An Invitation To The Table

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[0:00] In our home, we have a collection of family photos in our dining room that we love.

! They're a little bit out of date right now. There's a few grandkids missing. A couple more on the way. And if you were to ask me about this collection of photos, Rich, are they there because you can't remember what they look like? I would say, no, that's not really the reason they're there. They're not there to inform my intellect. The photos are there to touch my heart, to remind me of special times together, to look forward to times where we can be together again, we long to be together, to thank God for them, to pray for them, pray for their protection, pray for their blessing. Some of you may have similar arrangements in your home. The Lord has left us a picture that serves as a similar purpose, and that we should not take for granted looking at it as well. It is not given to inform our intellect. Many of us have heard the story of this picture over and over again. We know the details even. It should absolutely touch our hearts.
It should rekindle a desire within us to want to be together. It should remind us of his great love for us, especially when we think of what he did for us on the cross, when he shed his blood and died, that we might be forgiven of our sins. And again, it should fill our hearts with a desire to see him and also make us ask the question, am I ready to meet him? Of course, I'm talking about communion. Sometimes it's called the Lord's table or the Lord's supper. Today, we're going to be in Luke 22, looking at that occasion where Jesus met with his disciples in the upper room and shared this table together. But I want to, before we do that, start with a different familiar passage, do some definitions, and then go into the passage in Luke 22. So to start with, a passage that we read quite often when we share communion together is this from 1 Corinthians 11. This is Paul writing, and he said, for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. Paul received these instructions directly from the Lord.
It is an interesting idea that Paul met with the Lord to be taught directly by him, even after Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. That is Galatians chapter 1 and 2 deal with that subject. But this is what happened, that the Lord taught Paul this information here.
[3:43] I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. He told the Corinthians this before, that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, and that word given thanks in the Greek is the verb form, it's eucharisto is the Greek word, and we get our English word eucharist from it. Sometimes we tie the word eucharist to communion.

Some denominations, that's an understanding there, and eucharist just means to give thanks. It's very simple, and we just went blank. There we go. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And then verse 25, boy, I'm doing some spritzing. It's not me spitting, it's spritzing. Should I go to the handheld?
Okay. Okay. I'm going to take this off. I'm not sure this is going to solve our problem, but we still need one thing.
Sorry. No. Check, check. I'm going to get it off eventually. Here. Where'd I go? Okay. We're going to try this.
All right. Verse 25. In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Jesus instituting something different here.
[5:32] It's the Old Testament or Old Covenant. Now he's introducing something new. Jeremiah prophesied this, that this is a new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

And then in verse 26, he said, for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes. This celebration of communion is a way for us, another way for us to declare the gospel.

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The gospel is integral in what we do in celebrating communion, the Lord's table together. It is a declaration of that gospel. And we are continuing to proclaim this gospel until he returns.
It's the instruction that we have been given to share this message until he comes again. And now I want to kind of do some defining here.
And I want to understand the tension of communion because there is a tension there. There is a mystery that is involved in communion. And I'll explain that as we go forward here.
[6:41] And I want to start with, and you see this on your notes, defining the word sacrament. Because sometimes the word sacrament is used in what is named, what this celebration is, is called.

We sometimes refer to it as a sacrament. And there are a couple of definitions for sacrament. One is, I would say, faulty, one that we don't use, and one that is true and right and less popular, less well-known.
It's why I don't use the word sacrament to describe it, because most often when I say the word sacrament, most people think of the first definition, which I would say is faulty.
And so the definition of sacrament, it starts with a right that was ordained by Christ. Now, both definitions include that element. This is something that Jesus himself ordained for us.
Now, that first definition is this, that it serves as a means of grace. Now, what I mean by a means of grace is that just by the very act of participating in this sacrament, in this table, in the taking of the bread and the cup, or what they would label as other sacraments like baptism or some would say marriage, some would say last rites, ordination, different things like that, just by participating in this, you are receiving some form of grace from God.
[8:25] And that is an incorrect view of what this table represents. There is no extra grace that you receive by participating. This is simply second definition of what this is.

So if you would, write the word no there, so that you know that that's a faulty definition of the word sacrament. And let's take a look at what I would say is the better definition here.
It is a symbol, or if you want, a sign of a greater spiritual reality. And that is the correct definition of this, of a sacrament, a symbol or a sign of a greater spiritual reality.
The greater spiritual reality is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, or was condemned, crucified, died, buried, and rose from the dead.
And this is what we celebrate when we partake of the Lord's table together. This is what we remember. When Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me, the word remembrance there is a kind of a rehearsal, a going over vividly in your mind.
[9:39] If you could use pictures in your mind to remember what he has done for us. And so the other aspect of it is that it's literally a mystery.

