

The Lord's Supper: The Ongoing Sign of the New Covenant

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[0:00] Amen, Father, we come before you one more time, Lord, and just asking what Angel already asked, that you would speak to us, Lord, through the preaching of your word. God, let it be you. Let it be Christ who is speaking to our hearts, even as I open my mouth, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Well, good morning, church. My name's Mike. So glad to be here with you this morning. If you're new here, it's a special welcome to you.

And yeah, we're glad that you're here. As Andrew said, we're about to start a sermon series in Genesis next week, which I'm really excited for. This week, we're covering the topic of the Lord's Supper. And I do want to warn you, especially if you're new, that in these topical sermons, I've been preaching a lot longer than I normally do. So get ready for another lengthy sermon today.

Well, you know, God has wired humans to love and to resonate with stories, you know, and especially acted out stories. You know, our kids love acting out stories in the Bible during our times of family worship.

And, you know, it also helps the message to stick, right? To hear a story, to see it enacted, helps the message stick in a way that it doesn't otherwise. And this is perhaps why God had the prophets, if you read through the prophets, you'll see he had them convey spiritual message to Israel through acted out or enacted stories.

[1:36] For example, God had the prophet Ezekiel build a model Jerusalem and then build siege works against it to illustrate the coming invasion of Babylon.

Or there's a time when God had Isaiah, think about this, he had to walk around naked and barefoot for three years as a sign of the future exile of Egypt and Ethiopia.

I mean, that's a vivid message that sticks, right? Well, God has given to the church until Christ returns two enacted parables in the ordinances of baptism in the Lord's Supper.

These are rich, vivid portrayals of the gospel. They help the message to stick. Now, last week we talked about baptism. We said that baptism is the initiating sign of the new covenant.

And this week we're talking about the Lord's Supper or communion or some might call it the Eucharist, the ongoing sign of the new covenant. Now, as I said last week, the elders' hope over these two weeks is for us to better grasp the meaning and significance of these two ordinances that the Lord has given to us, given to the church, until he returns.

[2:50] And that's really to the end, though, not just that we would understand, but that we would practice these ordinances more faithfully and that we would treasure Christ and the gospel more as we practice them.

Now, you may have noticed last week and just now that I've been using the word ordinance and not the related word sacrament. And I just want to briefly explain why the church father, Augustine, in the 5th century, he defined sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.

And now he also believed that the sacraments were not just signs of that grace, but they also conferred grace by the performing of the sacrament, by the work performed.

And so another theologian, you know, believing similarly described sacraments as acts by which God's love is manifested to us and his gift is mediated to us.

That's the word sacrament. The word ordinance simply means that something is ordained. It has been commanded, appointed. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were ordained and instituted by Christ.

[4:03] Now, we certainly believe here that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ways in which God communicates grace to us, but only insofar as they stir us up to faith in Christ and the gospel.

That there is any inherent grace being dispensed in the act itself, apart from faith, is something that we reject. And so for that reason, it's not that the word sacrament is necessarily a wrong word. I think we will use it sometimes. It's just that it often carries a connotation with it that we disagree with. And so we are typically going to use the word ordinance. If you have any questions about that or anything I say this whole sermon, by all means, please come talk to me.

When the church partakes of the Lord's Supper, and you've probably seen this in many churches, it's common to use the words of the Apostle Paul. We use these often in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And Paul says, starting in verse 23, In the same way also, he took the cup after supper, saying, Now when we modern American evangelicals read this, We often falsely read it in the second person singular, you, instead of you all.

[5:47] And we often conclude from this that the Lord's Supper, also known as communion, it's a common union, a fellowship. We conclude that it's just that, that it's a private communion, a private fellowship of me and Jesus, in which I am remembering his death on the cross for my sins.

And that's certainly not incorrect, but I want to ask, is that all that it is? Is that all? Is it a private thing between me and Jesus? So we're going to begin this week by talking about what is the Lord's Supper?

Just like we walked last week through the what, the why, the who, and the how. That's where we're going this week. What is the Lord's Supper? Now the reason that I had Megan read from Exodus 12 before the sermon is because it's important for us to understand that the Lord's Supper, or I'm sorry, the Last Supper, so Jesus' final meal with his disciples on the night when he was betrayed, was actually a Passover meal.

