

Selected Verses “Meeting Jesus in the Lord’s Supper”

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Date: 14 July 2024

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Before we come to the Lord's table together this morning, we are considering communion, the Lord's Supper together from God's Word.
- But not just in general. We could talk about a lot of things about the Lord's Supper for sure. But rather particularly today, how we meet Jesus here as we walk in relationship with Him day by day.
- That's what we've been talking about this summer and I've been especially struck this week considering the idea that we need God's grace in such an ongoing way.
- That's part of the relationship that we have with God. It's part of why the mission of our church is to experience grace and express it.
- [1 : 07] The fact that God gives us means of grace like His Word and prayer and the sacraments is that we so desperately need it. We breathe in and out grace like oxygen.
- That's the design of the relationship. We are needy, dependent people here at Southwood. Yes? Yes. It's not that we once upon a time needed God's grace and now we're just fine on our own, but it's that we today need God's grace moment by moment to walk with Jesus so over and over again we come to Him and we come to the Lord's Supper for grace.
- Remember, both baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments given to the covenant community of God's people as signs to celebrate together.
- We talked last week about how much we need one another as we walk with Jesus together. God designed His church to gather as His body, not to give up meeting together.
- That's how we walk with Him together. Making the gathered worship of God's people then a regular part of your life is a great way to meet Jesus and to walk with Him regularly.
- [2 : 29] Sometimes we lose sight of that priority, don't we? Many have missed out on that a lot since COVID disrupted regular habits and priorities, but we must walk together with Jesus in worship, with your grace group, sharing all of life together.
- You can't even obey half of God's commands in His Word on your own in private as a lone Christian. There's way too much one anothering to do in here to do that on your own.
- And you certainly can't celebrate the Lord's Supper and have Jesus meet you there in it like we need Him to without the other members of His body.
- Oh, we need this grace so much and so often. We're going to talk this morning about how God brings His grace to us in the Lord's Supper, looking at several passages, but let's pray together first and ask for His help.
- Father, we come before You this morning needing grace. Knowing that You give it, asking You for it.

[3 : 49] And we do that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. In order to digest the grace of the Lord's Supper this morning, I want you to recall a great meal that you've had sometime in your life recently, maybe many years ago.

A meal where you felt filled up. Not just in your stomach, but in your heart. Too deep in your soul, you felt filled up. Maybe a Thanksgiving dinner with multiple generations gathered to feast and share together.

Maybe it was an exquisite evening where someone pulled out the fine china and celebrated you with amazing food. Maybe a meal of normal food on paper plates where you reconnected with an old friend in a life-giving way and it filled your soul.

I can think of a bunch of those. I think a lot about food. But many recently, I was in Richmond for General Assembly and I ran into Mike and Judy Honeycutt in a room of over 2,000 people.

Mike was the senior pastor of Southwood when I came here about 16 years ago. And we chatted together for a couple of minutes and then Mike said, hey Will, Judy has plans with some women tomorrow.

[5 : 14] Would you like to go to lunch together? Now listen, Mike is a role model for me, okay? He's a hero. He is much more connected in the PCA.

He's a generation ahead of me in life and ministry. He has taught as a professor at our denominational seminary. So there were a lot of people in that room that Mike could have had lunch with the next day.

But the next day, we enjoyed really good tacos, encouraging conversation that ranged from preaching to pastoring to parenting and sharing together a special love for the people of this church and this city.

That's a unique way that Mike and I are connected. And we so love you and this place.

Seeing Mike put a smile on my face. But sharing a meal together filled my heart, right? Isn't there something about a meal together that deepens relationship?

[6 : 25] Especially when someone invites you into their home, into their life, you have a more intimate connection, don't you? That dynamic that most of us have felt and experienced sometime, I hope you've got a moment in your mind.

That was especially true in the ancient Near East in the time of the Bible. And I think one of the most remarkable things about the whole story of Scripture is the way that eating, particularly meals shared with God, is woven throughout God's story.

It is a way that he reiterates to us the importance of intimacy with him. The fulfillment that we have in relationship with him, the closeness of that relationship that he wants to have with us.

