

BACK TO THE BASICS: What is The Lord's Supper? **1 Corinthians 11:23-34ⁱ**

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is great to be back with you this morning! For those of you that are guests with us today, whether you are in the room or joining us online, we say a very special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to be able to connect with you. You can let us know you are here in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area. We have a gift we'd like to give you there. Again, we look forward to connecting with you.

JULY 4th:

Let's me also say this morning that tomorrow is the 4th of July. And beyond it being Eddie Thomas' birthday, it is a day that we celebrate our independence. Happy Independence Day. America is 246 years old tomorrow! We celebrate the freedoms we have in our great country. What an incredible thought that we can gather here this morning, worship freely, and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ freely. That is all because of men and women who have served our country and given their lives for us. If you have served, or currently serving, would you please stand. We want to honor you right now. Thank you for the role you have played in defending our freedoms!

RECAP:

Well, it is good to be back with you after missing the past two Sundays. I want to say a huge thank you to the men that filled in the last couple of weeks. Pastor Jeff Julian and Aaron Blankenship. Did they not do an incredible job?!

I'm grateful for the opportunity you gave me to be a camp speaker at Rising Light Ridge Camp. This is a camp that is a part of the Tim Tebow Foundation. It is a cool place that exists to build a community of belonging where individuals

of all backgrounds and abilities can grow together physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. It was an honor for me to be able to be a part.

Well, a lot happened while I was away. I heard that Fathers got new socks! Did you guys like those? Good deal. I'm wearing the pair I took today. Also, while I was away, The Supreme Court made a historical decision. The reversal of Roe v. Wade is a monumental thing. It is something that many pro-life advocates have been working for over many years. I want to take just a moment to speak to this as it has been a discourse in our culture.

As a church we have always championed human life, as I've heard it said, from the womb to the tomb. We take this stance, not because of a political agenda, but because the Word of God teaches us that life begins at conception and that all humanity bears the image of God. Because of this, no matter how small or weak a person might be, regardless of the color of their skin, or where on the planet they live, all people have dignity because they bear the image of God, and they certainly have a right to life.

While I rejoice in this decision, please know, I am also burdened. The reversal of Roe v. Wade is not the end of the battle, but rather the beginning. Church Family, now is the time for action. If we are going to be a people that rejoices at this decision, we must be a people that responds to it as well. I want to invite you, alongside my family, to begin praying about how The Lord is prompting you. And what begins with prayer must follow through with action. I am asking our church to lead the way in our area in caring for children beyond the womb. I am asking you to consider becoming a foster parent, pursue adoption, and love on people in crisis. In essence, I'm asking us to BE the Church.

I will be coming alongside our Missions Team to work to identify specific ways you can get involved. In the meantime, I've asked Lisa Fein to make herself available this morning to visit with you on questions you might have on how you can make a difference. Our elders have agreed that we must continue and even increase our commitment to ministry partners we already have. Partners like Expectant Heart and For the Sake of One. But we must also explore other avenues to mobilize our church beyond financial partnerships. And please know, when you give to Trinity, you are giving to these organizations and supporting their work. However, what I am calling us to is to do even more.

So, I want to begin our time together in prayer. I want you to feel the freedom to kneel, huddle up with your family, come to this altar, or simply pray there in your seat. I want to begin with a moment of silence. In that time, I want you to pour out your heart to God on this matter and begin listening to Him to what He is prompting you to do. I will close our time of prayer. Let's pray. [PRAYER]

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Thank you. We are in the middle of a teaching series we have called, "Back to the Basics." We are taking a biblical look at foundational observances and practices given to The Church. Today we turn our attention to The Lord's Supper, Communion. So, grab your bible and turn with me to 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. We are going to be in verses 23 through 29. Following our time of study, we will observe Communion together.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: One of My Favorite Pictures

I want to show you one of my favorite pictures from my office. [Show Picture](#). This picture was taken in Sedona, Arizona. Anyone been to Sedona? Beautiful. This is Cathy and I kissing on what is called the Devil's Bridge. You thought you'd come to church, and we would keep it G rated, didn't you?! Well, I love kissing my bride. Amen?!

The reason I love this picture so much is not just the scenery it captures. I don't love this picture simply because I am with the love of my life. I don't love this picture just because of the incredibility of the Devil's bridge. This bridge, by the way, is about 4 feet wide and is about 6 stories from the ground. All of the things that I have mentioned contribute to why I love the picture. But it is not the main reason I love it so. I love this picture because of what it reminds me of.