And this is significant. So first we want to move here from Passover to the Last Supper. Who knows what the tenth and final plague against Egypt was?

Anybody? The tenth and final plague. The death of the firstborn. That's right. Which we just read about. On that night, as the angel of death passed over the houses in Egypt, he struck down the firstborn of every family.

[7:13] But if the blood of a lamb had been put across the doorpost of the house, the angel would pass over that house. The life of the firstborn would be spared.

It was this awful plague that finally persuaded Pharaoh to let God's people go. And so after 430 years of slavery, which by the way God had told Abraham was going to take place, after 430 years of slavery, God delivered his people from bondage.

He miraculously brought them across the Red Sea on dry land and swallowed up Pharaoh and his army in the process of that. And in Passover, the Lord instituted for it to be this annual celebratory meal for Israel to look back and commemorate her salvation by the blood of the lamb and her deliverance from Egypt by the power of God and her forming in that as a nation, a people for God's possession and glory.

And so year after year, as the Israelites partook of the Passover meal in their homes, and still today, they would recount the story of the Exodus. And they would say, Exodus 12, 8, It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

This is the meal that Jesus is eating with his disciples in the Last Supper. But as they commemorate that mighty deliverance of God from of old, Christ transforms the meal.

[8:40] And so the unleavened bread, which was formerly, it reminded Israel of her hasty departure from Egypt. Jesus then takes that and he identifies it with his own body, about to be broken on the cross.

And the cup of blessing, it was transformed from a remembrance of rescue from Egypt by the blood of a lamb, to remembrance of rescue from sin by the shed blood of Christ on the cross.

Jesus is, as John the Baptist proclaimed, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, John 1, 29. And so Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 5, 7, For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

In fact, if you read the gospel accounts of Jesus' death, especially in John's gospel, it is clear that he is tying the crucifixion with the Passover. Jesus is the Passover lamb, and that meal is transformed for the Christian.

In this, Jesus inaugurates the new covenant in his blood. Now, inaugurate's a big word. It simply means to formally begin something. Think about a president inaugurating or beginning his term in office.

[9:52] The old covenant with Israel was also inaugurated with blood. Moses, in Exodus 24, verse 8, he sprinkles the people with the blood of sacrificed animals, and he declares, Behold, the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.

In church, Christ is the fulfillment of those words from Moses. By his once-for-all sacrifice, his blood, Hebrews says, it speaks a better word.

It speaks a better word than the blood of Abel, than the blood of bulls and goats, than any other word. And why is that? Because it's a word of divine forgiveness and eternal salvation for all who repent and believe in his name.

This is the new covenant inaugurated by the blood of Christ. The prophets foretold of this new covenant to come. It would be a covenant in which sins would be forgiven and hearts would be softened and implanted with the very word of God.

And all would know the Lord and he would be their God and they would be his people and he would put his very spirit within them. It's this new covenant that Jesus has begun by his shed blood for us on the cross.

[11:05] And so you see that the last supper, which became the Lord's Supper, is loaded with meaning and significance. And so let's move to better define now what it is, defining the Lord's Supper.

So again, just as Passover, Passover was this ongoing meal celebrated by the covenant community of Israel. The Lord's Supper, it is the ongoing meal celebrated by the new covenant community, which is the church.

That is, it is the ongoing sign, the ongoing sign of our participation in the new covenant. Now there are four parts to this and this can be diced a few different ways, but this is just the way that I'm sort of categorizing things.

It is first a, it is remembrance. It's a commemorative meal. Now look back. Now this is perhaps the most intuitive of the four that we're gonna talk about.

I mean, I can still picture the wooden table at the first church that I was ever in and it had the words, do this in remembrance of me, engraved right on that table. We do this in remembrance of Christ, his body broken for us, his blood shed for us.

[12:18] And Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 11, as we read, for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So this remembrance is at the very same time a proclamation. And what are we remembering? What are we proclaiming? We're remembering and proclaiming the most significant event in human history, right?

It is the cross of Christ in which the Father forsook his only son and poured out all of his wrath for our sin upon him so that we would be welcomed into the family of God, our sins forgiven, and then never forsaken for all eternity.

As we partake of the bread and the cup, we are visibly, tangibly, even edibly, portraying this gospel of our salvation.

