

# Feasting By Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Thank you, Treg. Some of you are like me and that you love a clear, well-laid-out plan, and so if that is you this morning, I would like to apologize.

I'm sorry for throwing you off this morning, but I do hope that it will be worth it because what we're doing this morning is we're going to take communion together. And as Treg and I talked about this, what we're doing when we take communion is so significant and so important and so weighty that we felt like it would be necessary for us to take a one-week detour away from the Gospel of John just for one week and just to really focus in and dive in on what in the world are we doing when we take communion together. We want you to understand what we're doing, not just to do it, but to really understand what we're doing when we take communion.

So if you would, please open up your Bibles this morning to 1 Corinthians 11. 1 Corinthians 11, and we're going to look at verses 17 through 34 this morning.

If you're using the pew Bibles there in front of you, that's going to be on page 901 of the pew Bibles there in front of you. But I do encourage you to have a Bible open, 1 Corinthians 11, verses 17 through 34, and follow with me as I read.

But in the following instructions, I do not commend you, because when you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse. For in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you, in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

[ 1 : 58 ] When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

What? Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you?

Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and the blood of the Lord.

[ 3 : 10 ] Let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for judgment. About the other things, I will give directions when I come.

Let's bow and pray. Father God, what a gift you've given us in communion. And we pray now as we open up and we read and we look to you in these words, Father, would you deepen our understanding of what we are about to do, what you've done for us.

[ 4 : 15 ] We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Sunday, March 19th at 4 p.m., we will gather here and we will eat chili.

I'm looking forward to this. I like chili, but even more than that, I enjoy just gathering with my brothers and sisters in Christ, especially over a good meal. But I'd like for you just to imagine a

scenario with me for a moment.

Imagine that you show up on March 19th, 4 p.m. You've been waiting for weeks for this. You've been talking it up. You've been having dreams about chili in your sleep, just thinking about it. Your mouth is watering as you drive to the church. But when you arrive, to your dismay, all the food is gone. You don't know how they did it.

Some other members who will not be named showed up before you, and they somehow managed to eat up all of the appetizers, to eat all of the chili, to go work their way through all of the dessert.

[ 5 : 27 ] They even ate all the crackers, the cheese, the sour cream, the Fritos. And now, you're mad, of course, because you were hungry, and you were looking forward to this, and you didn't get to enjoy any of it.

But that's part of it. You're also disappointed. You're hurt because what was supposed to be a unifying, joyful, even worshipful experience was now ruined by someone else's selfishness. Now, that example is ridiculous. See, we never run out of food, right? But this imaginary example is similar, at least, to the scenario that we find ourselves in in 1 Corinthians 11.

Although only it's not a chili cook-off that's being ruined by someone's selfishness, it was the Lord's Supper. In these verses, chapter 11, Paul is showing us, he's addressing an abuse of the Lord's Supper.

He says that some there in Corinth, your own brothers and sisters in Christ, showed up before you and fed themselves at your expense.

[ 6 : 40 ] They left fed and happy and left no consideration for others, and you showed up and you were hungry. So he says in verse 20, look there with me, chapter 11, verse 20.

He says, See, some individuals here in Corinth, they were taking this sacred meal of bread and wine, and they were treating it as ordinary.

The issue here in Corinth, what we're studying about this morning, the issue was that they have lost sight of the value of this meal.

And of course, while we may not profane the Lord's table in that exact way, at least I hope not, I wonder how many of us, without even realizing it, treat this meal as ordinary.

I wonder how many of us come, we take the Lord's Supper, we know that it's good, we know Jesus commanded us to do this, but we don't really understand fully what exactly we're doing when we eat this bread and drink this cup.

[ 8 : 02 ] Are we aware of all that it means? I'm convinced that the Lord's Supper, communion, is one of the most precious graces that Jesus Christ has given to his church, but I'm also convinced that far too many of us undervalue or misunderstand this meal.

So, this morning what we're going to do is we're going to let Paul remind us what communion is for. If someone were to ask you, what do we do this for? I want to give you some answers to that question.

So this morning we're going to see seven ways you could answer them. Did he just say seven?

Yes, I did. So we're going to move quickly. Seven answers to the question, what is communion for? This is going to be our outline this morning. If you're taking notes, seven answers to the question, what is communion for? First, communion is for uniting.

