

Focus on Communion

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[0 : 00] Luke 22, verses 7 to 30. Luke 22, verses 7 to 30. When they came to the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed, Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, Go and make preparation for us to eat the Passover.

Where do you want us to prepare for it? They asked. He replied, As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, The teacher asks, Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there. They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table, and he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. After taking the cup, he gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among you.

[1 : 20] For I tell you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him. They began to question amongst themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

Also, a dispute arose amongst them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Jesus said to them, The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors.

But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?

[2 : 33] Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials, and I confer on your kingdom, just as my father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Our hymn is All Heaven Declares. Thank you.

Thank you for your prayers, Richard. Thank you for the worship guys. Mentioning Donald Trump, did you manage to catch a glimpse of his state banquet at Windsor?

All the pomp, and the royal ways. It's a finely tuned, well-oiled job, isn't it?

These things always are. I mean, like, whether it's the palace, or the White House, or any number of such places, you expect to see an array.

[4 : 05] You expect to see the hosts, and the guests of honour, and the servants, and the butlers. Of course, it's not always about honoured guests in that way, is it?

It's not always about state official people. Many times, for a number of reasons, ordinary decent folk get invited to dine, or go for tea at one of these establishments.

Emergency workers, and such maybe you, maybe you have been. Iron Jersey got invited to the palace years ago. And when you do, you expect, you will receive a specially sealed invite through a postal worker directing you to perhaps an email address where you can talk with the establishment's management who will tell you the information, everything you need to know.

As for the host themselves, you would expect not to even talk to them, never mind meet them, until the actual day and the precisely set time.

And when the day arrives, and you're finally there, you expect you will at least see a servant, maybe a butler, and of course, finally the host.

[5 : 49] Queen, King, President, Prime Minister, whoever it may be. The servant, of course, is the one who pours your tea.

The event will be quick, no chit-chat, straight to the point of the reason why you've been invited. Then over. and the two will never meet again.

It certainly is not going to be the beginning of a great friendship. That's how you would expect it all to go, from invite to the event, from beginning to end.

And so, on an opposite note, what you would not expect, what you would never, ever expect to see, is that whomever it is, the host, you would not expect to see them come to your street, to your home, deliver you the invite, personally, by hand, and there and then invite you right into their precious, special chambers.

You would not expect them to open the door for you, guide you to a throne-ish chair, plump the cushions, seat you, get you a footstool, pour your drink, serve you your cake, and say, right, what do you need to talk about?

[7 : 34] What do you need to chat about? Let's get personal. There's no time limit, by the way, no set agenda, just me and you in my special chambers. Of course, that never happens.

What country, what kingdom, would allow its head of state to belittle themselves so much? The rest of the world would take advantage at such a sign of weakness.

No, the kingdoms of the world don't do this. The world's way is, look great, look strong, be powerful. Jesus says this, by the way, look at it there, verse 25, from where Richard just read from.

Jesus said to them, his disciples, the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors, and again, no, the kingdoms of the world do not host, like my description here, but instead they host the way Jesus describes, authority.

Keep yourself up there, look strong, look powerful. But yet, yet, and ironically, maybe a little ironically, such hosting, such events, such moves, do actually happen.

[9 : 19] They do actually happen. And they certainly do exist. They do exist in this life right now in the 21st century.

They're happening and they exist. They take place every single week all over the globe in small and large gatherings.

They include all sorts of ordinary people. At least it does for those who want it.

At least it does for those who choose to accept it. Communion. We must understand, yes, it's an act of remembrance, but it is also so much more than a memorial.

It's so much more than a reenactment. Even as long-term followers of Jesus, we so easily approach communion on autopilot!

[10 : 52] Jesus is the one who serves. at the communion table, he is king of all kings and he waits on us.

He's the one who put stars into space. He is the one who made the mighty mountains, yet he pours our wine. He, the mighty, majestic, one and only God, serves our supper.

You see, when we read the last supper account, Jesus is clearly the inviter. Jesus is clearly the waiter.

Jesus is clearly the servant. Jesus is clearly the butler. Jesus is clearly all these things, whilst clearly being the host.

And the disciples, they are clearly the invited guests. It's not a state banquet thrown in Jesus' honour.

[11 : 56] It's a state banquet thrown by the king of the kingdom in honour, in joy, in friendship for and with the kingdom subjects. It's the total opposite way about from what the world does.

It's the entire opposite. it. And as we unravel it all here in Luke's gospel, we see it was Jesus who selected the venue.

Jesus' destiny was the time. Jesus arranged for the meal to be set. And at the supper, it is Jesus who is entertaining the guests.

The clue is in the verbs. He took, He blessed, He washed, He broke, He gave. Jesus, the servant, removes the guest's sandals and washes their feet, declaring their forgiveness.

Jesus, the host, entertains by embarking on a wondrous message all about love and the Holy Spirit coming and the new home above. Jesus is the most active one at the table.

[13:12] Jesus is not reclining and receiving. Jesus is the one up moving around and giving. And this wondrous passage, along with the other gospels, all four together, has initiated countless and countless and countless of many, many, many more kingdom suppers.