Think with me just a couple minutes. In God's first recorded conversation with the man and the woman made in his image, he tells them of his provision for them to eat wide varieties of food.

In his patterns of life for his people, there are feasts like the annual Passover feast that involves unleavened bread and a slain lamb. And God says, keep this feast forever.

[7 : 43] Never forget what I did to bring you into relationship with me. That special relationship with God we call a covenant.

And covenants were often sealed, ratified with a meal. So when God tells his newly delivered people how to live in relationship with him, that's the Ten Commandments, okay?

They listened to this book of the covenant, read to them, and then Moses and some priests and 70 elders go up the mountain, see Yahweh, and share a meal in his presence.

In the new covenant, this pattern continues. As Jesus comes, God in the flesh, and he's known for eating with whom? Tax collectors and sinners.

And why is it that people are so upset about that? Why do the religious leaders get so worked up about Jesus being one who's eating with tax collectors and sinners?

[8 : 46] It's because that sharing of a meal communicates value, doesn't it? And welcome and friendship that they thought was so beneath a teacher like Jesus to be eating with sinners such as these.

But Jesus enjoys many famous meals like that. Like one at tax collector Zacchaeus' house. Some meals where he miraculously provides food for thousands of people at the same time.

Another where Mary and Martha and Lazarus are key guests. In fact, as he teaches, Jesus depicts the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 22, as a banquet where the king invites both good and bad guests to come celebrate his son with him.

Religious, irreligious, celebrate my son with me. And then, of course, there's the meal that we will celebrate and focus on today.

Where Jesus takes that Passover meal with his disciples and he fills it with new covenant significance at the last supper.

[9 : 57] Only the last supper is not actually the last supper in the Bible. It doesn't. And there we learned earlier this summer that Jesus continues to knock at the door of his people's hearts and offer to linger over a meal with us.

If we'll just repent and welcome him in, he says in Revelation 3. And the Bible tells us that we're moving forward to an eternal meal at the wedding supper of the Lamb that goes beyond anything we've experienced or could possibly imagine.

Part of that picture of our eternal, perfectly restored relationship with God is the meal foretold in Isaiah 25 that we read together earlier.

Let me just remind us. And what's going to happen?

What are we feasting about? He will swallow up on this mountain the covering cast over all peoples, the veil spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever.

[11 : 07] And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. The reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day when we're gathered with him at that meal.

Behold, this is our God. We're eating with him. We have waited for him that he might save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Don't you want to be at that meal? That will be good. Can you believe that meal? If you are a foodie, this is the God you want to know, isn't it?

But I mean, can you believe even more importantly that this incredible God wants to have that kind of close personal relationship with you?

He comes for that purpose. He wants to sit down with you over lunch. He wants to pick you out of a large room full of people and listen to your heart.

[12 : 12] He wants to be known by you in such a personal way. Listen, when God gave us something to picture his personal relationship with us, it wasn't a picture, was it?

It wasn't merely words. It was a meal. And a meal not merely of, hey, y'all, look up and look at bread and look at wine. No, taste and see, touch and feel.

God is good. That's the regular communal meal provided by him. The extraordinary God and king over all for very ordinary people like you and me.

What grace that is. You thought it was grace for Mike Honeycutt to eat lunch with me. Yahweh eats with you all the time.

That's grace. Amen. Now, I know moving back up here is stressing some of you out because I walked down there and you thought the sermon was over. And you thought, man, that was short.

[13 : 24] You hold on to that feeling, okay? You're going to need it in a few minutes. That's really what we're talking about this morning.

But I want to help us see just a little further as we eat with God. As we marvel at the reality that we do. How do we taste his grace? How does that actually happen?

What I want to do is encourage you, give you some tools as you think about coming to this table. And as you think about the Lord's Supper, even if you're observing or watching this morning.

How do you prepare to come? What do you think about as you eat? What are the things you contemplate after you leave? Consider three parts of this meal.

The host, the guests, and the food. First, the host. God invites us to supper with him.

