

This is my body

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Preacher: Benjamin Wilks

[0 : 0 0] We're reading this morning in the Gospel according to Luke, and as Benjamin said, we're reading from chapter 22. We'll read from verse 7 through to verse 38. Luke chapter 22, beginning at verse 7.

Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which a Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

Where do you want us to prepare for it, they asked. He replied, as you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, the teacher asks, where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished.

Make preparations there. They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 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. After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, take this and divide it among you. For I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, this is my body given for you. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him. They began to question among themselves which of them it might be that would do this. A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

Jesus said to them, the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater?

[3 : 2 8] The one who is at the table? The one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials, and I confer on you a kingdom, just as my father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. But he replied,

Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Jesus answered, I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows today, you will deny three times that you know me. Then Jesus asked them, when I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything? Nothing, they answered.

He said to them, but now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag. And if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written, and he was numbered with the transgressors.

And I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment. The disciples said, see, Lord, here are two swords. That's enough, he replied. Amen.

So do have open in front of you, if you can, those verses from Luke chapter 22. We'll be focusing on verse 14 and following this morning. As we continue now into these final chapters of Luke's gospel, as we're approaching the cross, the tension is rising in these verses, isn't it? We looked last week at those different plans being put in place, the plan of the chief priests and Judas alongside Jesus' own plan. These pieces moved into position, ready for things to take their course.

[6 : 23] And our passage this morning, verse 14, begins with the phrase, when the hour came. This isn't just a simple chronology. This isn't just storytelling. You can imagine the bell tolling as you watch the film. David Garland says this is a solemn chiming of the hour, heralding the doom-laden events to come.

This is serious things that are happening, the bell tolls. The hour has come. And knowing how events are going to unfold, knowing the pace of what is in store, Jesus not only prepares himself for the cross, Jesus also prepares his disciples. He equips the twelve apostles and with them equips us to understand the things that must soon take place. And this equipping takes the form not of words to memorize, but his equipping is in the form of giving them something to do, a meal to eat.

And as with so much of what Jesus said and did, this new stage is rooted in what has gone before. It's rooted in the Old Testament. To understand what happens in this upper room, we need to know something of our Old Testaments. Remember, they're here in this room because that's where they've prepared to eat the Passover. Now, Jesus doubtless has celebrated the Passover many times, traveling to Jerusalem with his parents as a little boy, down through the years. This is an old tradition that goes back to the days of Egypt, of the Exodus. This isn't something begun by Jesus. But Luke doesn't record the Passover each year. Luke records this particular Passover. Because here the Passover is not just celebrated, the Passover is transformed, fulfilled. But to understand how it's transformed and fulfilled, first we do need to understand the Passover itself. So come back with me to Exodus chapter 11. The Lord said to Moses, I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold. The Lord made the

Egyptians favorably disposed towards the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people. So Moses said, this is what the Lord says. About midnight, I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. This tenth plague, this is the most dramatic, the most painful of the mighty deeds that God did to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt. God sends the angel of death to kill every firstborn child. But that isn't the full story, is it? God made provision for his own people. God tells them to take an unblemished lamb. Remember, we've been seeing in Leviticus, haven't we? Sacrifices are always the very best of the stock, always must be perfect, free from defect. They take an unblemished lamb, and chapter 12, verse 7, they are to take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the house where they eat the lambs. That same night, they're to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire with the head, legs, and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning. If some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it, with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. On that same night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. So God told his people to prepare this special meal. They've got the bitter herbs. They've got the roasted lamb. They've got bread made without taking time for yeast. There's no time for it to rise. They've got to be ready to go at any moment. They eat with their shoes on, with their bags packed, ready to leave at any moment.

[11 : 18] And they repeat this process every year, not because they're going to be leaving their homes at any moment every year, but in order that they might not forget the time when that was their situation.

In order that they might remember not only slavery in Egypt, but especially they might remember the rescue from slavery in Egypt. That they might remember God their rescuer, God their redeemer.

Every year at the Passover, the children ask, why are we doing this? And their father answers, because of that Passover night long ago when God redeemed his people, when he set them free.

And Jesus says he's eager to continue that. Jesus will not forget. Jesus eagerly desires to celebrate with his friends, to join together with them in remembering what God has done. And even more than that, even that remembering of what God did in Egypt all those years ago, more than that, he will see the Passover fulfilled. And so they go through the familiar ritual with the herbs and the cups and the bread and the lamb. And as they go through this ritual, Jesus transforms it. After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, take this and divide it among you. For I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Do you see how he takes the familiar rituals of the Passover, the different cups that are passed around at different stages?