This was taken on a family vacation we took before the world shut down for COVID. In fact, we were on the trip when everything shut down. When I look at this picture, I remember the 1.8-mile hike it took to get there and what seemed like the 25-mile hike back. I remember that right before I went across the bridge solo, Cathy said, "Don't fall!" I remember that as soon as she got that out of her mouth, I tripped right at the narrowest spot. I remember how my knees were weak just standing there and looking out. I remember how I felt about God's creative power in that moment. I remember how I complained and suggested that we got lost on the way back to the car. And I remember my hip flexors not being able to fire because we had hiked so far. A picture reminds us of much.

Well, the same is true when it comes to The Lord's Supper, Communion. Our Lord instituted this observance on the night before He endured the cross. It is the one thing Jesus asks us to remember. The Lord never asked us to remember His birth, but He did command us to remember His death, burial, and resurrection. And the observance of this ordinance should flood our minds in remembrance of the price paid to purchase our great salvation.

I want to approach our topic this morning in a few different ways. I want us to consider the historical significance, the symbolic significance, and the practical significance of The Lord's Supper. That will serve as our outline this morning.

Let's read our passage of study this morning. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. ***23For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed [now, we know that Paul was not in attendance on that evening. However, it is apparent that The Lord confirmed this practice to Paul at some point.], took bread, 24and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25In 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." 26For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.***

MESSAGE:

First, let's consider the...

1) Historical Significance.

The Lord's Supper finds its roots in the Passover Meal. We cannot pass over the Passoverⁱ as we look to fully understand Communion. Jesus implemented the Lord's Supper as He observed Passover.

Passover is an Old Testament feast providing a picture of God's deliverance of His people. For hundreds of years the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. The bondage experienced in Egypt is a picture of our bondage to sin. But God called Moses to lead His people out of bondage and to the Land that God had promised. So, Moses stood before Pharaoh, and in the authority given to him

by God, commanded Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh refused to oblige the Word of The Lord. As a result, God sent a series of judgments upon Egypt. A total of 10 plagues including the Nile turning to blood, infestation of frogs, lice, locusts, and even darkness over all the land. But Pharaoh, given the opportunity to relent, did not. As a result, the 10th and final judgment came upon Egypt, the death of the first born of all the houses of Egypt.

In the midst of this darkness and death, there was a promise given to God's people. Really, a provision so that they would not have to bear the weight of God's judgment and wrath.

Moses gave the people very detailed instructions regarding the observance of what would be called Passover. It was a meal that included the sacrifice of a lamb. There were multiple cups taken throughout the meal having certain significance tied to them. The first cup was the cup of Sanctification. It was a blessing acknowledging God as the King of the Universe. Then parts of the meal would be served including bitter herbs to call to memory the difficulty of slavery in Egypt. Then came the second cup, the cup of Judgment. This cup spoke of the plagues that had come upon Egypt. Then the sacrificed lamb was served. Then a piece of unleavened bread was broken and served as a reference to the Messiah, the one who is to come. Then the third cup, the cup of Redemption was served. Then they would sign a hymn and leave.

But in addition to these observances on that very first Passover, Moses instructed them to do something with the blood from the lamb that was sacrificed. Exodus 12:5-7. *⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats,⁶and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. ⁷Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.* That action served as a signal to the angel of death to pass over that home. They were spared of the penalty of the 10th plague.

I read one commentator that said, "The Passover provided a physical, temporary deliverance. Jesus, in the establishment of Communion, was pointing to a spiritual, eternal deliverance, a greater deliverance."ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, *"For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."*

Scripture tells us that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law of God. But to fulfill it. He became, as John the Baptist pronounced, *"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

The gospels tell us that when Jesus instituted The Lord's Supper, Communion, he did so as He observed Passover with His disciples. And He issued a command. In Luke 22:19, *"Do this in remembrance of me."* A picture calling to attention all that Jesus had done.

I heard a Pastor once say, "The cross is not an accident. Jesus is not a victim. He was a volunteer." And He volunteered to be our Passover Lamb. By faith in Jesus, we are spared of the penalty of our sin. This is the historical significance by which Jesus instituted Communion. And we are to reflect on and remember the events tied to this ordinance.

We have the historical significance and then the...

2) Symbolic Significance.

We have already mentioned the symbolism that the observance of The Lord's Supper is steeped in. But it is important to highlight that it is just that, symbolism.

There are Christian traditions that ascribe to what is called transubstantiation. This is the belief that the elements of the Eucharist, the bread and wine, transform into the actual body and blood of Jesus.^{iv}

How do they come to that belief? Look, again, at 1 Corinthians 11, verse 24. *²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you."* Jesus repeats the phrase referring to the cup being His blood.