Communion is for uniting. You all know this, the enemy hates spiritual unity. Jesus Christ purchased unity for his bride, for the church on the cross.

[ 9 : 17 ] The enemy hates it. He wants to divide. So Paul is addressing some division in the church here at Corinth. So he says in verse 18 again, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are some divisions among you.

It doesn't sit well with Paul. He wants to address that. And this division is illustrated in how they are approaching and how they are taking the Lord's supper. Some go on eating and drinking themselves full, while others in the body go without.

They are not protecting and guarding the unity that they've been given in Christ. And so Paul corrects them. Verse 22. He says, What? Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?

Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? He's so upset because the church, again, is meant to be a spiritually united body in Jesus Christ.

That's what he talks about in the next chapter. 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We are many members of one body. And one place where we see that spiritual unity visibly, clearly is at the communion table.

[10:36] Communion is one place where our invisible unity becomes visible. Look back with me one chapter to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 17.

As Paul says it like this, he says, Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body. For we all partake of one bread.

Do you see that? How he connects, Paul is connecting, he's linking communion, the one bread, with our unity together in Christ. When each of us individually comes to this one table, and we each individually come and we partake of one bread, we are declaring that we have been made one, both vertically, individually, vertically with God.

But not only that, horizontally, we have been made one with one another. We're declaring that we are one flesh, one body with all those who share this meal with us.

Communion is for uniting. So, very quickly, my question here then becomes, Well, who should share this meal with us? Who should take communion?

[11:53] And when and where? And so here's my very brief answer. Communion is a family meal for the gathered church. Communion is a family meal for the gathered church.

And this is, I know, one area where I know this just bucks right up against our tendency towards Christian individualism. But that's exactly the point, isn't it?

Now, communion is not just for me, not just for you individually. It's not even just for your family or for a small group, for a men's group, for a Sunday school class.

No, communion is meant for the gathered church, the gathered body of Christ. Meaning, all those who have received Christ, that's vertical unity, but also who have been baptized and brought into membership of a local church family.

That is horizontal unity. Look back at our passage and tell me, see how many times he says here in this passage, When you come together.

[13:05] Meaning the whole Corinthian church. When you come together. He says it five times. Verse 17. When you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse.

Verse 18. For when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you. Verse 20.

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. Verse 33.

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. Verse 34. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for judgment.

Do you see that? When we come together as a church, communion is given to the church to be taken when the local church comes together.

So that whatever divisions there may be, whatever tension there may be with our brothers and sisters horizontally, when we come to this one table and share from one bread, we're reminded of our spiritual unity in Christ.

[14:08] Second, communion is for remembering. Communion is for remembering. Look with me to verse 23.

Paul says, This is probably, I think, the one aspect that we're most familiar with.

Do this in remembrance of me. God knew I needed to live in an age of smartphone reminders, calendar notifications, birthdays, milestones, anniversaries, whatever it is, appointments.

I just plug it into the calendar once, and then I'm good to go. I'm forgetful. I don't think I'm alone in that. We are a forgetful people. We're forgetful about small things, and sometimes we are forgetful about big things.

We need to be reminded even of the gospel. Communion is one way that God has built in a regular reminder of the gospel to the church's life together.

[15:27] You think in the Old Testament, the Jewish people, they had the Passover meal. What did that signify? The Jews ate the Passover meal as a reminder of their deliverance from slavery, of their protection from the wrath of God on all those who were not marked off by the blood of the Lamb.

Now in communion, Jesus takes this Passover meal and he reinterprets it in light of himself as a reminder for us of the ultimate deliverance from slavery to sin and the ultimate rescue from the wrath of God by the true blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

So when we take this bread and this juice together here in just a moment, we're going to be reminded visibly and tangibly of the sacrifice that Christ made for us.

Just as in baptism, we see and are reminded of God's power to save as they are buried with him in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life, so in communion, we see and are reminded of the

broken body and the shed blood of Christ.

You can't miss it. You literally taste this lesson in your mouth. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. The Son of God gave his life for you.

[16:56] His body was broken for you. His blood was shed for you. You taste it and you remember. To Christians, we never move on from the gospel.

This is the only way that we grow. It's by beholding the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. It's by fixing our minds on him. It's by feasting on Christ by faith, by remembering the gospel so that we grow and we live in light of the gospel.