[14 : 25] You'll notice that in all the gospel accounts of the Last Supper. And the same in 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul passes along what Jesus has told him. Verse 23, I received this from the Lord.

What is it? The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, he's the one who took bread. And he gave thanks. And he broke it and starts to share the food.

See, Jesus plays the role of host in this supper. It's important. He tells us why. It's because the entire supper is at his initiative.

Luke 22, at that last supper, he says to his apostles, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you.

What an encouraging reminder, isn't that? Of the kind of relationship Jesus longs for with us. And if you say, oh, well, it's not encouraging to me. Jesus just wanted to eat it with the apostles. No, you remember Revelation 3.

[15 : 25] Jesus knocking and longing to linger with you. It's that same longing. Can you imagine going out to a meal? And eating the whole meal completely ignoring the person across the table from you?

Or sitting down for a meal that someone prepared for you in their home and never speaking to them all night? You'd never do that.

May we never come to this table without being mindful of our dinner companion. The one who longs to know us, to hear our hearts, to forgive our sins, to strengthen our faith.

C.S. Lewis emphasizes the importance of including God in our conversation here and throughout our lives. The lives that we share together in Christian community.

He writes of that and said, God includes each of you personally in this community. And so at this feast, it is he, God, who has spread the board.

[16 : 33] And it is he who has chosen the guests. It is he we may dare to hope who sometimes does and always should preside. Let us not reckon without our host.

Don't ignore him. Don't miss him. Don't eat with brothers and sisters in any context without talking about him. He is here with us, especially in the supper, so that we taste and see that he is good.

He's the focus. And we receive grace as we depend on and look to his provision. And then as we focus on communing with him around this table, we look up and find he has invited many others into the same space with us.

Those friends that he chose to put around us are an important part of the meal, aren't they? Is that true in the memorable meal that you have in your mind this morning?

The people who are there, a big part of that? Have you ever been to a good meal with awkward guests? Jesus has.

[17 : 48] At the last supper, Jesus pours out his heart to guys who are getting ready to deny him, betray him, or abandon him.

But he has washed their feet. He has told them of his love. And he is now explaining the Passover feast that they've celebrated before, but never like this.

He's explaining that it is his blood that he will give to pay for their sins. The ones that are in the middle of committing, the ones that are about to go commit. What grace that Jesus sits and shares that meal with them.

God says this is an aspect of his grace that we can't overlook as we come to commune with him. As we eat with our host, it is not just about the two of us.

That's the context of Paul's admonition to the Corinthians. He's writing to them about the Lord's Supper. He goes so far as to say that because they don't eat together, they're not eating the Lord's Supper at all.

[18 : 54] Verse 21, one goes hungry, another gets drunk. See, the upper class Corinthians would often arrive early for the shared meal.

They'd be escorted into the fancy dining room where they would enjoy the best food and the best wine. But many of the working class Corinthians would come from the fields arriving much later.

They'd go to an outer room where they were being seated for this and being served leftovers. Sometimes not enough at all and going home hungry.

So what's Paul's solution? How can you eat and drink of this supper in a worthy manner? There, verse 33 says, wait for one another.

You have to discern the body. Yes, Jesus' body given for you, we're going to get to that. But here, primarily the body around you.

[20 : 00] It is a grace to be told to consider our relationships with our brothers and sisters, to be pushed towards sharing more together of the most important thing that we all share despite our differences.

To be reminded of the priority of those relationships such that a broken relationship in the body should be reconciled first. Leave your gift and go to your brother or sister before coming back to eat with Jesus.

Jesus, his grace calls us to repentance and reconciliation so that we come together as sinners to the throne of grace.

See, the guests at this table, they didn't earn their way on to the guest list. None of them did. Just like those failing disciples, we are invited here because of our completely undeserved relationship with the host.

I know some of you have never partaken of the Lord's Supper before. And you may have thought before as you've sat in a room like this one, I'm not holy enough.

[21 : 11] I'm not religious enough like y'all. I'm not good enough. Let me suggest to you a different understanding of this meal than perhaps the way you've thought about it.

The people who come to eat this bread and drink this wine are those who need grace. They are weak and wounded, sick and sore, not strong and successful.

