

# Communion Give Thanks

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Matthew chapter 26. Matthew chapter 26. Let me read to you, beginning there in verse 26, and we'll carry down through to verse 28.

And he took a cup, and when he'd given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you.

For 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 again of the fruit of this vine until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Let us pray. Father, this morning, as we take your word in hand, we recognize that you have given to us in your word all that we need for life and godliness.

That it is here to instruct our hearts, to frame our thinking, to govern our behavior. That we, as your children, might live in this world in an upright and godly fashion and bring glory to our Savior, through whom we have salvation.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] We are thankful this morning that as we take your word in hand, that we may rely upon the Spirit of God working in the believer's life. That we may ask for his enabling to help us understand and appreciate and apply in daily living the truth that you have here for us.

Help our time in the word and before this table to affect our thinking and our behavior.

So that we would not be like those who Ezekiel spoke of, who hearing the prophet speak, spoke of him as one who sang well, but then remembered nothing afterwards.

My prayer is that we, together, would rely upon your Spirit and would rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ and have a longing in our heart for the day that we will see him face to face.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. We come this morning to the Lord's table. And when we come to this table, there are some very specific purposes that we have in mind.

[ 2 : 5 8 ] We are clearly persuaded that taking the elements, the bread and the cup, do not earn us extra bonus points or merit with God, correct?

No one can go out of here saying, well, I have assurance and confidence of my salvation because I took those things right there. We understand from the passage in 1 Corinthians that what we're engaging in this morning is we're reminding ourselves of something.

And over in the passage in 1 Corinthians, we remind ourselves, we remember the Lord's death till he come. I would like us this morning to kind of step into this passage in Matthew and think through the frame and then come down to one particular truth that I want us to kind of rest on.

How many of you, by nature, are thankful people? Raise your hands. Wave at me. All you who are just normally, all the time, really thankful.

Woo-hoo! You know, it's like, yes! The other day, I was in Home Depot. And I'm a frequent flyer there because we're in the remodeling stage of life.

[ 4 : 1 8 ] And the lady, some of you are looking at me like, when were you not in the remodeling stage of life? Well, I was in Home Depot and I was walking through the checkout counter and one of the ladies who knows me, she said, hey, you're a pretty happy guy.

And I said, well, not by nature. She looked at me and she said, no, no, you're a happy guy. Every time I see you, you're happy. I said, well, it has nothing to do with me.

I said, the truth of the matter is, is I was born profoundly unhappy and I stayed that way. And God has worked in my life through the Lord Jesus Christ to change the way I think and the way I act.

I still can wake up. My bride is back there. Hi, honey. And I can wake up moody without practice.

How many of you are in my space? My parents used to say things like, why don't you get out on the other side of the bed? You know, it's like, is that going to help? No. No. But the older I get and the more that the sweetness of our Lord Jesus resonates on my heart, the more I understand that thankfulness really flows from my appreciation and affection for him.

[ 5 : 56 ] And I want you to look at this passage this morning. And what I want you to do is when you walk away from here, I want you to ask yourself the question, does my life reflect thankfulness in the Lord Jesus?

To the point that your neighbors wonder, what's the deal with you? The people that you work with are attracted to the fact that in this doom and gloom world, there's a spirit in you that's unusual.

And they desire to know more about it. Well, I want you to look at the passage this morning and recognize there in the Matthew passage, what we're looking at is Jesus in this setting with his disciples, and they are gathering ostensibly to celebrate the Passover.

It was something that every Jew did, at least should have done. And it was a reminder to the nation of Israel that God had taken them out of the land of slavery when they had been under the boot of Egypt and had been suffering in that environment.

God took them out. And he did so by instructing Moses to speak to the people. And you'll remember what they did was they slaughtered a lamb, and they put the blood on the lentils and on both doorposts, and they stayed inside the night that God sent death through the entire nation of Egypt.

[ 7 : 29 ] And every firstborn died where there was not the blood on the lentil and the doorposts. And so every year the Egyptians or the Israelites were instructed that they were to celebrate the Passover, and they were to remind themselves that it had been through the sacrifice of the lamb, and it had been through the work of God that they had been redeemed from the iron furnace and from the suffering that they had endured.