So as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we're reminded of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Third, communion is for participating. Communion is for participating. Now, there are some historically who have reduced communion to only being a reminder.

And that's all that it is. It's simply just a memorial of what Christ has done. I hope what we're seeing is that it is certainly not less than that, but it is definitely much more than just a reminder.

[18:08] But what are the spiritual, nutritional benefits of this meal? In other words, does taking communion actually do you any good outside of just getting a good reminder of what Christ has done for you on the cross?

Well, yes and no. On the one hand, if you take communion like the Corinthians did, then there's no spiritual benefit for you at all.

What did Paul say? These believers here in Corinth were not benefiting in any way from taking communion. Paul says it's not even the Lord's Supper that you eat.

Same bread, same wine. In one case, it is the Lord's Supper. In the Corinthian case, it is not the Lord's Supper. So what is the difference?

What is it that takes these ordinary elements and injects them with spiritual nutrition so that they're a source of growth for the believer?

[19:11] The difference, I believe, is faith. The difference is faith. These elements by themselves, bread and juice, they carry no intrinsic spiritual value at all.

We buy these at Walmart, I think, maybe online, store them on a shelf. They're not in and of themselves special. They're ordinary.

They're powerless for you. But when received by faith in what they represent, they become extraordinary and precious to the believer.

Look back again to what he said in chapter 10, verse 16. Chapter 10, verse 16. He says, The cup of blessing that we bless.

This ordinary cup filled with ordinary wine. This cup of blessing that we bless. Is it not participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break.

[20:16] Ordinary bread bought at the market, placed on the table. But that bread, he says, is it not participation, fellowship in the body of Christ? How?

Because when received by faith in the promises of God, faith in what the juice and what the bread represent, faith in the Savior, we are fed spiritually much more than we are fed physically.

Let me give you an illustration. Hopefully, this will help clear that up without being too silly. Faith is kind of like a straw.

The elements, bread and wine, are the cup. And the gospel is a big, nutritious smoothie. Okay? Follow with me. The smoothie is what you want, right?

That's where the nutrition is. That's where the benefits are. That's what we need. The cup, the cup is not really special in and of itself. It just packages up the smoothie.

[21:19] It houses it and it delivers it to us in a way that can be handled and held. That is what communion does.

It delivers the gospel to us in a way that can be handled and seen and received. But if the straw is just touching the cup, you don't get any of the smoothie.

The straw has to actually make contact with the smoothie or the smoothie is of no value to you at all. Are you following with me? We must partake of these elements by faith so that what we're actually doing is not just feasting on a cracker and some juice.

What we're actually doing by faith is feasting on all the glorious benefits of what Christ has done in the gospel. Bobby Jameson, he says it like this.

He says, What a gift that is for the church.

[ 22 : 45 ] Fourth. Fourth. Communion is for renewing. Look with me to verse 25. Chapter 11, verse 25.

It says, When Jesus took the cup after supper, he said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

I love that in God's providence just last week we talked about Jesus being the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That's John's proclamation. Behold the Lamb of God.

And what we saw was that in the old covenant, almost everything was purified by blood. The blood of lambs, the blood of goats, the blood of bulls.

They were shed for the temporary covering for sin. But it was temporary. And it was fading. And it was external. But here, Jesus says in Matthew 26, 28.

[ 23 : 44 ] He says, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. What Jesus is saying when he says, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

He's bringing to fulfillment hundreds of years of waiting and longing for the promises of God to come to pass. This substitutionary sacrifice who takes away the sin of the world.

His blood ushers forth the new covenant. The promise that God's made to be our God and us to be his people by wiping away our sin.

Not just externally, but completely, internally, totally. Restoring us from the inside out so that we love him and we desire to delight in him.

We desire to obey him. We want him to be our God. We want to be his people. But when we say this meal is for renewing, what do we mean?

[ 24 : 50 ] What I mean is that this meal is a covenant renewal between us and God. Between God and his people.

It is a reaffirmation. A renewal of promises that have been made in the new covenant. In communion, God is reaffirming to us his commitment to be our God through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

And by coming and drinking of this cup, we are reaffirming our commitment to him to be his people. To love him and to serve him with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, all our strength.

