

# Communion with Christ - Preparatory service

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] we're going to read in the gospel of john chapter 12 john chapter 12 and we're going to read from verse 12 john 12 reading from verse 12 on the next day much people that were come to the feast when they heard that jesus was coming to jerusalem took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him cried and cried hosanna blessed is the king of israel that cometh in the name of the lord and jesus when he had found a young ass sat thereon as it is written fear not daughter of zion behold thy king cometh sitting on an ass's cold these things understood not his disciples at the first but when jesus was glorified then remembered they that these things were written of him and that they had done these things unto him the people therefore that was that was with him when he called lazarus out of his grave and waste him from the dead bear record for this cause the people also met him for that they heard that he had done this miracle the pharisees therefore said among themselves perceive ye how you prevail nothing behold the world has gone after him and there were certain greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast the same came before therefore to philip which was of bethsaida of galilee and desired him saying sir we would see jesus philip cometh and telleth andrew and again andrew and philip tell jesus and jesus answered them saying the hour is come the son of man that the son of man should be glorified verily verily i say unto you except a corn of wheat fallen to the ground and die it abideth alone but if a diet bringeth forth much fruit he that loveth his life shall lose it and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life if any man serve me let him follow me and where i am there shall also my servant be if any man serve me him will my father honor now is my soul troubled and what shall i say father save me from this hour but for this cause came i unto this came i unto this hour father glorify thy name then came there a voice from heaven saying i have both glorified it and will glorify it again the people therefore that stood by and heard it said that it thundered others said an angel speak to him jesus answered and said this voice came not because of me but for your sakes now is the judgment of this world now shall the prince of this world be cast out and i if i be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me this he said signifying what death he should die and so on may god bless to us that reading from his own holy word we're now going to sing in psalm 36 from verse 5 psalm 36 thy mercy lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice is like mountains great

thy judgments deep as floods lord thou preservest man and beast how precious is thy grace therefore in shadow of thy wings men's sons their trust your place we're going to sing to the end of verse 10 psalm 36 from verse 5 thy mercy lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy mercy lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice in the heavens thy justice on Matthew thy shift our justice in the heavens thy mercy lord is in the heavens thy truth and our circumstances thy justice in the heavens thy justice in the heavens Plus

Lord, Lord, be steadfast, my peace, and preciousness, my grace.

Therefore, I will shine, O my grace, my son, that your child is.

May with the darkness of thy heart, shall be well satisfied.

[ 6 : 0 2 ] May with the light of thy heart, shall be well satisfied.

May with the light of thy heart, shall be well satisfied.

May with the light of thy heart, shall be well satisfied.

May with the light of thy heart, shall be well satisfied. May with the light of thy heart, shall be well satisfied.

May with the light of thy heart, shall be well satisfied. Thy loving kindness, the heart to hell.

[ 7 : 13 ] Come to hell in love, be well. And still on heaven, the pride in heart, thy righteousness be shown.

We'll turn back to the chapter that we read together in John's Gospel. And I want to take some thoughts from verse 20 downwards before us this evening.

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came before to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

And so on. Now, Jesus' ministry was coming to an end. And this would be the last time that he would come into Jerusalem.

And John records for us that he rode into Jerusalem sitting on a donkey. And that the crowds took palm branches and lined the streets shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel.

[ 8 : 55 ] And he goes on to say that this had been prophesied concerning him. Now, at the time of the Passover and the other major feasts that the Israelites celebrated, there were huge crowds coming from all over Israel going up to Jerusalem.

And it was a high point in their calendar where they went up to celebrate these feasts. And it wasn't just that they looked forward to going up to worship the Lord in Jerusalem and to keep the feast, but it gave them an opportunity to meet up with each other and to have fellowship with one another.

Now, at this time, we know that they were going up to celebrate the Passover. And as they're going up to celebrate the Passover lamb and as they line the streets, as Jesus rides into Jerusalem, they hadn't made the connection that Jesus was the Passover lamb.

That this is the significance of what their forefathers had been celebrating for all the years that they had been celebrating this feast.

They hadn't realized that the Messiah was actually going to be the Passover lamb. Now, John tells us here, as we read together, that certain Greeks had come.

[ 10 : 44 ] Who were going to worship at the feast. And they were desiring to meet with Jesus. But it's quite clear from the response that Jesus gives to them that they didn't really understand who he was.

That they didn't understand what God requires of those that worship him. And they didn't understand what they were looking for, what they should be expecting in their anticipation of the Messiah.