We're remembering and proclaiming the riches of God's grace and mercy lavished upon us in Christ. The Lord's Supper is first a commemorative meal.

[13:24] Second, it is anticipation. It is an appetizing meal. A look forward. The prophet Isaiah, prophesying of the new heavens and the new earth, declares in Isaiah 25, 6 through 8, on this mountain, which was a motif for the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the earth, on this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich

food, a feast of well-aged wine, a rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well-refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

And you probably recognize those words from the book of Revelation where the apostle John picks up on this language. This feast of rich food with well-aged wine made by the Lord himself is what John describes in Revelation 19 as the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And he says, blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And what does this have to do with communion? Well, when Christ institutes the Lord's Supper in Matthew 26, he says, I tell you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

So he's wanting his disciples not only to look back at the cross, but also to look forward to that day when he's going to spread before them the heavenly feast of the ages for their enjoyment.

[15:11] So in this Lord's Supper, as we partake of it, you know, week in, week out, we're getting a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb. It's kind of a lame foretaste, honestly, right?

But there's going to be a grand feast to come and we're supposed to be looking forward to that day. Third, communion is fellowship.

It's fellowship. Kind of what the word communion implies. It's a family meal. It's a look around. The Jewish Passover meal was not to be celebrated alone.

It was a family meal. And so Jesus, when he institutes the Lord's Supper, he does so, as we've seen, in the context of the covenant meal of Passover.

So it's meant to be a fellowship meal, bringing the family together in its commemorative, in its commemoration of God's saving work. Now this becomes especially clear in 1 Corinthians, which we walked through last year as a church.

[16:12] Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, 16 through 17, the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation? That word is, it's koinonia.

It's also translated fellowship. Is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

So you see first, there's a fellowship with Christ where we are appropriating the benefits of his death, which makes us one with him. So it's first, it's a fellowship with Christ.

But then Paul says, because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Now these verses, they anticipate Paul's lengthier treatment of the Lord's Supper in the very next chapter, in chapter 11.

Paul reprimands the Corinthians for their practice of the Lord's Supper. He says, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. Why does he make this abrasive claim?

[17:15] Well, Andrew preached on this passage last year and he said this, he says, it seems there was a wealthy prominent faction in the Corinthian church that were treating the meal as a pagan banquet where class distinctions would be observed.

In other words, instead of the gathering of the Corinthian church pointing to the unifying power of the gospel, their actions highlighted the same status distinctions that were prevalent in Roman society.

Their actions broadcasted that the Christian church is no different than any other contemporary religious group. The disconnect between their disregard for one another when they gather together and the message of the cross on display in the Lord's Supper put the gospel at stake.

The gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to unite people from all backgrounds and all walks of life into one family in Christ.

And so the fellowship meal of the Lord's Supper, it's intended to be a sign and a seal of that reality. That is, it both represents and it confirms our unity in Christ.

[18:24] Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread. So as we partake of the bread and the cup, we're not only looking back to the cross, we're not only looking forward to eternity, we're also looking around, we're looking at the brothers and

sisters in Christ that we have that God has made one.

And as we do that, we should be thanking God for these brothers and sisters, for our unity in Christ, renewing our commitment to one another and confirming our love to one another.

So the Lord's Supper is a commemorative meal, it's an appetizing meal, it is a family meal. Fourth, it is nourishment. It's a strengthening meal.

Now it's easy to see how the Lord's Supper, in light of what we just said, is a soul-nourishing meal.

We're looking back to our Savior who died in our place on the cross.

We're looking forward to the last day when He's going to make all things new. We're looking around at each other and rejoicing in our family unity. I mean, that is a soul-strengthening event.

[19:36] And so it ought to stir us up to faith in the gospel. It ought to excite anew affection and worship of Christ. It ought to evoke love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It ought to fill us with the hope of heaven and help us persevere in the faith. Now what's more, in the Lord's Supper, we are being nourished in and by Christ.

John Calvin writes of the Lord's Supper that it is a spiritual banquet wherein Christ attests Himself to be the life-giving bread upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality.

I actually was reading about one author who says how the words take and eat. They overturn the curse in the garden where the Lord says you shall not eat. And now He's inviting us to take and eat. We are in the Lord's Supper by faith eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ. Now that might sound really strange to you.