He takes these familiar rituals and he shows how they point forwards to him. He shows how they are transformed in this new covenant reality. Instead of the lamb's body, Jesus' own. Instead of the lamb's blood daubed on the doorposts, Jesus' blood marks us as his own. Instead of an unblemished lamb taken from the flock, Jesus' blood. Jesus, the one truly unblemished, the one perfect sacrifice, the one sufficient sacrifice. Judgment is poured out this time on someone whose blood is actually sufficient.

[13 : 50] Hebrews 10.4, the blood of the Passover lamb, the blood of the lamb on the day of atonement, the blood of the animals cannot take away sin, but Jesus' blood does. So the Passover commemorated the deliverance, but even more than that, the Passover pointed forward to this greater deliverance, pointed forward to this fulfillment of the Passover in the kingdom of God.

And therefore we, we with the disciples are charged to do this in remembrance of him. That remembrance is the primary function of the Lord's Supper. This is a commandment, an instruction from our Lord Jesus, a commandment for us to observe lest we forget.

Please understand when we share communion together as God's people today, it is not a sacrifice. It is a sacrament. It is a fulfillment of a commandment. It is a remembrance. It is an ordinance.

It's a memorial, a calling to mind. This is commemorative, keeping fresh in our minds the sacrifice of Christ on that cross all those years ago. This is not in any sense a fresh sacrifice today.

But importantly, when we say this is an ordinance, that is to say it's a command of our Lord Jesus himself, a command that we should remember his death in this particular way by eating and by drinking.

[15 : 30] This is what he tells us explicitly to do. It's not a minor thing, is it? It's a command from Jesus' own lips. Maybe some maybe are inclined to stay away from the Lord's table because they value it too little.

Maybe some of you are listening to me online today. Maybe you feel no great sense of what you've lost by being at the other end of an internet connection instead of being here in the room.

Maybe you say to yourself, God can hear me when I pray wherever I might be. Maybe you say, God is pleased to accept my worship whether I'm in a room with other people or alone in my car singing along to a CD. You say, I can receive the food of God's Word when I read my Bible every day. I can even benefit from the preaching of God's Word, which thanks to modern technology is now available to me in abundance with the fuller experience of a video recording far superior to the cassette tapes of yesteryear.

You say to yourself, I have all these things here where I am in comfort. And there is at least a degree of truth to all of that. I could quibble with most of it to some degree, but that's not the point I'm making right now.

There are lots of parts of the Christian experience that don't depend on being in a room with other believers. But folks, the Lord's Supper is emphatically not in that category.

[16 : 57] To eat bread and drink wine is a physical act. You have to be actually present. And it's not the Lord's Supper if you're not doing it together with other believers gathered as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Jesus commanded you to do this. He instructed his disciples to share this meal together in remembrance of him. So if you are watching online at this moment or you're listening to a recording, if you're separated in that sense, and if Covenant Church is your church, then I say to you, please don't be content with joining in online.

Specifically, we'll be sharing the Lord's Supper together next Sunday morning. Please think carefully whether you might be able to be here. Look, I appreciate there are circumstances that make it difficult for some of you to be present.

But maybe even if attendance every week isn't feasible, maybe it is worth looking and saying, whether in obedience to our Lord's command to share this together, whether it might not be possible to attend in person from time to time.

On another tack, if you're watching online but you're not part of Covenant Church, if this isn't your own church and you're, well, if you're a member elsewhere and this is supplemental, you just want more of God's Word, well, well and good, more power to you.

[18 : 29] But if you are hopping from one online service to another and not really rooted anywhere, well, then I don't see how you're being obedient to this command.

You need somewhere where you can share the Lord's Supper together with His people. Find a church that you can be a part of. Participate fully in life in all its aspects.

And those of you who are here in person, well, still I have to ask, do we actually prioritize obedience to this command?

Are you actually organizing your life so as to be present on the first Sunday of each month when we share the Lord's Supper together? In the mornings, in odd-numbered months, and the evenings, on even numbers.

Or have you thought, well, okay, it's hard to come to the evening service every week. But I could come from time to time. I could come once every couple of months.

[19 : 37] Ryle asks, do we stay away from the Lord's Supper under a vague notion that there is no great necessity for receiving it? If we hold such an opinion, the sooner we give it up, the better.

A plain precept of God's own Son is not to be trifled with in this way. Maybe too small a view of the Lord's Supper produces neglect of it.

Perhaps perversely, so too might too high a view of it, or better, a distorted view of the meaning and purpose of coming to the table.

Because some, I think, are inclined to stay away, thinking ourselves unworthy of coming. We imagine that we're not fit to be communicants, and so we don't come to the table.

Some think themselves unfit to come at all, and therefore don't become members of the church, and don't ever come to the table for the first time, or not until they're advanced in years. Or some, though they have come to the Lord's table in that kind of first sense, then still from time to time consider themselves unworthy and choose to abstain.