And so here, in the shadow of the cross, Jesus had said to his disciples, I want you to go and have a room prepared for me where we are going to eat together.

It must have been with mixed emotion that they went about this, because just days earlier, remember they had had that phenomenal entrance into Jerusalem, and how had the people received them?

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! Hosanna! And the enthusiasm of the crowd must have been infectious for the disciples.

Now, things had turned a little south, though, because we know that they had a sense of foreboding as they gathered in this room, and Jesus spoke undeniably and very clearly about his death.

[ 8 : 50 ] They understood. They understood that something ominous was going to take place, and yet in the midst of the meal that they were partaking here, we find that Jesus does something quite unexpected.

Look there in verse 26. Now, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples. He said, Take, eat.

This is my body. And later, he said, This is my blood of the covenant. We often consider the meaning of these two statements and allow them to remind us of the fact that the bread and the cup really bring our focus and remind us of the fact that Jesus paid for our sins.

That is what these things point our thoughts to, that he died in our place, that he took our wrath. I want us to look at a smaller piece of the passage this morning, and I want us to really focus in on that one little statement that over the years has just gripped my heart over and over again, and it is that little statement where he says that he gave thanks.

He gave thanks. I have to tell you that learning how to be a thankful person is work. I can remember coaching my grandchildren in particular that thanks was something that was expected.

[ 10 : 29 ] There were please and thank you that went on either side of whatever their ambition or interest was. How many of you tried to work through that with your children or grandchildren? And there are various things that you do to kind of drive that point home.

One is when they come out and say, Hey, I'd like such and such. What do you do? Not on your life. Well, you didn't say the magic. You know, they're the things we kind of get into to help them learn.

And slowly, eventually, they kind of get it woven into their mind that they have to say please, and they have to say thank you. Now, we need to recognize that Jesus actually said thanks before both the bread and the cup.

And if you take the companion passages, you will see that in one, it speaks of him saying thank you for the bread, and the other, it says thank you for the cup. And I think we can weave the two together and understand that before each of the things that he did, he was saying thank you.

It was appropriate and part of Jewish custom that there was a prayer of blessing or thanks that preceded the meal. Yet given the moment, we can assume that Jesus did something that was not merely an expression of Jewish habit.

[ 11 : 44 ] So let's think about the significance of what we are dealing with this morning and allow it to resonate in our own heart and cause us to think carefully about our thankfulness for what we have in the Lord Jesus.

I want you to understand for one thing, Jesus understood exactly what lay in front. He knew what was coming. He knew that he was going to suffer.

He knew that he was going to be in great emotional trauma. He knew that he was going to be abandoned by his disciples. He knew that his father was going to forsake him.

He also understood the weight of sin that was going to rest on his shoulders, and he would bear our sin for us. Now, I want to ask you just for a second, how many of you have ever laid awake at night and kind of felt really bad about something you had said before?

You ever done that? Some of you are looking, I don't know. You probably should. Because here's what the Bible says. It says, The multitude of words there lacks not for sin.

[ 12 : 55 ] And there's not a one of us, James tells us, we've all blown it, worse than that, we've sinned with our tongue. That's nothing.

Compared to what Jesus was going to endure as he took the full measure of my black heart and your black heart upon himself, and he died in my place and in your place.

I want you to imagine there you are, kind of pondering what you are anticipating, in that you are going to sit in the dentist's chair, and he is going to drill out a cavity without Novocaine.

I mean, I've got to tell you, when the dentist says, this is going to just be a little stick, I kind of grin and bear it, because I know it's not true. However, I've had those instances where the dentist has said to me, I think we can do this without Novocaine.

And midstream, in a yee, I've thought to myself, not again. That has no comparison to what Jesus understood was in front of him.

[ 14 : 16 ] And here he is at the table, and he offers thanks for both the bread and the cup. And he offers thanks because his eyes were set on the deeper significance of what was in front of him.

Now, I want you to understand that as we think about this, we need to recognize that he gave thanks with a clear-eyed appreciation for what was to come from his crucifixion.

The word thanks is a term that really means to have a gratitude or appreciation for something. You don't offer thanks without reason.

And we are not thankful without an understanding or appreciation of a certain set of facts that have happened to us. There's always a reason for giving thanks.