The ruin by Jesus all over the globe, these last 2,000 years. And we must begin to see it this way. Because for some, communion is a sleepy hour in which breads are eaten and the juice of the grape is drunk and the soul sadly never stirs.

It wasn't intended to be like this. It was intended to be a, I can't believe this. I'm invited to the king of kings table sort of experience.

Pinch me, I must be dreaming. I'm actually in the presence of God. I'm actually invited to sit at God's table and be served by the great king of kings himself.

[14:39] Westerhill's Baptist Church, let's get reacquainted with the precious wonderfulness of communion. let's remind ourselves of the deep, perfect, sacred, divine beauty that communion is.

The Lord's supper is a gift to you and me. It's so easy to see it as a performance, a time when we are on the stage, and God is in the audience.

A ceremony in which we do the work, God does the watching. But the whole point of what we see, of what we have just unraveled here thus far this morning, is that's not how it was intended.

If it was, then back here in all four gospels, we would be reading Jesus took the seat, put his feet up, relaxed, and the disciples did all this fruit washing and serving and meat messaging, teaching and preaching and all the rest of it.

But we don't read that. We instead read Jesus fulfilled his role as a teacher by guiding his disciples through Passover. Jesus fulfilled his role as a servant by washing their feet.

[16:13] Jesus fulfilled his role as a saviour by granting the forgiveness of sins. He was in charge, yes. He was the one in centre stage, yes.

He was the person behind it all. And very, very, very importantly, he still is. He still is.

It might have been one of his delegates who gave you the invite letter in your first Bible. But it is Jesus who wrote it.

And it's a holy invitation to your personal, yet sacred sacrament. Begging you to leave the chores of life, to set the things of the working week to the side, free them for a moment, and enter his splendour, and meet with him personally, at his personal table.

It is the Lord's table we come to. It is the Lord's supper we eat. And when we read, the bread is broken, Christ breaks it.

[17:30] And when the wine is poured, Christ pours it. And when your burdens are lifted, it's because the king in the apron, doing the work, has drawn near and given you rest.

Yes, it is all Jesus is doing, and it is all about his sacrifice. And so for us as we attend, there are also sacrificial moments for us.

We offer our prayers, confessions, thanksgiving, all as a sacrifice, but they are sacrifices of thanksgiving for the salvation we have freely received, and not sacrifices of service for a salvation worked for.

In other words, we are not participating in communion, hoping to be saved, hoping to meet God, but we are freely participating out of joy, because the new covenant, the new covenant that he brought about has opened the door for our salvation, and has brought us right to the feet of God.

And here we now finally arrive at the big finale of the whole Last Supper, in verse 20 there, that chapter. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, this cup is, this cup is the new covenant.

[19:21] covenant, in my blood, which has poured out for you. And it simply couldn't be clear. This really is no ordinary meal, and certainly no ordinary host.

This is still all about bringing a new, covenant, a new covenant, a whole new way.

The Old Testament, the Old Covenant, now fulfilled, not done away with, fulfilled, with this wondrous initiation of the new covenant.

Listen, there was nothing inferior about the Jewish religion. it was given by God. It was designed by God.

Every principle, every rule, every ritual had a great wealth of meaning. The Torah and the other scriptures of the Old Testament served as a faithful guide for thousands of people over thousands

of years.

[20 : 41] And up to this point in the New Testament, it was the best. It was the very best and the very greatest gift from God to humanity.

But, as the writer of Hebrews is so keen to point out and make clear, when Christ came with his new covenant, God's best and God's greatest gifts got even better again.

Even better again. Christ is God's ultimate gift. He is greater than all that went before.

He is superior to all that went before. Look at it with me. Hebrews chapter 1. Let's go to Hebrews chapter 1. verse 1.

there. In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times in various ways.

[22 : 08] But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he also made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, i.e.

through the covenant, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven, so he became as much superior to the angels as the name he inherited is superior to theirs.

And as the wonderful book of Hebrews goes on to show, we see Christ proclaimed better and greater.

Better and greater. Again, I said nothing inferior about the Jewish religion. It was the best and greatest from God to that point. But when Christ came, God's best and greatest got even better and greater again.

[23 : 22] And so Hebrews tells us Jesus is better and greater than the angels, better and greater than Moses, better and greater than all the prophets, kings and judges, greater and better than the entire priesthood, greater and better than the entire Old Testament and ultimately greater and better than the Old Covenant.

For if in the Old Covenant people related to God from a distance, with a mass curtain, in effect covering God's table. And people sought forgiveness from God through a system of animal sacrifice administered by priests.

When this sacrificial system was inaugurated, the covenant between God and his people was sealed with the blood of animals.

But animal blood doesn't remove sin. Only God can remove sin. And the animal sacrifices had to be repeated day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

But here at the Last Supper, Jesus was initiating a wondrous, sacred, delightful, divine new covenant. covenant, where under this new covenant, Jesus would be and die in place of sinners.

[24 : 58] And unlike the blood of animals, his blood would and does genuinely remove sin for all those who believe in him.