It is a regular mutual reaffirmation of the promises made in the new covenant. I'll give you another example. If you are married, then you are married whether or not you ever take your wife on a date. That covenant commitment is there. The vows have been made. But when you do get a chance to pull away from the busyness of life and actually spend some time with your spouse, you are reminded again of all of the good benefits, all of the good blessing, all of the relational intimacy of marriage.

[ 26 : 13 ] Your love is rekindled and your commitment is strengthened. And you leave, I hope, renewed in your commitments to one another. Only communion is more formal even than this.

It is covenant vow renewal. He offers himself fully to us and we offer ourselves fully to him. He commits again to be our God.

We commit again to be his people. So in a sense, communion doesn't give us anything that we don't already have as Christians.

But it deepens our intimacy with God as we're reminded again of his faithfulness to us and we have the opportunity again to pledge ourselves to him over and over and over and over again until he comes.

And we need to do that, church, because none of us are perfect. None of us are perfect. God always commits and fulfills his end of the bargain, doesn't he?

[ 27 : 19 ] But you and I, we always fall short, which is why fifth, communion is for revealing. Communion is for revealing.

One of the most gloriously painful ways that God loves his people is to shine a light on our sin.

And he gives an opportunity for that in communion. You remember communion is an expression of our fellowship with God. 1 John 1, verses 5 through 9 says this.

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. In the blood of Jesus, his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

[ 28 : 22 ] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In communion, we have a regular opportunity to confess our sin to God.

To bring it before him and to have our fellowship with him, our experience of intimacy with the Lord restored. Paul shows us here that the stakes are high.

Higher than you and I probably normally think. We shouldn't treat this casually. Look at verse 27. He says, And he says in verse 30, I think it's safe to say that God takes this meal way more seriously than we do.

We are urged here to examine ourselves. To approach this table, not casually and with a carefree manner, but somberly and soberly and seriously to approach the table.

Christians are not perfect. We are declared perfect. One day we will be perfect, but we're not there yet. Martin Luther, I believe he's the one that said that the whole of the Christian life is to be one of constant repentance.

[ 30 : 19 ] Continual repentance. That's not a one-time thing when you come to faith in Christ. The entire Christian life is to be marked by repentance. When's the last time you repented of your sins?

Before the Lord. Last month. Last week. Today. In the past hour. Church communion.

Is a gift to the church. As a regular checkup of the state of your heart before the Lord. To be able to shine a light on your sin. To invite the Holy Spirit. To examine yourselves.

To see if there's any unpleasing way in you. That you might confess your sin. So before we eat of this table today. We're going to stop and give an opportunity for you to reflect.

And to confess any unrepentant sin. This is good, painful, merciful grace. Sixth. Sixth.

[ 31 : 16 ] Sixth. Communion is for proclaiming. Communion is for proclaiming. Jesus says in verse 26.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup. You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Communion is a meal with a message.

The reformers used to refer to baptism and communion as visible words. In other words, they are saying something. They are proclaiming a message.

And you know, sometimes I think that we tend to just overcomplicate things a little bit. I was talking about this with some of you this week. Communion and baptism are not meant to be complicated.

They're really not. You do not need a master's degree and hours and hours of study to understand the simple message of baptism. Or the simple message of communion.

[ 32 : 15 ] Yes, there's elements of mystery here. Yes, there's always more that we can glean. More that we can learn. There's a lot to talk about. But at its core, communion and baptism are supposed to be simple, visible demonstrations of the gospel.

So complex and mysterious that academics can argue for years and years and years and years and never come to an agreement. But so simple and clear that even a child can get the message of what's being demonstrated here.

Don't overcomplicate this. And when Jesus picks up a loaf of bread and he breaks it in half. And then again. And then again. And then again.

And then again. And he hands a piece to you. Hands a piece to you. Hands a piece to you. And he tells them, this is my body broken for you.

And when he takes a glass of red wine and he pours it out for his friends. And he says, this is my blood that is shed for you. The strange and overcomplicated way to understand that is to say, well, he must mean that's actually his body.

[ 33 : 29 ] And that is actually his blood. That's not what he's saying. This is a simple proclamation of the gospel. He's making a point here.

What's the point? What? It's a comparison. Just like this bread is broken into many pieces and spread abroad for all of you.

Just like this wine is poured out for you. So my body and my blood are broken and shed for you. I'm going to die. And whenever you eat this bread and drink this wine.