[20:46] And you're not alone because when Jesus said those words to His Jewish audience, they thought that was strange and many of them actually deserted Jesus after His words in John chapter 6.

I'm going to read just a couple verses here. John 6, this is known as the bread of life discourse. In verse 51, Jesus says, I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. The Jews then disputed among themselves saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

Now one thing that's clear that everyone can agree on is that Jesus is teaching there is nourishment to be found in His body and blood. But in what sense is He talking about?

[21:55] Now this passage in John 6, as well as the words of institution when Jesus says, this is my body, this is my blood, those words collectively have been the center of a lot of debate over many centuries regarding the question of whether and how Christ is present in the Lord's Supper.

And I just want to briefly touch on three views. This is going to be brushing with broad strokes here. Some have and do believe that the physical body and blood of Christ are mystically present in the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper.

Now this is known as the real presence view. Without going into detail, in John 6, however, Jesus is driving home the lesson that salvation is found by faith in Him.

The Israelites ate physical manna in the wilderness. Jesus is spiritual manna. He is living bread. He Himself is the all-satisfying nourishment that our souls need for eternal life, which we receive by faith.

That seems to be the clear message of John 6. And when Jesus says, this is my body and this is my blood, He's not speaking literally. He's speaking metaphorically.

[23:08] Just as when Christ says, I am the true vine. Nobody thinks He's a vine, right? I am the gate of the sheep, the door. The bread represents His body broken for us.

The cup signifies His body shed for us, just like those other I am statements of the Lord. When we partake of these elements, we are feasting afresh on Christ by faith.

We are recalling how Jesus is Himself our living bread and true spiritual drink and thus we are by faith being spiritually nourished in Him.

And we shouldn't downplay that that is so significant. So is Christ then especially present spiritually in the Lord's Supper?

The classic Reformed view says yes and now this is referred to as the spiritual presence view. We think here though that this goes a step too far beyond where Scripture seems to go.

[24:09] Is Christ present with us spiritually as we partake of the elements? Of course He is. Of course He is. The church is the temple of God.

The Holy Spirit dwells in our midst 1 Corinthians 3 and Jesus promises where two or three are gathered in my name there I am among them. But to say that in the Lord's Supper Christ is somehow more present does not seem to us to be biblically warranted.

Now we would align more closely to a third view to the memorial view that stresses the connection between communion and the gospel. We cannot say that Christ is more present in the elements but what we can say is that Christ is present by His Spirit because we are gathered in His name and that we should be especially cognizant.

We should be especially aware of His presence because of what it is that we are doing. We are in faith portraying the gospel of our salvation. We are doing it in this rich and vivid way in this act then we should be especially aware of His presence.

As Professor Sharn Wright articulates, certainly the Lord's Supper should point us to the cross but the cross of Jesus not the supper is where we see Christ most clearly.

[25:31] I just want to pause here for a second and say saints consider just like we did last week for baptism and all that it represents. Consider the Lord's Supper in light of all of this all the great meaning and significance when we here partake of the bread and the cup.

It means that Jesus once for all died for our sins. Even the sins that I committed this morning that you may have committed parents this morning in speaking harsh words to our children.

He's died for those sins. Even tensions that are going on in our marriages and in the workplaces. He's died for every sin that you can name. Jesus paid for it on the cross.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper that's what we're proclaiming. It means that He's secured our future in heaven with Him. Eternity awaits in which these bodies will be raised to newness of life in Christ and all death and sickness will be gone.

We're proclaiming that in the Lord's Supper. It means that He's united us together as one family.

Think about that. Side by side our brothers and sisters in the faith we hurt one another sometimes don't we?

[26:52] We offend one another but we're proclaiming that in Jesus we are one. That's a strong powerful statement church and all the things that would divide us they don't divide us in Christ.

It means that He has become the eternal nourishment of our souls. We are feasting on Him by faith unto eternal life. It is so significant. Now with this already laid out we've already begun answering the next question really.

Why is the Lord's Supper practiced? Well first for all the things we just said to remember to anticipate to fellowship to receive nourishment. Secondly to obey Christ's command.

Just as Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize and be baptized He commands that His disciples do this in remembrance of me. He's commanding our participation in this new covenant meal.