The word sacrament, it doesn't come from the Greek. It comes from the Latin. And it comes from putting two Latin words together. One is sacred, and the other is mystery.
Holy mystery, literally, is what this is. And, of course, there are Greek words to describe holy and mystery. The Greek word is mysterion.
And this describes, this is, I think, an accurate description of what communion is all about, because there is something unique and something special about communion.
It is perhaps more than just a remembrance. Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 10. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?
[10:44] There is the idea here that we are participating. When we partake of the elements, we are participating with him in the shedding of his blood. We are applying that, if you will.

The word participation here is the Greek word koinonia. We get our word communion from it. So we often refer to this Lord's table as communion.
That is that word of fellowship or partnership or participation in. We are participating in the blood of Christ when we receive the elements.
The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Are we not participating with him as he goes to the cross, and we ourselves also going to the cross with him as believers?
It is why this celebration, this Lord's table, is meant for believers. It is meant for those who have fully trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
[11:46] It is not effectual in any way for those who are not believers. It's not applied to you if you're not a believer. Only true believers can benefit from the participation in this Lord's table.

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Now, let me also say this. You have this on your notes as well. Nothing is conferred or given or provided at the Lord's table that isn't already mine in Christ.
First, if I have trusted Jesus Christ, if you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, he has given you everything you need for faith, for life, for everything.
You've received everything that he has to offer the moment that you place your faith, your trust in Jesus Christ. There is no second grace. There is no second blessing that comes after you trust Christ as Savior.
The scriptures don't teach anything like that. And so this is meant to serve as a reminder in and a participation in what he has already done and given for us.
[12:54] So what is it for then? The difference isn't in what is given. You've already been given everything. But in how I take what has already been given to me and make it mine, make it my possession.

Now, if I have trusted Christ, I've at least on an infant level, on a very elementary level, I have become a child of God.
But I'm still young in my faith. I'm still a babe in Christ. And so I cannot fully grasp all of the depth, all of the richness of the understanding that comes with everything that Jesus has done for us when he went to the cross.
I understand it simply that he's died for me, and he paid the penalty for my sin, and he rose again from the dead. That's all we need to know in order to be saved. Thank you, Lord, for saving me.
I repent of my sin. I trust you as Savior. That is enough. But that's not where I want to stay. I want to grow in my faith. I want to grow in my knowledge and my understanding, my relationship with the Lord.
[14:04] And so by participating in communion, it allows me to make that more of a possession that I can claim. It helps me to grow in faith, to grow in the depth of my faith, and how deeply then I apply it to my daily life because it does have an impact in my daily life.

Regular participation with, regular communion with the Lord's table over time will bring to us comfort because we've trusted in the one who has done the work.
It brings to us assurance. It brings to us a confidence that we have trusted Christ as Savior.
He has done all this on my behalf, and it is mine. And I can know it, 1 John 5, 13, that we may know that we have eternal life. It's not an arrogance.
It's a settled assurance. And participating in the Lord's table helps to bring that level of assurance, that level of confidence higher and higher in my walk with the Lord.
[15:23] It is hard for us to grow as believers if we're not participating with Him on several levels, if we're not in His Word, if we're not spending time in prayer, if we're not participating in the Lord's table.

This is not an optional event event for those of us who have trusted Christ as Savior. This is something that we've been commanded to participate in.
And so God calls us to this table. And now I want us to look to Luke chapter 22 and look at this passage where Jesus instituted the first ever Lord's table.
So in verse 7, it goes on from here. This is just after Judas has met with the chief priests and the scribes and they paid him 30 pieces of silver.
And now they're looking for this opportunity to betray Jesus and to take Jesus into custody. Then when the day of unleavened bread, then came the day of the unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.
[16:30] And Jesus sent Peter and John and He's only telling Peter and John. He's not letting all the 12 know, particularly Judas, because this would have been a perfect opportunity, them meeting in secret in an upper room for them to come and arrest Jesus.