Now, we know that they asked to meet with Jesus, but what was the reason? Was it because his fame had spread about and they wanted to see this great celebrity that had come into their midst, that everybody by this time was talking about as a result of the miracles that he had performed, and as a result of the teaching that he was giving, which they hadn't heard the like of before.

But it's quite clear that they didn't recognize that he was the Savior. And that he himself was the Passover lamb that was going to be brought before them symbolically in the lamb that they were to sacrifice and feast on.

And we could ask ourselves the question, what are we looking for this weekend? As we come to celebrate the Lord's death, what is it that you understand concerning the Lord's death?

[ 12 : 39 ] What kind of Savior are you looking for? And is the Savior that you're looking for the Savior that you need for your souls?

Because there are many people in the world who believe in Jesus, but they believe in him for various reasons. And it's not always for the best reasons.

It's not always that they recognize the need that they have deep down in their souls that they might have their sins forgiven.

And if that's going to be true, that they must understand that he had to sacrifice himself in order for their sins to be forgiven. And if they truly come in the right spirit, they will have communion.

Because that's what his death has secured for those who seek him and receive him in the way that he's offered to us in the gospel.

[ 13 : 42 ] And this is what this weekend is about. It's about having communion with God. But how many people will actually have communion with God?

Does everybody that sits at the table automatically have communion with God? Well, I fear not. Unless we're coming in the right spirit, it doesn't matter whether we sit at the table or not.

It doesn't matter how long we may have been professing the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. We will have failed to have communion with him. Unless we come in the way that we ought to come.

Unless we come being led by the spirit, not what we think, but waiting upon him to hear what God has to say to us and what way he's leading us into.

And what discernment he will give us concerning the Lord's death, concerning the Lord's body that's going to be brought before us in the symbols of the broken bread.

[ 14 : 56 ] Now, it ought to be a time of great blessing. But it's not always the case.

And the problem doesn't lie with God. God hasn't changed. The terms remain exactly the same as they were when Christ first instituted the supper.

God hasn't changed. If we fail to have communion, the problem's on our side, not on God's side. So, when we're seeking Jesus, just as these Greeks were seeking Jesus, we have to ask ourselves, what are we really doing?

What are we really seeking? What's he really done for us? And do we appreciate it? And are we seeking his grace so that we might go forth then to serve him?

Are we willing to serve him? Are we wanting to serve him? Because that's why we receive grace, to help us. It's not to help us to continue living in the world, seeking and desiring the things of the world.

[ 16 : 07 ] It's to help us to be different from the world. It's to help us to bear witness. And that's what we ought to be doing when we're partaking of the Lord's Supper.

We ought to be making a public profession. We're making a witness. We're witnessing to everybody that's present. But we're not just to witness within the building.

It's easy to do that. Our witness is to be in the world. We are in the world. And he gives us grace to keep us in the world.

So that we might be the lights that we ought to be as his professing people. Now the first thing I want to consider with you is that the life that we need in our soul comes from his death.

And this is what he began to teach these Greeks and those that were around him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

[ 17 : 18 ] But if it die, it brings forth much fruit. So he's taking a corn of wheat, a seed of wheat, and using it to bring before them a spiritual principle.

And the principle is that he has to die. Now that's not the kind of saviour that they expected. They didn't expect a suffering saviour. They didn't expect one that was going to lay down his life.

But it's by laying down his life that they would have life. That was what was going to give them communion. The fact that he was prepared to lay down his life.

And that's the seed that was going to be brought forth. The fact that many sinners would be saved as a result of him dying.

Just as one seed falls into the ground and dies, it brings forth much fruit. So he's using this to illustrate the significance of his coming.

[ 18 : 29 ] And why they should actually be celebrating. And what the Passover lamb was actually bringing before them. That there needed to be a sacrifice.

That blood had to be shed in order for them to be protected from the angel of death. In order for them to have their sins forgiven.

So he took upon himself our nature. So that he might sow the weakness of our nature to be later raised in power.

In the power of the resurrection. And had there not been a resurrection, the work would have failed. The resurrection is as important as the death.

Because if he hadn't risen, it would have meant that God did not find satisfaction in his death. And if he hadn't found satisfaction in his death, there would be no fruit as a result of his death.

[ 19 : 35 ] But he first of all had to lay down his life. And this is what gives us hope. And this is the only hope. This is the only way of salvation.

That God has revealed to us under the heavens. There is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved. Now he knew that this is what ought to have been brought before those who celebrated the Passover.