They're people who need grace and find it in Jesus. That's why they come here to this table. There's no other reason to come.

No other good one, at least. Seeing this table then is an invitation to you. Not a barrier, please know that. But it's an invitation to you to come and find rest and joy and goodness.

Not in yourself, but in the good Savior who offers His body to be broken in your place. And His blood to be shed in your place. See, at the king's banquet Jesus talks about in Matthew 22, Jesus says the king sends his servant to the highways and the byways to find the good and the bad.

[22 : 29] Anyone who's willing to come be part of celebrating his son. And you know what happens? By that invitation, the wedding hall was filled with guests.

That's how He brings us in. He goes searching for us and inviting us in. Won't you come to be a part of this celebration with a God like that who will run out after you and welcome you in because of His Son?

Maybe you'd prefer today to talk with someone than coming now to partake of a sacrament. Maybe you're not really sure what it all means yet. That's great.

There's no pressure or rush. We would love to talk with you. Perhaps just come and observe this morning and then tell the elders serving at your table that you'd like to talk with him after the service.

Or come up here and find me. I'd love to talk with you following the service. We want you to know the comfort and the grace, the freedom and hope of coming empty-handed to be filled by the God of all grace.

[23 : 38] He has everything you need and He welcomes you because of Jesus. Nothing else you have to do. He welcomes you to this table, not because of who you are, but because of Jesus.

That's the host. The guests. Finally, the food. I think the most common topic of conversation around a table at mealtime is what we're eating, right?

Can you still almost taste the memorable meal that you're thinking of? That's God's intent. The intent in the Passover meal that God gave His people was for the food they ate to remind those eating it of an event.

Of a person so important. Exodus chapter 12. You're going to be there celebrating this and your children are going to say to you, what do you mean by this service?

This might happen to you this morning during the Lord's Supper, okay? Your children may say, what in the world are we doing, Mom and Dad? And you'll say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover.

[24 : 49] For He passed over the houses of the people of Israel and Egypt when He struck the Egyptians but spared our houses. It's about Him and something He's done.

The signs of God's deliverance from slavery into relationship with Him. The blood of the Lamb protecting us from death. The bread we ate so that we would be ready to leave.

Similarly, Jesus in the Last Supper says, now the bread is my body given for you.

See, Jesus is the bread of life, right? When you eat this bread that we will eat this morning, you're telling the world how desperate you are for Jesus' sustaining grace to make it through the day.

He alone fulfills you, right? And then there's wine. Pointing to a new covenant, a new way of relationship with God, being protected and delivered by the blood of Jesus, the once and for all perfect Lamb of God, whose blood, Jesus tells us in Matthew 26, is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

[26 : 04] When you drink the cup here, you're telling the world how desperate you are for forgiving grace from Jesus. That He alone forgives you.

That He alone fulfills you. Come to this table repenting and receiving the grace that you desperately need. That you need not only to hear about and be told is true, but also to taste and bring in to your heart.

What's that going to look like for you this morning? Maybe you find yourself doubting or lonely, and you come and you taste grace to trust one who suffered like you.

Maybe become fearful. You taste grace to share hope with your neighbors out of gratitude for the hope Jesus gives you.

Perhaps selfish. Maybe you taste the grace to love sacrificially because He first loved you. Maybe this morning you've even wrestled as we've confessed.

[27 : 11] You're in denial of your sin. And you taste here grace to repent deeply to God and to others because forgiveness and freedom are so clear here.

Now I can be honest, finally. Maybe you're despairing in this world. And you taste grace here to hope in the home that Jesus has prepared for you.

Perhaps you've confessed already this morning that you're just self-focused and you can't get anything else on your mind. And you taste grace to give generously because Jesus gave generously to you.

Maybe you come weak in your struggle against sin. You feel like you're losing. And you come here and you taste grace to finally turn from the sin because Jesus hung on the cross for it.

And in light of what it cost Him, you're going to turn away from that evil. Maybe you're exhausted from performing. You've been trying so hard to be good.