The third thing to continue to identify with Christ and His church and so be marked off from the world. Now we used this language last week in baptism because in baptism we are identifying with Christ and His church and so being marked off from the world and the Lord's Supper we're continuing to do the same.

[28:07] Bobby Jameson describes baptism and the Lord's Supper and he wasn't the first to do so but he describes it as drawing a line between the church and the world. This is how the reformers described the Lord's Supper.

It's drawing a line. They are baptism and the Lord's Supper the boundary markers for identifying who are and who aren't the citizens of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Now last week I said that baptism is sort of like your passport. The Lord's Supper is sort of like the ongoing renewal of that passport. Saints, our citizenship in heaven it was granted by Christ's blood. It was sealed by His Spirit but that citizenship in heaven gets reflected here on earth and especially in the ordinances. The fourth thing to visually portray and testify to the gospel.

Again, we said this in talking about baptism. Now one thing that I implied last week but I wanted to state explicitly this week is that because both ordinances portray and testify to the gospel they are actually means of discipleship and evangelism.

[29:17] As means of discipleship they are helping us to follow and become more like Jesus. So we should saints, we should approach the Lord's Supper every time we partake as that, as a means of discipling us, as reminding us of the gospel, as helping us to lay hold of the gospel and to apply it to our lives more.

It's a means of discipleship, as a means of evangelism. The bread and the cup, they provide a clear and tangible witness to the lost. It is beckoning them to come to Christ, to receive His body and His blood that was broken and shed for their salvation.

The elements are preaching to them. They're saying to the lost, there is soul nourishment to be found here in Jesus. Stop passing them by. Receive Him today.

And so I want to say, friend, if you're here and you have not received Christ, I hope you will hear and respond to the message that's not only being preached today, but being portrayed as we partake of the bread and the cup.

Now we've covered the what and the why and now we come to the who. Who should partake of the Lord's Supper? First thing, those in the family and under the new covenant.

[30:41] If the Lord's Supper is the ongoing sign of participation in the new covenant, then it's for those who belong to the new covenant. If it's a meal to remember the gospel, then it's for those who believe in the gospel and believe in Christ.

If it's a meal to anticipate heaven, then it's for citizens of heaven. If it's a fellowship meal, then it's for members of God's family. And if it's a nourishing meal, it's for those who are actually being nourished by faith in Christ.

And here's another way to say it, and this will accord with what we said last week. The Lord's Supper is for those who have repented of their sin, believed in Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord, received the Holy Spirit, and been baptized.

Those are, as we saw last week, the five components of the conversion experience that we talked about. Baptism, again, it's the initiating sign of the new covenant like circumcision was to the old covenant.

And so, it necessarily then precedes participation in the Lord's Supper because the Lord's Supper is the ongoing sign of those who already belong to the new covenant.

[31:50] And so, to use the analogy again, you can't renew a passport that you don't have, right? The passport has to be issued before it gets renewed. Now, if that's the connection between baptism and the Lord's Supper, I just want to briefly mention the connection to church membership.

Last week, we talked about how we baptize people into membership in the local church because it's joining them to Christ's body, the church. And this week, what I'm essentially saying is we baptize people into participation in the Lord's Supper.

Membership and the Lord's Supper, they're vitally linked together. And this is why, as we've experienced in our not-too-distant past, when someone undergoes church discipline and is then excommunicated from the church, they're removed from membership, which is essentially saying, and it means, that they are barred from the Lord's Supper.

Now, that might sound odd. It might sound like even maybe a trivial thing. No, they can't partake of the Lord's Supper. Historically, Christians have thought that this was a really big deal to be barred from the Lord's Supper because of what it means.

Due to that person's hardness of heart, due to their unrepentant sin, the church can no longer affirm that they belong to the new covenant, that they are born again.

[33:10] That's a serious thing. It's supposed to be serious. It's supposed to be beckon them to repentance and faith, that they might be

saved. That's what the action is doing. To be baptized is to become a card-carrying member of the new covenant family of God, is to become a member of the local church, is to be welcomed to the fellowship meal of the Lord's Supper.

This seems to be the logic of Scripture. That is, this seems to be the implications of what we see in the New Testament. And also, baptism and preceding membership in the Lord's Supper, that has been, by and large, the historic practice of the church.