[20 : 52] Perhaps we fear hypocrisy. We don't want to claim, or seem to claim, to be better than we are. Now there is such a thing as receiving the supper in an unworthy manner.

But in our present day and age, those inclined to count themselves unworthy are probably far more numerous than any St. Paul might have intended.

I found Donald MacLeod very helpful on this. He says, to come in an unworthy manner is to come in a way that's not controlled by the basic nature of the supper.

To come unworthily is to come in a way that disregards the purposes it was meant to serve. That was Paul's basic complaint. He speaks of this bread and this cup.

The Lord's Supper is not just any feast. It is not a party. It's not an orgy. What is it? It's a Eucharist. A giving of thanks.

[21 : 56] It's a proclamation. A declaration of the truth of the gospel. It's a commemoration. A remembering of what Jesus has done. It's a supper. It's an ordinance.

A command. You come worthily if in your coming you are controlled by these things. So the solution to the Corinthians sinful corruption of the Lord's Supper when Paul wrote to them, the solution for them was repentance and then come together.

well if you're convicted of your sin thinking that there might be a reason not to come well actually your response should be the same.

Repent and eat. We examine ourselves not in order to discover that we're too sinful this week to come and sit at the Lord's table. No, we examine ourselves in order that in seeing our sin we're reminded exactly why we do need to come.

In Matthew's account of this Jesus' last Passover meal Matthew records Jesus saying this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

[23 : 08] That's the purpose of it that we might be forgiven not that we might think we cannot come because our sins are too many but that seeing the magnitude of our sins we might know our need of our Saviour.

The supper's about remembering what Jesus has done for us which is precisely to provide atonement for our sins. So to refuse to participate because of a sense of our sinfulness shows we have missed the point profoundly.

To fail to partake is disobedience to Christ's command. Ryle sums up do we stay away from the Lord's supper because we're not fit to be communicants?

If we do let us thoroughly understand that we are not fit to die. Unfit for the Lord's table we are unfit for heaven and unprepared for the judgment day and not ready to meet God.

Surely this is a most serious state of things but the words before us are clear and explicit. Christ gives us a plain command. If we willfully disobey it we are in danger of ruining our souls.

[24 : 22] If we are not fit to obey it we ought to repent without delay. Repent and come to the table. Friends look again at your saviour.

Look again at Jesus who invites you here to sit at his table. Consider his character. reflect on his mercy and his grace.

We will be thinking more on this on his journey to the cross. We will be thinking more on this in the coming weeks. But for now let me point out another couple of things of his character in the latter part of this account from the upper room.

Consider how graciously Jesus treats his disciples here in these last hours of his life. Think for a moment. Imagine how disappointing and frustrating verse 24 ought to have been for Jesus.

Verse 24 a dispute also arose among the disciples as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Here he is telling them his blood is going to be shed and they are arguing about who's the best.

[25 : 41] Jesus has told them that someone in that very room is going to betray him. The son of man will go as it has been decreed.

One of those closest to him will be instrumental in his death. And the next minute they're talking not just about who will be the betrayer but who will be the greatest. Can you imagine the ugliness of that discussion can't you?

And Jesus does rebuke them. They're not to be like the kings of the Gentiles lording it over one another. But you see what an example he sets before them.

I am among you as one who serves. Verse 27. Jesus the supreme example of servant leadership.

Jesus the one who pours himself out for others. Who pours himself out throughout his life and supremely in his death. And this is the one who is entitled to all things.

[26 : 47] This is Jesus the firstborn over all creation choosing to be a humble servant of all. And then verse 28 he commends them.

They are the ones who have stood beside him through the trials. On that long and dusty road they've walked beside him. they've been there with him when he has had no place to lay his head nor have they.

Why does Jesus desire to eat this Passover with them? Because he loves them. He rejoices to celebrate with his friends.

They've been there beside him every day. He loves them. To Simon Peter. Simon who's going to disown and deny him.

We'll see that soon enough. To Peter Jesus offers an assurance. Not only will Satan not have him but Jesus has prayed that his faith may not fail but he will in fact turn back.

[27 : 55] Peter receives the assurance he will falter but will not ultimately fall. my friends what a wonderful savior we serve.

How beautiful he is. That this is how he acts. That this is the provision he makes for his disciples in that moment.

For all of us down through the ages and on into eternity. This is the one who served us. The servant king who gave his life that we might live.

The one who welcomes us to sit and to eat at his table. Let's pray. Lord Jesus the enormity of your willingness to be a servant of all is hard for us to comprehend because we lose sight of how glorious you are in yourself.

Of how far down you come in order to serve your people in this way. Lord, increase in us gratitude for what you have done.

[29 : 16] Increase in us obedience to your commands. Increase in us this same attitude patterned after you, our gracious savior, that we too might be servants of all.

For we ask it in the name of Jesus who served us. Amen.