And unlike the animals, day after day, week after week, year after year, his sacrifice was once and only once, therefore covering us eternally forever, which now meant that massive curtain between the people and his table could now be removed.

and people could come right in to the table now, to the Holy of Holies. And this is all possible because he is God and he has that authority.

And this is really, really, really good news. And all of those Old Testament prophets, they looked forward with delight at the arrival of this new covenant.

covenant. And now it has arrived. And one of the most wonderful facts about finally arriving at the 22nd chapter of Luke's biography is that it is here that the reader now learns Jesus knew.

[26 : 23] He knew all along these last 22 chapters that he was going to be crucified. By openly declaring, my blood will bring in the new covenant.

We learn, we get tapped into that he had come for this very, very, very reason. We learn that Jesus had made a decision, a choice to die, to be killed as God's ultimate sacrifice.

We learn he wanted to endure the cross because his death was the only way that the new covenant could actually work. Only the blood of a righteous one, only the blood of God could really deal with sin.

So he knew he had to go. So he could seal in the new covenant. And the new covenant was the only way for any human to be saved, forgiven, redeemed.

And so he made sure he brought it in out of love to offer us forgiveness. forgiveness. And so as I say, the chapter shows, yes, he knew what was happening in accordance with scripture.

[27 : 36] He knew Judas was betraying him. He knew the Pharisees and religious rulers at that very precise moment while he was having his meal were busy arranging his capture and his death.

And out of the entire then known world, from China to Africa, he could have run and went anywhere and avoided it all. But he didn't.

He stared right in the one place where the Pharisees would find him. He stared in the one city where they knew he was where they could find him.

Even more as the chapter goes on to reveal, he goes to the very square inch of grass. where Judas is going to take them. Out of the entire world, he went to that one part of grass where Judas would take them to in Gethsemane.

That they may easily find him. That they may easily capture him. That they may easily take him away. All because he really, really wanted to be taken.

[28 : 43] Because by being taken, he would be crucified and by being crucified, he would ultimately bring in the new covenant. as promised at his supper.

Ultimately meaning salvation and forgiveness are the gift via no works, via no efforts, just grace, just forgiven out of grace for me and you.

And ultimately meaning the curtain down and us now in face-to-face relationships with God and future. And so finishing back there on communion, when he initiated this meal, means we come in awe to watch God and worship God all for what he has done, for what he has done, for what he has done by bringing about the new covenant.

Full forgiveness and direct contact with God. He said, this is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me. This is my cup, the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.

And listen, what happens on earth is just a warm-up for what will happen in heaven. So the next time you're called to his table, a couple of weeks from now, drop everything.

[30 : 20] Spend the morning before you come here, pondering what he's invited you to. Seek him for what he initiated at the beginning. Ask him to meet you, to help you, to arrange it for you.

And then come here ready to really, really, really join in an intimate, direct thing with God face to face in the way he did the very first one with his twelve disciples.

And beyond that, beyond that, as you ponder your relationship with God and grow with God and get closer to God, be sure of this, be sure that you're still eating at his table when he finally calls you home to heaven.

Be sure you're still eating at his table when he returns. Be sure you're still a part of it and enjoying life with him. Let me pray. pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me!

Let me! Lord Jesus Christ, we come humbly thinking about that night near 2,000 years ago.

[31 : 47] There you were, around the table with 12. And you hosted them.

And you talked with them. And you washed their feet. And you served them. And 2,000 years later, you're still inviting people to come and have that same interaction with you.

And it's so easy, Lord, to quickly bypass it and not go into deepness with it, Lord. But that's the whole point, Lord.

You want us to stop, think, ponder, and come with bright hearts. So I pray, Lord, over these next couple of weeks that all of us here, Lord, really, really seek you as we approach our next communion, Lord.

That we let you talk to us and remind us of what you're inviting us to. And that we come with bright hearts, right thinking, right focus for the table. Jesus, we thank you for communion.

[33 : 03] But, Lord, let us never lose the focus that there's so many people, Lord, who are yet to be invited to this table, who are yet to be invited into your wonderful presence. And so, Lord, send us out, bold and courageous, Lord, to tell everyone about you and the new covenant and the wonderful message and your salvation by grace and grace alone.

And, Lord, as we ponder that, Lord, we just think, what a wonderful, powerful, mighty, phenomenal God you really, really are. What a beautiful name it is, Jesus.

And within that name there is power. And that's the name that tore that curtain, that tore that veil.

Let us never forget that. In thy mighty name, Jesus.

Amen. Amen. And so on that note, what a beautiful name it is. Do stand if you're able. Have this lovely song. See you at 6 p.m. if you're available.

That would be nice to join with you. And so may you go forth from here, dwelling upon the true inner deepness of communion.

[34 : 14] And spend time at home continuing what we have started. Watch the chosen's take on communion if you want some help.

And think about it. And think about it. So that in two weeks' time, as we together come to this table, you will come correctly.

Come prepared. And so to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence, without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen.

Thank you.

[35 : 57] Thank you.