Now, I do want to say, especially for those that might be newer to the church or to Christianity, if all this sounds a bit exclusive, well, it is.

Seemingly paradoxically, Christianity is, at the same time, both radically exclusive and radically inclusive. Christ's offer is, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. It does not matter your sex, your ethnicity, your educational background, whatever. This is radically inclusive. But you have to come to Him. He is the narrow gate.

[34:32] This is radically exclusive. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him. And this reality is to be represented by the local church who beckons all to come.

All are welcome to come find living water, take without price. But the church only baptizes and welcomes to the Lord's Supper those who have actually done that.

And so, to welcome those that haven't, to welcome those that have not done, that have not believed in Christ, that have not entered through the door of baptism is bringing a lack of clarity.

And especially for those that don't believe in Christ, if they're welcomed to the fellowship meal, we might be aiding them towards hell. We might be causing them to think that they belong and that they've actually received Christ when they haven't.

That is confusing the gospel reality to which the elements point. And again, I just want to stop here to acknowledge what I'm saying is different from how many churches in our cultural context teach about the ordinances.

[35:45] The evangelical church in this country has moved towards opening the Lord's Supper to anyone or to anyone that professes Christ. And that's been, our practice here has been to open it to anyone that professes Christ.

And that might be the most common approach. And so maybe what I just said is totally new to you. If that's the case, as I've been saying, if you have further questions, I would love to talk to you. Any of the elders would love to talk to you. And I'd also encourage you to consider that although this is not as common today to restrict baptism, I'm sorry, the Lord's Supper to those who have been baptized.

Historically, that was the common approach. And secondly, just consider whether open communion, welcoming the Lord's Supper to anybody that professes Christ but has not been baptized, consider whether that fits with the purposes that we've talked about of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

If baptism is the symbolic entry point to the Christian faith, to the church body, again, the house analogy I used last week, it is the front door into the family of God.

[36:54] And if communion, then, is the ongoing fellowship meal, does it make sense to invite someone to the meal that hasn't yet walked through the front door of the house? Or might they be more helped, actually, if we instead encourage them to walk through the front door of baptism first?

I also want to say that we as elders, we recognize that we have not provided clarity here up to this point in our church's life. And really, this is a conviction that has developed among the elders and really solidified over the past year as we've looked into these things.

We understand if people have questions about this, and we again welcome your questions to us. We also understand that faithful Christians have differing convictions about whether baptism ought to precede the Lord's Supper.

But this is our conviction here. And so in light of this, we are going to be using slightly different words when we fence the table. Now, to fence the table is simply to affirm who may or may not partake of the family meal.

In the past, we've said words like this. We've said, this meal is for Christians, disciples of Jesus, those who have repented of their sin and put their faith in Christ as their and the only Lord and Savior.

[38:14] Going forward, we're going to say something more like this. This meal is for baptized believers who belong to this church or another local church. That is, for those who have repented of their sin, believed in Christ as Savior and Lord, and committed themselves to Him and to His body.

Now, because we're just today providing this level of clarity and this teaching, I'm going to use it when we partake today. I'm going to use the words that we've typically used here as we partake. But going forward, we're going to use the words that I was just describing that talks about baptized believers partaking of the supper. Again, if you have questions, please come talk to me or one of the elders.

Also, I want to extend the same invitation I did last week. If anyone here has not been baptized, but has repented of their sin, believed in Christ for salvation, confesses Him as Lord, and desires to pursue baptism, please come talk to me or one of the elders.

Who should partake of the Lord's Supper? Those in the family and under the new covenant, and secondly, those who come worthily.

[39:28] Those who come worthily. Now, this principle comes from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11. He says, Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Now, in context here, Paul is urging the Corinthians to consider whether their treatment of fellow believers is consistent with the gospel that they are proclaiming in the Lord's Supper.

But in the context of the whole letter, this self-examination, we don't think it should be restricted just to our treatment of fellow believers. It should include that, but it should include the totality of our lives and the state of our hearts, whether they are consistent with the gospel that we profess.

And so, if after examining, we see ways that there are inconsistencies, we ought to repent. We're called to repent of those sins. If we've offended a brother or sister, we're called to go to that brother and sister and to seek reconciliation, to seek forgiveness.

