whose body was broken. I need that. And we're saying, he feeds me. We're saying, his blood works for me. I accept this. I don't dispute it. His blood avails for me. We're saying, one less time. I agree with that. One less time here on earth, one step closer to the great feast in heaven. And as Jesus looked forward to that, as we come round the table, we're saying, yeah. We believe that. We believe that. And we're looking forward to the great feast in glory when we shall see his face and be with him forever.