Down through the years. But that wasn't always the case. There is no doubt those who were spiritually minded understood it. But many people celebrated the Passover.

Enjoyed the celebration. But went home. Not really affected spiritually in the slightest bit. Now we can come here on Sunday.

Celebrate the Lord's Supper. And go home. And come Monday. It's just like any other day. That's not how it ought to be.

[ 20 : 43 ] This ought to make an impression upon us. Every time we do it. The blessing ought to follow us. It ought to continually bring about the confirmation of our lives being changed and us becoming more and more like Christ.

As we receive more grace. We become more like him. And that's what we desire. Now he knew as he rode into Jerusalem that he was on the way to the cross.

He had told his disciples on the way up to Jerusalem that that was what was going to happen. But even the disciples didn't understand it.

Peter tried to prevent it. And they didn't understand that he would have to die. And they certainly didn't understand that he was going to rise again.

Even though he told them several times on the way up. I'm going to suffer. I'm going to die. But I will rise again. And I will meet you in Galilee.

[ 21 : 55 ] Where were they when he rose again? Well they certainly weren't in Galilee waiting for him. They were surprised that he had risen again. They didn't expect that he was going to rise again. Why?

Because they didn't understand. They didn't understand the significance of him laying down his life. Now we need to understand before it's going to be of any benefit to us.

We need to discern the Lord's body. We need to know what we're doing when we're partaking of the Lord's Supper. We need to know what God is teaching us and what he's bringing before us.

And how he desires to edify our souls. To strengthen us. And to go forward so that we might serve him. We need to know who it is that we're seeking.

And it's not the Christ of our imagination that we need. It's the Christ of the scripture. The one who reveals himself to us in this word.

[ 23 : 07 ] Now Jesus didn't just give them this illustration from the corn of wheat falling into the ground. Signifying the death that he himself was going to die.

He applies it. He applies it to them. And he says to them. He that loves his life shall lose it. And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

Jesus didn't come into this world to give us health and wealth and prosperity. And to ensure that we were going to have a happy ever after life in this world.

On the contrary. He doesn't guarantee us any of these things. And he tells us here that if that's what we're seeking. If we're seeking to lay hold of that kind of life.

He warns us we're going to lose it. We're going to lose everything. If that's what we've set our hearts on. And if that's why we're seeking God. And if that's why we want to have Christ as our saviour.

[ 24 : 18 ] Then we've got the false Christ. We haven't got the true Christ. That's not why he came. We need to be prepared to lose our lives in this world.

If we're going to gain the eternal life. That he came to secure for us. He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If we make the things of this life our priority. Then we're going to lose everything. Then we're going to lose everything.

But if we make our spiritual lives our priority. And if we realise the need that we have of Jesus.

In order to bring us into communion with God. Because it's only God that can communicate that life to our souls. As he told them that evening.

[ 25 : 20 ] This is life eternal. That you might know God and Jesus Christ to me as sent forth. You must know. And you must know the Christ he sent forth.

Because that's eternal life. That's the only way you're going to have life in your souls. And the reason that he laid down his life is to bring us into communion.

With the living and the true God. So that we have life in our souls. So the priority must be for our souls. Not for our bodies.

Not for this world. And the life that we have in this world. But for the spiritual life. The life that he came to secure for us.

Which goes on to eternal life. Paul writing to the Colossians. Says this.

[ 26 : 18 ] If you then were raised with Christ. Because everybody. That has Christ as a saviour. Has already experienced a spiritual resurrection.

He's been raised from spiritual death. And he says. If you then were raised with Christ. Seek these things which are above. Where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above. Not on the things of this earth. For you died. And your life is hidden. With Christ in God.

The truth is. That if we're going to lose everything. That we associate with this life. Then we will.

Gain. Everything that's associated with. The life that Jesus came to secure for us. For us. Now. Just think about it.

[ 27 : 22 ] Can we hold on to our youth? Can we hold on to our health? Can we hold on to our wealth?

Can we hold on to our lives? Can we hold on to our lives? We're going to lose all of these things anyway.

So why not lose them now? So that we might gain eternal life. Are we willing to make the sacrifice.

That we're required to make. In order that we might. Lay up our treasures in heaven. Are we setting our minds on the things that are above.

Where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. God. Jesus is telling us. Not to focus on the things. Of this world.

[ 28 : 22 ] The temporal things. Because he's making it clear to us. You're not going to be able to keep them anyway. So don't waste your time. Trying to labor. To hold on to them.