So Judas doesn't know this yet. So Jesus sent Peter and John saying, go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it. They said to him, where will you have us to prepare it?
And he said to them, behold, when you have entered the city, there's going to be a man there carrying a jar of water and he will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters.
This is a little odd, okay? Then tell the master of the house, the teacher says to you, where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?
And he will show you to a large upper room that's furnished and I want you to prepare it there. So now the task for Peter and John is to go and to secure a lamb to celebrate for the Passover.

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[17:39] That was part of the Passover meal, was roasted lamb. And so they would go and procure the lamb. They would then take it to the temple to be sacrificed.

Its blood would be shed. This is part of the Passover celebration. This was the task. This was an all-day task for them. They would go, they'd take that lamb to the temple to be sacrificed.
They would then take the carcass of that lamb after it's gone through all of the sacrifice, bring it back to this upper room. We tend to think of Airbnb or Vrbo as kind of a new thing.
It was very popular back in the day. They had Airbnb. Especially people in Jerusalem because people would come to Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate these different festivals throughout the year.
And so it was very common that when you built a house, you would build on one floor your own living space. And then on the second floor, you would have another wide open kind of space that had outdoor steps up to it.
[18:52] You may not then also have indoor steps that would lead into it, but definitely outdoor steps. And that was an extra source of income for your family because then you could rent out that upper room to be used for travelers who were coming in, particularly to Jerusalem.

And so Jesus, we don't know if what's happening here is miraculous or if Jesus has arranged this ahead of time, but we know who this is. This is the home of John Mark.
Actually, John Mark's father is the owner of this home. Mark, we know him as the gospel writer, Mark. At this point, he's probably around 12 years old.
And he is, this is part of it. He's around. He's hanging around, right? He's watching all of this. He probably met Jesus, knew Jesus, heard Jesus teach, saw Jesus perform miracles, was perhaps at 12 years old already a follower of Christ.
And so here they come. They come, they go to the temple, they bring the carcass of the lamb back to this place, and they begin the roasting and the preparation and the buying of other meal, parts of the meal.
[20:07] And they do all of this preparation work. And then Jesus and the rest of the apostles are coming in that evening to celebrate the meal together. But Peter and John have been given this task to prepare it in advance.

And then they went and found it just as he had told them, Peter and John, and they prepared the Passover. And when the hour came, Jesus, this is speaking of Jesus, reclined at table.
That's a phrase that we've heard before in the Gospel of Luke. When Jesus fed the 5,000, they reclined at table.
That's all one word, but they didn't have tables out in the wilderness where he fed them, but it's the same word. And it means they didn't just sit down in the field. They sat down with an anticipation of receiving food.
That's what reclined at table means. You don't go sit at the dining room table unless you're preparing to receive a meal, right? That's kind of what is in view here with this word.
[21:12] The apostles with him. And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. So Jesus knows what's happening.

He knows the betrayal is about to take place. He knows that he's going to suffer and die the next day. He knows all of this is coming.
And yet here he is. Looks like to me he is very much so at peace. Very calm. Very in control of his faculties here.
I've earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. We've been talking about the kingdom of God all throughout the Gospel of Luke.
The drumbeat, that is, this gospel message that Jesus was proclaiming that John the Baptist had been proclaiming. The kingdom of God is at hand.
[22:09] The kingdom of God is at hand. And now he's saying, listen, I'm not going to share this with you again until the kingdom of God is established. They wouldn't have had a clue what he was talking about in terms of timing.

For them, it would simply mean that a year from now, the next time Passover was to come, the kingdom of God would be established. That's probably how they interpreted it, how they understood it.

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But that's not what Jesus was saying. Jesus was saying, I'm getting ready to go away. And until I return, I will not enjoy this meal with you like this until that time is fulfilled.
And so he took a cup and the Passover meal included three or four cups. There's a little disagreement there in terms of how many cups of wine they would share officially during the meal. But this is one of the earlier cups. This isn't part of communion yet. So this is part of the Passover celebration. He took a cup and when he had given thanks, he said, take this and divide it among yourselves.
[23:20] For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And so they would share a cup of this wine together as part of the Passover.

And now, here in verse 19, we see Jesus instituting what we now know today is the Lord's table or communion. He took bread and when he had given thanks, there's our Eucharist again, he broke it and gave it to them saying, this is my body which is given for you.
And he said, do this in remembrance of me. There's our rehearsal in our minds of looking over in our mind's eye, if you will, the videotape of all that he is about to go through in purchasing our redemption.
And likewise, the cup after they had eaten. And so now, this is the cup that's included as part of the celebration of communion.
Saying, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. There's the new covenant. But behold, even as they're finishing the celebration of this communion, communion, right out of his mouth is this, someone's going to betray me.
[24:46] But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined. But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed.