I want you to remember that I gave myself for you. A sinner. Unworthy. Unworthy. Unworthy. But now adopted as a child of God. That is the message.

It's a proclamation of the gospel. Now you should know by now that every week we proclaim the gospel. This is not a new message.

[ 34 : 28 ] We preach the gospel from every text of scripture. You hear the gospel every single time we come to worship. We sing about the gospel. We preach about the gospel. But sometimes we're

a little dense.

And we need to taste the gospel. We need to see the gospel. We need to have it shown visibly to us. See God is condescending to our senses as he often does.

In a way that we can understand. So that when we eat this bread and drink this cup. We're proclaiming the gospel visibly to ourselves. To others around us.

To our children here among us. To those outside of this church. To any non-believers who are here.

We're bearing witness to the fact that Christ Jesus has died for sinners.

The righteous for the unrighteous. That he might bring us to God. We preach Christ crucified. But not just that.

[ 35 : 32 ] We preach Christ risen. We preach Christ reigning. We preach Christ victorious over death.

Which is why number seven. This is where we'll close. Communion is for hoping.

Communion is for hoping. When we take communion together as a church family. We're not just looking backwards to the cross.

We are also looking forwards. In anticipation. Of when he will come again. Look what Paul says in verse 26.

Look there with me. He says as often as you eat this bread. And drink this cup. You proclaim the Lord's death. Until he comes.

[ 36 : 32 ] Until he comes. Jesus adds in Matthew 26 verse 29. 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. Church communion is an incredible gift.

But it's not permanent. This is a meal on the way. It's just an appetizer. To hold us over. Until our king returns. And we will feast with him.

And with one another. Forever. And for all of his people. Those who cling to him now in faith. For us. This meal is just a pointer. It's a foretaste.

It's a mere sample. Of the joy to come. But for those who don't know. The Lord. Let this table.

[ 37 : 29 ] Be a flashing. Warning sign. For you. That only those who feast on Christ. Now. Here. Now. Now. By faith. Will be.

Invited. To feast. Forevermore. With him. In glory. You know. If you've. Sat through this whole sermon. And you're just scratching your head. You don't. You don't get it. Maybe you got this sinking feeling.

In the pit of your stomach. And wonder. If you actually believe. And belong to God. Maybe you're not sure. Jesus invites you. To join the family. By turning from your sin.

And trusting in Christ alone. For your salvation. Let your response. To this table. This morning. Be repentance. And faith in Christ. But for those of us.

Who know. The king. Church. Let this meal. Increase your longing. For his fulfillment. In the age to come. If you're like me.

[ 38 : 26 ] This little bit of bread. And this little cup of juice. Is not enough to satisfy you. It ought to leave you wanting more. That's exactly the point.

But the best news imaginable. Is that one day. Christ will return. And we will be satisfied. Forever. In him. Together.

I want to close by. Reading the passage. That was read earlier. This morning. From Isaiah. Chapter 25. Verses 6 through 9.

Church. This is our hope. I'm going to read it again. To you. He says. On this mountain. The Lord of hosts. Will make for all peoples. A feast of rich food. A feast of well-aged wine.

Of rich food. Full of morrow. Of aged wine. Well refined. And he will swallow up. On the mountain.

The covering. That is cast. Over all peoples. The veil.

[ 39 : 22 ] That is spread. Over all nations. He will swallow up. Death forever. And the Lord God. Will wipe away tears. From all faces. And 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. Behold. This is our God. 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. As it says in Revelation. Chapter 19. Church. Blessed are those.

Who are invited. To the marriage supper. Of the lamb. That is what this meal. Is for. Will you join us. At the table. Let's pray.

Father God. We. We thank you. For the gospel. The good news. Of the broken body.

[ 40 : 17 ] And the shed blood. Of Christ. And Lord. We thank you. For. The unity. That you've given us. Not only individually. To you. As individual believers.

But. But together. As one body. In Christ. That you have made us. One. We pray now. That. As we come. And we partake. Of this. This bread. And this juice. Lord. Would you.

Would you lead us. To worship you. Would you deepen. Our. Our. Our desire. For you. Would you help us. To long. For the day. When Christ returns. And we will feast.

Forever with you. In glory. We pray this. In Christ's name. Amen.