When we do it, there's always a reason for it. And it is our desire this morning to really understand why was Jesus thankful? Why was Jesus thankful?

[ 15 : 28 ] Allow me to step forward just a little bit into a passage in Hebrews 12, verse 3. And I want you to turn over there, if you will, for a moment. Hebrews 12, verse 3. Let me read the background to you, beginning there in verse 1 of chapter 12.

It says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, who I believe are the individuals mentioned in chapter 11, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before you.

Us, rather. By the way, just a little side note on the word endurance. How many of you recognize that the race of faith takes endurance?

It really does. And the older I get, the more persuaded I am that endurance is an essential component in the walk of faith. It's not just doing it once, it's doing it again and again and again and again with a persistent belief that He is the one who is the rewarder of them that do diligently seek Him.

And here, the author says to us that we are to run the race with endurance. But look at what it says in verse 3.

[ 16 : 46 ] Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

I want you to think about that, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

in that the Spirit has let us know our Savior's heart as He anticipated the cross, it's fitting for us to think a little more carefully about that.

And so let's kind of ponder, what was it? Jesus was thankful because He knew several things, and I want you to focus on these and allow them to resonate with your heart and make a difference in your thinking.

Jesus was thankful that He knew His death would satisfy the wrath of God against all sin. How could God be reconciled to fallen man apart from a full and holy judgment against sin?

[ 18 : 13 ] and the judgment of God fully, completely, satisfied for all eternity.

I was thinking about this issue of the pardon for sin, and for whatever reason, I thought about presidential pardons. And doing a little bit of research, discovered that a full presidential pardon is an exceptional judicial act.

It is something that the President of the United States is granted constitutionally, and he's allowed, it actually goes back to kings in England who at the end of the day were the law.

And the king could pardon. Incidentally, a full presidential pardon is an exceptional act whereby the person's crime is forgiven, and the individual is restored to a state of legal innocence just as though he had never done the crime.

That's pretty interesting. Because Christ Jesus has made it possible for God to forgive us our sins. And we think about the statement just as though I'd never done it.

[ 19 : 42 ] Now, in the face of the incredible truth that Christ's death on the cross satisfied the wrath of God against sin, someone who might ask me, how do you know that you're going to heaven?

My answer would be, because all my sins have been forgiven. Whoa! Now, can you imagine how unnerving that would be to the average person if you were to say that in the checkout at Meijer or at Walmart?

Did I miss anyone? And, you know, Giant Eagle and whatever else. You know, if you said that, people would say, what? I mean, hey, when someone sins, there's got to be some compensation.

Isn't that right? How many of you here are struggling with bitterness and unforgiving spirit occasionally? Just rarely. You know, it's like, you would like God to settle things with such and such because of what they did to you.

No. That debt's been paid by Jesus and you have no business dragging it out and demanding your own justice. And here's the fact.

[ 20 : 54 ] God has forgiven all of our sins because of Jesus Christ. I know that God has forgiven all of my sins.

Now, let me kind of touch on a little challenging thought that has crept into the vocabulary of believers that has come to us from psychology.

How many of you have ever bumped into a person who said, hey, listen, I know that God has forgiven me but I just can't forgive myself? Huh.

Just imagine that. The president has pardoned you and you're no longer going to be incarcerated and you're going to be completely restored to all your liberties.

You're going to enjoy the blessing of that pardon but you're going to go around with a moody and sour face remembering in the distant past the crime that you committed.

[ 21 : 59 ] So the next time somebody says to you, well, I know that God has forgiven me but I just can't forgive myself, what would you say? Are you more important in your own thinking than God?

Right? You see, a statement like that is really bad theology and it's a sad picture of the sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross.

Christ's death satisfied the wrath of God against all sin and we together revel in the fact that what it says in Romans chapter 8 verse 1 is undeniably true.

There is now therefore no condemnation. Case closed. Christ. Another reason that Jesus was thankful is that he knew he would purchase our redemption.

He had me in mind. He had you in mind. I love the statement over in John chapter 13 verse 1 where it speaks about Jesus. This is kind of at the beginning of the upper room discourse and it tells us this about Jesus.