As Paul warns here in 1 Corinthians 11, to live in unrepentant sin and yet partake of the bread and the cup is actually inviting the judgment of the Lord.

[40:51] And that's a serious thing. So we ought to examine our hearts and then repent of any known sin. But it's vital, church, that we don't tarry there for too long in self-examination.

What we don't want to do is turn the gospel into works righteousness. We don't need to think that, oh, I need to be good enough to come to the table. The bread and the cup, they point us to the cross, right?

And the cross says, you aren't worthy. You're unworthy. You can't come. But my worthiness, Christ is saying, my worthiness is now yours. Our unworthiness has been swallowed up in the death of Christ.

And so coming worthily, it does not mean coming perfectly. It means coming repentantly and in faith. Ray Van Nest writes this, as long as you are repentant, come.

Be reminded of the cost of your sin. Hate it afresh and be reminded that your Savior has paid the debt. Be reminded of the grace of God that is greater than your sin.

[41:57] Be humbled anew by grace, which is staggeringly beyond what you could expect, ask, or think. Allow the truth of free grace to melt your heart and cause you to long all the more for holiness.

We've covered the what, the why, the who, and now, finally, we come to the how. Now, we've really talked about most of these things, so I'm going to move quickly here.

How should we practice the Lord's Supper here at Shoreline? With faith. With faith. As we've already talked about. Apart from faith in Christ and the gospel, the Lord's Supper, it's a meaningless practice.

But when we partake in faith, when we in faith lay hold of Christ and feast on his abundance and portray and proclaim the gospel, then the Lord's Supper is actually a fount of endless riches. We should partake with faith. The second thing is we just talked about with self-examination. We ought to prepare in advance for communion. And so, this is why we always, in the weekly email that we send out, if we're going to be participating in the Lord's Supper, we say that.

[43:00] And we also typically give time during the service for self-examination. This is an important step. Again, let's become to the table unworthily. But again, we need not linger too long here for we have, as we often sing here, the all-sufficient merit of Christ.

That's how we come. That leads us to this. With our eyes up and out. Our eyes ought to be directed upwards to Christ, all that He is, all that He has accomplished for us on the cross, all that this means for our future in heaven with Him and the saints.

And our eyes ought to be directed outward, as we've talked about, to the body of Christ, to our brothers and sisters with whom we are united by faith in Him. Don't miss that.

Don't miss that. This part of the Lord's Supper, growing up, was not a part that was ever emphasized. We come to the table because it makes us one.

And so, we've encouraged you before, make a practice as we participate. And sometimes I'll explicitly tell you, sometimes I won't, look around the room and thank the Lord that He has united us together by faith in Christ.

[44:14] We are one. We are one. That leads to this. With our church family. The Lord's Supper, again, is a fellowship meal.

It's a meal that ought to be taken when we come together. Paul says, like, five or six times in 1 Corinthians 11, when you come together, when you come together. It's when we come together. The meal loses its significance when it's taken outside of a corporate gathering of the church. And again, people will disagree about this point. We don't recommend partaking of the Lord's Supper outside of the corporate gathering for the reasons talked about. The next thing is with regularity. With regularity.

It's likely the Lord's Supper was actually practiced weekly in the early church. Now, this isn't a command, but it is clear that communion ought to be a regular, consistent practice of the church. And so there is a measure of freedom in this, and different churches come to different conclusions. Here at Shoreline, at least, we have, for the last few years, we've typically celebrated communion every three or so weeks.

[45:17] We want to do it frequently. We also don't want people that serve on a monthly basis to always miss out. And so that's kind of what we've landed on. But the principle is with regularity. Then, with intentionality.

It's easy for anything that we do regularly to become rote or to become mechanical, but that definitely doesn't mean that we should just throw the baby out with the bathwater.

It means that we ought to be more prayerful, that we ought to ask for God's help to engage heart and mind. And that's the same every time we come here. We're singing the same songs often.

We're hearing the preaching of the word again. We're doing a lot of the same things. We should do it with intentionality and just asking for the Spirit's help. We were praying, let there be wonder. I forget the exact words, but that the Spirit would fill this place.