Jesus knows who's going to betray him. Jesus knows when it's going to happen. He knows all about it. He's not powerless to stop it. He could stop it if he so chose to do so.
But all of this has been determined in advance. This is the reason he came was to go to the cross. And so he is just now following through what has already been determined was going to happen. But woe to that man. Woe to Judas who is going to betray Jesus. And they began to question one another which one of them it could be who was going to do this.
We'll see next time we meet that they quickly move on from who's going to do this to who's the greatest. I think I'm the greatest. Are you? No, I think I'm. Jesus, can I be the one to sit at you?
[25:47] And it's interesting that chain of events if you will. Now when we talk about communion there's something that we often do when we celebrate communion together.

And it's a part of this charge that's been given by Paul for us to do. And that is the idea of self-examination. Self-examination where we're called to be honest with ourselves and yet at the same time the Lord is not looking for perfection.
To participate in the table does not mean that you are perfect. It's, oh, I got everything all squared away and oh, I'm all set and I'm good with God.
That's not the standard if you will. Honesty is a part of it, yes, but not perfection. So I want to deal with some of this when it comes to this examination and read the text from 1 Corinthians 11 beginning in verse 27.
Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner manner. Or a thoughtless manner.
[27:03] You're not taking account of what you're participating in when you celebrate communion. Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Okay? So this is meant to be a serious or a somber or a sober moment in the life of the body of Christ and the life of the church.
It's meant to be very sobering because we're called here to examine ourselves. So 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 without judging the body. Now there's a lot of I think perhaps misunderstanding when he talks about the body is he talking about the bread of communion or is he talking about the body of Christ?
the relationships within the body of Christ without judging where are we at as this local expression of the body of Christ? Where are we at?

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[28:20] Are our relationships where they need to be? Do we have something against others in the fellowship? Is the body where it's supposed to be?

Because if you read the context of 1 Corinthians chapter 11 you'll know that the Corinthian church was not okay. Matter of fact the whole letter is basically one long spiritual spanking because of how misbehaved they were.
They were fighting over who was in charge who they were following. Well I follow Paul. I follow Peter. I follow Apollos. Well I follow Christ. I'm better than you all.
And that's what they were doing. And then they were tolerating sin in the ranks. Rank sin where a man was sleeping with his stepmother and they just looked at it and said oh praise God you know look at how forgiving we are.
And without saying hey this guy because he's unrepentant he should be put out of the church because he refuses to repent. They were taking each other to court.
[29:34] The disagreements among them and then when it came to the Lord's table not only did they celebrate the Lord's table this part of it but the Lord's table for them also included a real meal.

And what was happening is within this congregation you had people of means and people of poverty. And the people of means were coming and they were celebrating and they were eating and they were getting drunk.
at the church meeting at this fellowship meal and they were refusing to share with those who came who had need who had no food for themselves were so much in poverty that they couldn't even afford to bring anything to the potluck if you will.
And these people were saying no you stay over there and we'll be over here and we'll do our thing.
And Paul says listen this kind of all of this behavior add up all of that and you're bringing that into this celebration of the Lord's table and no sir for anyone who eats this and drinks without discerning the body drinks judgment onto himself.
And he said this is why many among you not a few many among you become weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep.
[31:10] Now this does not mean that they were falling asleep in the pew listening to the preaching. Okay any idea what this meant? It meant that they died.

It's like it's a euphemism that we use to say that someone died. For them they would say someone had fallen asleep. they would understand that to mean they've died.
We do it too. We say pass away. Right? Or they've gone on. We use these euphemisms all the time because just bluntly saying someone died we find that to be too blunt of a thing to say in regular conversations.
So well they passed away. Well they would say well they fell asleep. And they would understand they weren't taking a nap. They were they were they had they had died.
They had they're in the grave. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves if we would hold our own selves up to judgment if you will we would not come under such judgment from God.
[32:22] Nevertheless when we are judged in this way by the Lord we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world. This is not a matter of losing your salvation.