[28 : 09] And you're going to taste here grace to rest and finally get your value and significance from the fact that Jesus treasured you enough to give His life for you before you performed for Him at all.

Perhaps you'll come feeling distant and discouraged in your relationship with Jesus. And you'll taste grace to spend time with Jesus afresh as you remember the lengths that He went to in order to be in relationship with you.

I don't know exactly where you are, exactly what grace you need, but there is grace here for you wherever you are in the body and blood of Jesus.

Come to Him. See, as we discussed last week with baptism, these are more than mere signs. They're not magical, but they're not meaningless either.

The sacrament is a means of God's grace. It's a pathway where you meet Jesus and His grace comes to you. 1 Corinthians 10, the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

[29 : 22] The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? A participation, it means true fellowship, that you're actually united to Jesus, really feeding on Him by faith.

It is so vital. You can't miss this supper, friends, because you are unwelcome before God apart from Jesus. You are weak against Satan apart from Jesus.

You are hopeless in this world apart from Jesus. But the grace of the Lord's Supper is that you come and you eat with Him and you take into your body and soul His body and blood and you have Jesus, don't you?

You know it and you feel it, that He is yours. And the one you need to stand today is in you and with you and for you. Amen. Amen.

So our larger catechism tells us as we partake, we should earnestly hunger and thirst after Christ. Feed on Him by faith. Draw from His fullness.

[30 : 36] Trust in His merit. Rejoice in His love. Give thanks for His grace. Now, that's a beautiful list. That's a long list to do in a few minutes.

Let me encourage you to do this. As we celebrate, close your eyes and remember the host and talk to Him.

Open your eyes. See the guests around you. Marvel His grace in bringing you all together with these crazy people. Celebrate reconciled relationships.

And fix your eyes on Jesus in the bread and wine, the food. As He forgives your sins. As He fills your soul with joy.

There are many, many more questions that you could consider as you prepare to come to the Lord's Supper. As you contemplate this during the Lord's Supper.

[31 : 40] That you could meditate on afterwards. If you scan this QR code, it's up there. It's also in your bulletin if you need it later. Maybe just pick one or two.

There's a lot of questions, I admit. I write lots of questions. Maybe just pick one or two for today. Consider another one later. There is so much grace available to us at this table, isn't there?

So much that it may still make some of us wonder, how do I get an invite to such a meal? Or I know you're inviting me, but what's really required to eat always?

To know that not just today, but when I go and blow it tomorrow, that I could actually come back again and know that I'm invited back to the King's table. Will, that's a lot.

We don't know a lot about Mephibosheth. He's an Old Testament character. We know he was the son of Jonathan, King David's best friend.

[32 : 49] But that actually made Mephibosheth one of the few living members of the rival family that David had just displaced on the throne of Israel.

He's in trouble. Samuel tells us he was lame in both feet. He was unclean. Not the kind of guy qualified to be eating with the king.

Yet we know one more thing about him. That he ate always at the king's table. Even though he was lame in both feet.

Why? What qualified a self-described dead dog like Mephibosheth? One thing. He was connected to Jonathan.

That's it. Friends, we are less than unqualified on our own, aren't we? Lame in both feet, if you will.

[33 : 58] Deserving to be cast far away from the king of glory except for one thing. That by grace, through faith, we are connected to Jesus.

It's the only way we come. It's the only way we come and we eat always at the king's table. Today, sometime again in the future when you're dragged stinking of sin back to the foot of the cross to eat with the king who forgives you and gloriously to eat at the king's table forever connected to Jesus.

I want us to take a few moments as we prepare to come and eat to tell Jesus how undeserving we are. Tell him how you're lame in both feet and then thank him for seating you here at this table and eating with you again today.

Take a few moments and pray silently. come on. Okay? Anybody■■ the inside A Jesus we're talking about our brokenness and sin again because there's a lot of it and we're remembering your grace again because it abounds to us so much more and where sin increases grace super increases so that we can be washed and made clean and sit at this table and we thank you and we ask that you'd set aside these very common elements for a sacred purpose in our hearts that we would taste and see that you are good and you're good to us amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org