That should be a prayer of ours. We need His help. Finally, with thanks and praise, as we consider all that God has done in Christ out of the immeasurable riches of His grace, which is so beautifully portrayed in the Lord's Supper, this ought to lead us to worship, to thanks and to praise and to honor and to revere our triune God, Father, Son, Spirit, for His astounding love, His astounding mercy towards us in the gospel.

[46:37] So Shoreline, let us really lean into the Lord's Supper this year. Let's seek to engage our hearts and our minds as we regularly partake of the bread and the cup.

Let's come expectantly, just as we should come into the gathered assembly. Let's come expectantly to the Lord's table, knowing that through this visible, tangible sign, that this gospel reenactment, we are being nourished by faith in Jesus Christ.

We are proclaiming His death until He comes. Please pray with me. Father, there are so many mysteries of the faith, but You have given us Your Word.

You have given us all that we need to know for life and salvation. You've given us what we need, and You, Yourself, are what we need. Christ, thank You for the cross.

Thank You for coming down, taking on human form, becoming a servant to the point of death on the cross, becoming a curse that was rejected by Your own people, killed by Roman soldiers, so that You could bear our sin in our place for our eternal forgiveness.

[47:46] We could never thank You enough. All of the rest of our lives on earth and for all of eternity, we will be singing praises to You, a song of redemption, for You are worthy.

You're the Lamb that was slain. By Your blood, You have ransomed us and people from every tribe and tongue and language and nation. And we thank You, Lord Jesus Christ. And we ask, God, that You would speak to us, work in our hearts as we regularly partake of the Lord's Supper.

Let the message of the gospel be communicated to us, Lord. Let us not go through the motions. I pray that we would approach the table by faith. God, that You would nourish us spiritually, that You'd unite us as a body, that You'd make the gospel more real to us, that You'd fill us with the hope of heaven.

God, I pray that if there's anyone here that has not received Christ by faith, O Lord, that this word of the gospel would stir them up to faith by the power of Your Spirit.

Lord, You are good. Continue to be with us now as we partake of the bread and the cup. Amen.

Before we partake, I just want to read the lyrics to this song.

[49:07] It's an Isaac Watts hymn, *How Sweet and Awful is the Place*. It's a lot about the Lord's Supper. Awful here does not mean what it means today.

It means full of awe. It means awe-inspiring. And so here's the lyrics to this song. How sweet and awful is the place with Christ within the doors while everlasting love displays the choicest of her stores.

While all our hearts and all our songs join to admire the feast, each of us cries with thankful tongue, Lord, why was I a guest? Why was I made to hear Thy voice and enter while there's room when thousands make a wretched choice and rather starve than come?

Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly drew us in, else we had still refused to taste and perished in our sin. Pity the nations, O our God, constrain the earth to come, send Thy victorious word abroad, and bring the strangers home.

We long to see Thy churches full, that all the chosen race may with one voice and heart and soul sing Thy redeeming grace. This meal is for Christians, it's for disciples of Christ, it's for those who have repented of their sin and put their faith in Him as their and the only Lord and Savior.

[50:38] If that's not you this morning, then we ask you to forego the bread and the cup. It's not going to mean anything to you. What you need, as we've talked about so much today, what you need is Christ, who is the soul-satisfying nourishment for all of eternity.

If you have not received Him, if you want to talk to me about that, I would love to talk to you more, so please come see me after the service. If you are a believer in Christ, then we welcome you to receive the bread and the cup, so long as you've examined your heart and can partake in a worthy manner, and again, this does not mean perfect, does not mean that you have to become good enough.

Christ makes you good enough through repentance and faith, so it means come repentantly. It means that sins against God or others have been brought to light and addressed, so let's just take a few minutes right now to examine our hearts before the Lord, and then, when you're ready, get up to receive the meal, look around the room as you do, thank the Lord for the brothers and sisters in Christ that He has united to Himself and to you, and as you go, remember this, that as you receive the bread and the cup, so you have received life and salvation as a free and unmerited gift of God's grace.

Return to your seats when you get the elements and we'll partake together. together. Thank you. Thank you.

[52:53] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[55 : 23] Thank you .

Thank you.

Thank you. Lord, we are thankful. We are thankful people. We are singing people because of all that you have done for us in Christ, all that you're doing now and all that you will do in eternity to come.

And so right now, Lord, we lift up a song of praise to you. Amen.