This is a matter of the Lord if you as a believer are abusing the Lord's table if you as a believer are abusing the body of Christ and the Lord brings you into discipline because of that and you refuse to repent and so that over time you eventually get sick or weak or die as a result of that it's not that the Lord reverses your salvation and sends you to hell it's that he calls you home and that's the consequences your physical death not your spiritual death that's what is at stake there this is what he is saying here in verse 32 so with this self-examination which is what we're going to do as we approach the meal today together the first thing that we ought to look at my attitudes the posture that we that we bring when we come into the celebration of the Lord's table another way of saying that is what am I carrying in here with me today my attitude towards others others in my family others in the body of Christ my attitude towards the
Lord where am I at am I a grumbling complaining don't like anything kind of a person or am I grateful my heart filled with joy and thanksgiving for what the Lord has done for me so that's a part of that we need to examine where our heart is with that secondly my actions this is the fruit that I have born and the question here is where have my hands contradicted my faith where has what I have done my actions contradicted what I say I believe where is it different from what I say I believe what sin actions of sin do I need to repent of and then thirdly and this is this is the deepest door into

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our heart is my affections the loves underneath it all because I can change my behavior but that doesn't mean that my heart has changed okay
I can I can come up with a behavior put some discipline in my life I can put some boundaries in my life to kind of safeguard my actions but if my heart hasn't changed that's where God wants to do the work in your life because what I love drives the rest of it and so this is where the Lord longs to get into your heart to change your heart to change your loves so that then the actions that change the attitudes that change come from a heart that is driven out of my love for Christ and so when we examine all three of these we do this not to disqualify ourselves we don't examine where we're at spiritually we don't examine where we're at in terms of our relationship with the body of
Christ our relationship with the Lord we don't examine ourselves to disqualify ourselves and I see this happen in a number of ways in a number of situations with this listen when we recognize our sin when we recognize our failures even though there may be some repetition there and I keep going back to that same sin over and over when I recognize my own depravity in this the message is not and you need to hear this the message is not don't come until you're ready don't come into the table until you're ready that's not the message the message is the table is here as imperfect as you are you come in your weakness in your failures you come look at what
[37:19] Paul says here but a man must examine himself this is from the new American standard to catch this let a man examine himself and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup Paul doesn't say let a man examine himself and if he finds himself wanting stay away from the table that's not what Paul says Paul says let a man examine himself when Paul says let a man examine himself himself what does Paul know that you're going to find when you examine yourself a weak broken sinful depraved heart that still longs to sin that still struggles with sin that still struggles with an attitude that still struggles with actions that don't line up with what we believe and so a man must examine himself not to disqualify himself but to discover how much we still need the one represented on the table that is what we need to be reminded of how much we need the one on the table so the point here is this the point is not to fix your gaze on yourself yes you are to examine yourself but don't linger there quickly turn your gaze towards

Christ the one who has the answer the one who's paid the penalty for all that sin for all that failure and that is what the Lord's table does for us so as we approach the Lord's table today let us examine ourselves our attitudes the posture that we carry in here today our actions the fruit we've already born our affections the loves underneath all of it let us examine ourselves but don't camp there stare at this too long stare at yourself too long stare at your own heart too long and you will leave this room defeated still broken because the heart that you're examining is the very heart that needs saving that needs the gospel that needs the message what this table represents the point was never to fix your gaze on yourself it was to turn your gaze to Christ that's what the table is for for us to look on
Christ there is a familiar chorus it goes like this turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace let's sing it together turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace we're going to sing it one more time and as we do
I want you to look upon Jesus that's represented in the table here the sacrifice on the cross the shedding of his blood the giving of his body that you might be forgiven of your sin turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace so we bring all three of these our attitudes the posture that we bring in what you carry in here your actions things that you've done your affections the things that you love and you lay them down before the one who took them to the cross stop looking inward and look up the invitation to the table is for you so now we'll take a few moments for silent prayer before we come to the table today a few moments for silent prayer for self-examination and as we do that as Tom begins to play his guitar
I want you to take that as your cue to come come forward take the bread and the cup they're all contained in one package one liner uncovers the bread the other uncovers the juice take the bread and the cup together return to your seat and then we'll pray together and then we'll eat and drink together so let's take this time now for that time of prayer and self-examination up and then we'll take it like this in the middle of prayer and then we'll take it as well as we can say this time it's going to be as an anti-car that's going to be as an anti-car that's going to be as an anti-car so let's see as an anti-car so let's see as an anti-car so let's see as an anti-car so let's see as an anti-car so let's

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