Let go your grip on them. And if you're finding it hard. Ask for help. So that he'll give you the help. To let go the grip.

That the things of this world have over us. And help us to lay hold of the things that he's offering us.

If we allow the things of this life. Our health. Our relationships. And even our religion. To become more important than Jesus.

More important than our salvation. Then we will forfeit eternal life. These Greeks.

[ 29 : 22 ] And many who were present. Who had come such long distances. To celebrate. The religious festival.

The Passover. Which was a high festival. In the calendar of the Israelites. Did they really understand.

How God. Requires to be worshipped. And were they really desirous. To worship him. In the way that he had revealed.

Were they willing to accept. The Savior that he had provided. Well. As he rides into Jerusalem. They're celebrating. Hosanna.

Blessed is the one who comes. In the name of the Lord. The King of Israel. A few days afterwards. They were shouting. Crucify him.

[ 30 : 17 ] We will not have him to roll over us. The one that they were celebrating. As the King of Israel. They're now a few days later. Crying out. Put him to death.

Crucify him. We will not have him to roll over us. Why? Because he wasn't the Christ. That they were expecting. And the truths. That he brought before them.

Were too hard for them to bear. They didn't want to hear these truths. They wanted a Christ. On their own terms. And that's how it is. For all of us.

We want God to be. What we want him to be. But what we need to learn is. That it's not what we want him to be.

It's what he wants us to be. We have to understand. His ways are far higher than our ways. What impudence. To think that we know better than God.

- [ 31 : 17 ] To think that we can say to God. No. I see what you're saying. I know your will. I've read your word.
- But I've decided to do it another way. What arrogance. When we think that we know better than he does.
- It's not him that has to change. It's us. He's made it possible for us to change. By giving us a saviour that will bring about that change in our lives.
- But we need to seek him. And it's the saviour that God has provided that we need to seek. Not the one that we want.
- And imagine him to be. But the one that we need. Now, the next point I want to make is that.
- [ 32 : 19 ] If we receive him, there will be a desire to serve him. Verse 26. If any man serve me, let him follow me.
- And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, whom will my father honour? We can only share in the resurrected life of Jesus if we're willing to follow him.
- We must be willing to take up our cross in order to follow him. In other words, we must be willing to die to self. We must put the desires of the flesh to death.
- And the things that appear to be more important than God to us must be crucified. When the time of the prayer meeting comes around and other things are calling us, we have to say, no, I've got a far more important appointment.
- When the Lord's Day comes around and family comes visiting, we say, well, that's good that you came to visit, but we go to church on Sunday and that's what we do.
- [ 33 : 33 ] When our friends invite us to go to places that we know isn't really the places that Christians should be found in, we have to be saying no to them.
- We have to be willing to crucify the flesh. There needs to be sacrifices. We need to be prepared to take up our cross so that we might follow him because he says that's where the blessings are.
- Now, we all seek the blessings, but we want them on our terms. We can't have them on our terms. The blessings are on his terms.
- If any man serve me, let him follow me. And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, whom will my father honour?
- It's only if we're prepared to follow him that the father is going to honour us. And if we don't receive the blessing, it's not because God has changed.
- [ 34 : 38 ] It's not that he grudges giving his blessing. He's far more willing to give the blessing than we are to receive it. If the heavens have been closed up, the problem isn't on God's side.
- The problem's on our side. Because we're not willing to serve him. We're not willing to follow him. And to serve him, we must know what his will is.
- We must understand what he requires of his people. How will we ever know what God requires of us if we don't read his word? That's where his will is revealed to us.
- If we don't come to where his word is explained to us. If we don't read books that open up the truths for us. We need to strive to find out the truth.
- And we need to ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth. Because we can't follow him if we don't know where he's going. And how he's going to lead us.
- [ 35 : 49 ] We must know the way. And he reveals the way in his word.
- And if we follow him, we'll be in communion with him. Because God is only walking in one direction.

He only walks in the paths of righteousness. If we choose not to walk with him. Then we can't be in communion with him. Because we're at a great distance from him.

We're walking away from him. The only way that we can be in communion with him is that we're close by. Walking, following in his footsteps.

Seeking to know his will. So that we can stand in the same footsteps that he's throttled. Now Jesus came to open up the way to the Father.

[ 36 : 51 ] And the only way we're going to have the blessings of the Father is to follow him in that way. That's what the Psalmist was deciding.

Teach me thy ways, O Lord. Thy paths, O teach thou me. Do thou lead me in your truth, therein my teacher be. God is far more willing to teach us than we are to learn.