Remember that Jesus and His disciples were observing the Passover Meal, which is highly symbolic. There would have been zero confusion on the part of the disciples participating here that Jesus was using metaphorical language. Add to that the fact that Jesus had not yet spilled His blood on the cross for the contents of the cup to contain the blood of Jesus. All that to say that Jesus is not suggesting that participation in The Lord's Supper is partaking in the actual body and blood of Jesus. It's simply symbolic.

ILLUSTRATION: My Boys Are Beasts on the Court

Let me illustrate it this way for us this morning. My boys both play basketball. If I were to say, "They were beats on the court," you would not conclude that they transformed into a wolf. It is a metaphor. The same is true in the Lord's Supper.

Furthermore, it is important, in discussing the symbolic significance, to point out that there is no saving grace in partaking of the elements. There is no salvific value in Communion. In other words, eating the bread and drinking the cup does not save you. Faith in God's grace is what saves you.

ILLUSTRATION: Driving From The Airport

This past week when I flew into Allentown, Pennsylvania, I had an hour drive to arrive at the camp in Bear Creek Township. So, as we were driving, we were following signs that said, "Bear Creek Township." The signs were not the town itself, but simply pointed us in the direction of where the town is.

In the same way, Communion is not salvation, but it points to what purchased our salvation. The grace of God, by way of faith, in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The elements and the action taken in The Lord's Supper are symbolic. Jesus said the bread represents My body which is broken for you. This is obviously symbolic of the wounded, lacerated, cut, bludgeoned, beaten beyond recognition, body of Jesus. This is what The Lord endured to save us.

The cup, Jesus said, represents His blood shed for us on the cross. This, also, symbolic of the pierced, ripped, speared body of Jesus upon Calvary. Again, enduring the very wrath of God, the penalty of our sin, in our place. Scripture teaches that there is life in the blood. Jesus is life. And placing our faith and trust in Him as the Lord of our life results in eternal life, true life.

There is a lot of symbolism in the elements we partake in. But let me point out to you the tie between the symbolism of the Passover Meal and the symbolism of Communion. Remember that after the meal a piece of unleavened bread was broken. The symbol for that bread was for the promised Messiah, the one to come. And then following that bread was the third cup, the cup of Redemption. Jesus, in making these statements at this point of the Passover Meal, is proclaiming that He is the Messiah, the one to come, and that His coming was for the purpose of purchasing our redemption. Highly symbolic!

Now, Jesus says something very specific when He introduces the cup. Verse 25. ***25In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."*** In Jesus' fulfilling of the Law of God, He fulfilled all aspects of the Old Covenant. Thereby ushering in a new covenant. What is that new covenant?

When Jesus died upon the cross, something significant happened. The curtain in the Temple tore from top to bottom. Matthew 27. What is significant about that? Well, that very curtain separated what was called the Holy of Holies from the remainder of the Temple. Only one person could enter into the Holy of Holies and on only one day of the year, The Day of Atonement. It was a signal to the people that their sin had separated them from a Holy God.

But when the blood of Jesus was spilt, that curtain tore. A signal that sin had been atoned, once and for all, and relationship with God restored. Jesus is the Great High Priest. And by the blood of Jesus, we can boldly approach the Throne of Grace. Praise God! A new covenant, a new relationship can be experienced with Almighty God.

So, we've talked about the historical significance and the symbolic significance of The Lord's Supper. Now, in the time we have remaining, let's look at the...

3) Practical Significance.

A few key words that I want to point out in 1 Corinthians 11. Proclaim, examine and until. First, the word...

A) Proclaim

Paul says in verse 26, ***26For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death...*** The observance of The Lord's Supper is a proclamation.^{vi} It is a preaching of the gospel. It is the greatest object lesson explaining the gospel.

Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His loves for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The elements **proclaim** that we are sinners, and that atonement is needed. Communion **proclaims** that Jesus took on our sin at the cross. The Lord's

Supper **proclaims** that there is a restored relationship with God through the blood of Jesus. We see what this observance **proclaims**. Secondly, ...

B) Examine

Paul gives strong warning in this passage. Verses 27-29. *27Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28Let a person **examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.** 29For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.* We learn here that an examination is needed so that we don't come in an unworthy manner. What do we need to examination?

The truth is we are all unworthy of grace. Grace would not be grace if we deserved it. We do not, and cannot, earn God's favor. We are sinful humanity in need of God's grace. And so, I don't think the term unworthy means that we have to come to the table without sin. That's impossible. I believe Paul is saying that we are not to come to the table if we are openly and intentionally living in a way that we know displeases God.^{vii} That is indicative of a spirit of defiance. Struggling, working through sin, is different from defiance.