[ 23 : 13 ] Jesus having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end. I like that. His love was not circumstantial.

His love was not occasional. His love was profoundly consistent and absolutely sufficient. There's a reason why so many of our songs focus on the love of Christ.

There's a reason why one of the most common assignments that I give to individuals who are struggling with self doubt or are struggling with discouragement is to say hey listen I want you to memorize Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through 19 in which the love of Christ is the predominant theme and the passage over in Romans chapter 8 where it talks about who shall separate us from the love of Christ.

The love of Christ is that which gives us undeniable comfort and confidence. And here as Jesus looked forward to the cross it was not the suffering that he took pleasure in but it was the absolute certainty that he in his love was going to lavish on us because of what he did on the cross all that we needed and he would bless us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

I like the thought in part of what it says over in John chapter 14 verse 3 and he must have had this thought in mind because it says that he says to them let not your hearts be troubled and he goes on and says that where I am you may be also he is talking about the fact that because of what lay in front of him he had confidence that after the cross those who were his disciples would spend eternity in his presence I wonder whether or not that is a significant thought and encouragement to your heart third I want you to understand that Jesus was thankful because he would bring glory to his father yes he died for my sins he died for ours but that is not the only reason that Jesus was thankful at the prospect of what lay in front in fact

[ 25 : 39 ] I would have to tell you that if you think of being thankful for the fact that Jesus died for your sins and you completely neglect and diminish the significance of what Jesus did for the glory of the father you are ill informed at best and taking a strong and weak theological position at worst why the glory of the father is more significant than my blessing and so when Jesus was thinking about what lay in front of him I want you to understand that he was thinking of his death in relationship to what his death did for the glory of God think if you will just for a moment over to a passage in Romans chapter 3 turn there if you will Romans chapter 3

Romans is a book that argues or I shouldn't say argues but it is a book that gives a careful exposition of the glory of God and woven in to this testament you look there at verse 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to receive by faith that was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins question how can God forgive your sins I mean I use the classic illustration if I were to back into your car and not entirely unreasonable to have that thought that it could happen if I were to back into your car you would come out and I say hey

Pastor Andrew I crunched your Subaru you know it's like I am really sorry I wasn't paying attention you know what Pastor would say he said no problem do you know why he'd say that because we're friends well actually he'd say that because he was hoping I had insurance but I said no no I canceled it a couple weeks ago and you said no problem all good right right so how are you going to pay that off how can the infinite offense of my sin be overlooked by God it can't be how can the infinite offense of my sin be satisfied only by the payment of an infinite price in the person of

Jesus Christ and when God said I am willing to forgive sin and his son said and I will pay the price he was thinking of the glory of his father and so when we hold that bread and we hold that cup what we are saying is wow God's holiness and his justice is adequately satisfied in the bread and the cup and we think to ourselves Jesus honors the father in his willing sacrifice to remedy sin so how does this impact your life here you are maybe a little bit like me I mean you are drawing breath so by nature you're not a thankful person right okay remember thankfulness comes when we have reason outside of our self someone says you're exceptionally good looking thank you you're the smartest person in the room thank you

I really liked your song thank you we're really not thankful so when I appreciate Christ's thankfulness and I understand why he was thankful thankfulness becomes a part of my life don't write anything else down but write that one down when we appreciate his life and sacrifice thankfulness becomes a part of my life I'm thankful that he took my sin upon himself and satisfied the judgment that I deserve how many of you realize that the scriptures are shot through with command after command after command that we as believers are to be thankful how do I get that thankfulness oh

[ 31 : 17 ] I think about thanksgiving no I think about what Jesus did for me furthermore I am thankful that I have complete confidence that I will spend eternity with the lover of my soul I know how the story ends and it's good and there's some of you sitting out here this morning that have no confidence in that whatsoever I am thankful that the honor and glory of the Lord God is exalted by the most glorious moment of history Christ Jesus for the glory of his father was willing to die in my place so that God who is merciful and gracious beyond the wildest imagination of the human heart could offer forgiveness and salvation and eternal life to whosoever believes

I close with this do you know what the name of Jesus means God saves God saves God saves and when we gather to take these elements we're reminding ourselves of what that salvation cost going to ask our men to come as we come to the Lord's table God Thank you.