But we need to come to be taught. Jesus himself abode in his Father's love.

How? Well he tells us in John 15. The discourse that he gave to his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion.

This is how I abode in my Father's love. I kept his commandments. And he goes on to say, this is how you will abide in my love.

[ 37 : 53 ] This is how you will demonstrate that you love me. You will keep my commandments. And he goes on to say, that's how you're going to bear fruit. That's how he bore fruit.

He was obedient to the Father. He laid down his life. And he saw the travail of his soul and was satisfied because he saw the end result.

He saw that that was going to bear much fruit. That's the lesson that he's giving to the people at this time in John 12 here.

Laying down his life so that he might bear much fruit. That's the lesson he gives to his disciples later on. Abide in my love.

Keep my commandments. Why? So that you will bear much fruit. He goes on to say. And he says, so that your joy may be full. And that it might abide.

[ 38 : 56 ] We ought to have the joy of the Lord in our souls. And if we have communion with God, that joy will abide.

It's not just for Sunday morning. It's something that ought to follow us all of our lives. Because the joy of the Lord is our strength.

It's what will keep us going. And we need to be edified. We need to be fed.

In order to journey on this journey. Because it's a long journey. It's a hard journey. And Jesus didn't say it's going to be easy. In fact, in all of his teaching, he's making it clear to his disciples, it's going to be hard.

You're going to have tribulations. The chakras to be born. If you're going to follow me in the way. But the rewards will be worth it.

[ 39 : 59 ] And I will be with you. And this is why we need to be in communion with God. This is what we must remind ourselves of.

This is what we're remembering. That it's not as a result of what I do that I'm in communion with God. It's as a result of what Christ has already done.

He's made it possible for us to be in communion with God. And our sins, regardless of how sinful we might be, our sins cannot even prevent us from being in communion with God if we're willing to confess our sins.

And if we're willing to repent of them. That means turn away from them. Once we realize, I shouldn't be doing that, we need to turn away from it. And if we're prepared to do that, we will remain in communion with God because we have an advocate with the Father.



As we confess our sins, He's interceding on our behalf in order that we might remain in that communion. That our fellowship will be with Him.

[ 41 : 12 ] And this is the example that He gives us. And this is the teaching that He gave to these Greeks who asked, we want to see Jesus.

Well, He revealed to them the Jesus that they needed. But the question is, was that the Jesus that they were wanting? Well, it becomes clear that for many of them, it wasn't.

Because in a few days' time, they were shouting, crucify Him. We will not have Him to rule over us. What about yourselves? What Jesus are you seeking?

Is it the Jesus of your own imagination that will give you the things that you want and you come to God and treat Him like a servant?

This is what I want you to do. That's not how we should come to God. We should come to God and ask Him, Lord, what will you have me to do?

[ 42 : 27 ] What do you want me to do? Not come without demands, laying them before God and saying, I want you to heal me. I want you to give me this.

I want you to give me that. That's no way to treat God. But if we come in the way that He's revealed to us, humbling ourselves, asking for teachable spirits, and asking that He will correct us in the wrongs that we will naturally do, ask Him to give us His wisdom rather than think that we already have wisdom.

We're not, we haven't. We're fools by nature because we deny God. But if we acknowledge Him in all of our ways, and if we're prepared to follow Him in His ways, then He will honour us.

If any man serve me, let him follow me. And where I am, there shall my servant be also. If any man serve me, whom will my Father honour?

Is He going to honour us as we seek Him? Are we going to receive His blessing? Well, that's up to us.

[ 44 : 01 ] It will all depend on how we seek Him. Because if we seek Him in the right manner, we will find Him. And we will receive His blessing.

May God grant that His blessing will be what you all receive this weekend. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we come before you to acknowledge our waywardness.

And as your children, we acknowledge that we are often disobedient children. But if we're your children, you're the God who loves us so much that you will chasten us.

And you will correct us. And you will bring us into line with yourself. Lord, help us to know your will. And help us to have the desire to know it so that we might serve you.

Because where you are, your servant will be. And if your servant is where you are, then you will bless us. Because that's your desire for your people.

[ 45 : 13 ] And we're asking that you would bless your people here as they wait upon you. And that if they're not seeking you in the right manner, that you would teach them and correct them.

And bring them to be obedient to yourself, exercising your own power. To make them willing. That they might walk in alignment with you.

Lord, lead us all in your own footsteps. And have mercy upon us for our sins and shortcomings. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.