Another way we are to examine our hearts is to determine if we are bringing a spirit of division. Paul is giving this instruction and at the same time disciplining the Corinthians regarding the divisions that were among them.

Listen to me, the beauty of the cross is that it is the very thing that transcends that which seeks to divide us. It comes as no surprise to say we are divided people. Politically, racially, theologically on secondary doctrines, and even harboring resentment and bitterness toward others. Beloved, the cross calls us to a higher unity. Not uniformity, but a unity in the fact that though we differ in many ways, we are united as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are to examine our hearts and repent and enjoy the unity found in the body of Christ. Proclaim and examine. Thirdly, ...

C) Until

Verse 26, *"26For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until** he comes."* The symbols of The Lord's Supper point to something; a reality that is far greater than what we are experiencing now.^{viii} It is Jesus' desire that while we reflect on the act that purchased our redemption,

we are to also eagerly await His return. Why do we anticipate His second coming? John 14:1-3, *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.**"*

A couple other things I want to touch on regarding the practical side. Two questions. How often should we observe Communion? And who can partake?

You know, the Bible never tells us how often we are to observe The Lord's Supper. Some churches do it every week. Others a few times a year. Some, once a month. Scripture only tells us that as often as we do come to The Lord's table, we are to do so in remembrance of Him. We have, for now, chosen to plan 4 times a year, but certainly reserve the right to do it more often.

What about who can participate? When we observe Communion, we are sharing in the benefit for what Christ endured. His broken body. His blood shed. And because it is a proclamation of the gospel, it is only meaningful to those that have trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior. So, we would say that if you are here and you haven't trusted Jesus as Lord, we're so glad you here, but ask you just to observe as we participate in something that is deeply meaningful.

Also, we say of this supper that it is The Lord's table. It does not belong to each particular church. So, if you are here today, and you are a believer that is a member of another church, we invite you to join in with us.

CONCLUSION: **I want to invite the band to come back up and lead us in a time of response.** In this time of response, I want to ask you to examine your heart. Do you have a relationship with Jesus? Are you fully surrendered to Him?

If you are here today and you have not given your life to Jesus, consider the Supper's content. I mentioned earlier that it is a sermon being preached. Jesus said, "This is my body broken for YOU." This is my blood shed for YOU. Today you can be included in the you. God loves you deeply. Your sin has separated you from Him. But He made a way to be restored through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Come to Jesus today.

Two actions this morning: Come to Jesus and Examine your heart. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

- ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Craig Blomberg, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1994; John Piper, *Why and How We Celebrate The Lord's Supper*, published by Desiring God, August 13, 2006; Dr. Michael Youssef, *Remember What Jesus Has Done For Your All*, article published by Leading The Way, July 17, 2020; J.D. Greear, *Why People Sometimes Die After Communion*, sermon preached at Summit Church, February 13, 2022; Alistair Begg, *The Nature and Meaning of The Lord's Supper*, sermon preached at Parkside Church in Cleveland, OH, December 3, 2000 and published by Truth for Life; Warren Wiersbe, *The Lord's Supper*, article accessed: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52a22fcb4b099b82e202c40/t/559b6c2ae4b04fd7aa879092/1436249130749/The+Lord's+Supper.pdf>, June 27, 2022; Jerry Winfield, *Sermon: A Call to Remember – Luke 22*, published by LifeWay on Wednesday, January 1, 2014; John MacArthur, *The Celebration of the Lord's Supper, Part 1*, published by Grace to You, accessed: <https://www.gty.org/library/study-guides/154/the-lords-supper>, June 27, 2022; John MacArthur, *The Celebration of the Lord's Supper, Part 2*, published by Grace to You, accessed: <https://www.gty.org/library/study-guides/154/the-lords-supper>, June 27, 2022; Pastor Skip Heitzig, *Celebrations of the Gospel: The Lord's Supper*, sermon preached January 25, 1996, Calvary Church Albuquerque; Jack Graham, *The Last Supper*, sermon preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church, accessed: <https://sermons.love/jack-graham/10864-jack-graham-the-last-supper.html>, June 27, 2022.
- ⁱⁱ I got this little quip from Dr. Jack Graham's message mentioned above.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Pastor Skip Heitzig, *Celebrations of the Gospel: The Lord's Supper*, sermon preached January 25, 1996, Calvary Church Albuquerque.
- ^{iv} Oxford Languages Dictionary.
- ^v Illustration inspired by Alistair Begg's illustration about a sign pointing to Chicago in his sermon mentioned above.
- ^{vi} Language used here was inspired by J.D. Greear's sermon mentioned above.
- ^{vii} Ibid.
- ^{viii} Idea taken from Alistair Begg.