

Celebrating The Lord's Supper

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[0 : 00] We're going to have somewhat abbreviated service this morning, and the entire focus of our morning service will be around the Lord's table, and we will be considering the text that is found in Luke chapter 22, beginning with verse 14.

And when the hour had come, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him. Well, because the New American renders this as it does, it just requires some brief explanation as to the use of the word recline.

And I simply want to point out in passing that this is in accordance with Oriental custom or Mid-Eastern custom, whereby when they were seated at table or reclining at table, would be more appropriate to say, it was not as Leonardo da Vinci pictures it at the Lord's Supper or the Last Supper.

You will recall that in that classic and immortal painting by Leonardo da Vinci, wherein he set forth the person of Christ in the center, and then he has the apostles gathered around him.

And it is much like a modern day banquet table, probably about 30 inches off the floor and everyone seated at chairs, as we are accustomed to, around the table.

[1 : 45] Well, it wasn't like that. It was like that in da Vinci's day when he painted it. But we've got declaring in the scriptures a biblical aspect of that.

And it is reclining at table. Now, if you can imagine, the tables were about 12 to 14 inches high. And around the tables were large cushions or pillows.

And the custom was to get down on your knees and recline at the table with your body out behind you and your arms and upper torso up front and the table is out here.

Frankly, we would probably consider that very uncomfortable. But I'm sure they thought it was just the only way to go. And that meant, of course, that the food was almost right at your face level.

So this is the kind of setting that is envisioned in scripture, not that in the famous Last Supper painting. Not only so, but as it is depicted here, you've got to bear in mind, this was common.

[2 : 58] This was the way just about everybody ate in that day. They did not have individual plates as we do. But rather, they had a large bowl, usually in the center of the table, often more than one bowl.

And in the bowl, of course, was the meal. And the meal consisted of vegetables and morsels of meat, sometimes lamb or beef, but usually lamb.

Or it might be a different kind of dish and consist of pieces of fish. And in addition with that, there would be a gravy supplied and often vegetable, much along the line of what we would call a stew.

Then the bread had nothing to do with slicing as we have sliced bread or even rolls or anything like that. The bread was usually about six to eight inches in diameter, very similar to what we would call a pancake.

Very close to that. They would take the bread, fold it in half and use it as a scoop. Use it like a spoon. They would dip that individually into the meat dish with the broth and the gravy in it and then take it to the mouth and eat it.

[4 : 23] There were no knives and forks and spoons. They simply did not use those. Now, we're talking about Middle Ages or the early first century and this continued on for several hundred years.

So, it wasn't until the Middle Ages that they actually developed the use of silverware. So, when your youngster tells you in a smart aleck fashion and you tell him to use his fork and he says fingers were invented before forks, he knows what he's talking about.

So, just bear that in mind, Mom, and cut him a little slack, okay? When Jesus was gathered at table with the disciples on this particular night, he remarked about someone was going to betray him.

And, of course, they were completely dumbfounded at that possibility. I can assure you that Jesus did not mean betrayal in the sense that it actually took place.

Because, had he meant that and had the disciples understood that that's what he meant, you may be sure that Judas would never have been allowed to leave that room.

[5 : 29] But, he did. When Jesus said, one of you shall betray me, I am convinced they did not interpret that as meaning this individual is going to go out in the middle of the night and strike a deal with the enemy and arrange for me to be handed over in the wee hours of the morning.

That's not the way they interpreted it at all. But, that is exactly what Jesus meant. And, that is exactly what happened. I rather suspect that the disciples thought that Jesus was referring to somebody of the twelve, possibly betraying him in the sense that they would really embarrass him or make him look bad, but not sell him out literally to the enemy.

Yet, that is precisely what he meant. And, of course, they were all concerned about who would be so foolish as to do that. Who could possibly be so ungrateful and out of tune with their master that he would be willing to do that.

And, Jesus made this statement. After each of them said, is it I? Is it I? Even Peter and all the rest of them thought that they might be the ones. Now, they knew they weren't going to go out in the middle of the night and strike a deal, but they knew that through the slip of the tongue or through bad behavior, they might do something that would be of great negative concern to their master.

And, they wanted to make sure that they weren't going to be the ones to fumble the ball. Is it I? Is it I? Am I going? You know. And, then Jesus said, He it is to whom I shall give the sop when I have dipped it.

[7 : 08] Now, again, in keeping with an oriental custom, you need to recall that Jesus was considered the host of this meal.

This was not his home. He did not own this place. But, he was presiding over the meal. So, that means that he was considered the host. And, all of the twelve were considered as his guests. He had already made arrangements for the use of the room. And, it was already prepared. And, he was going to preside over the meeting. There is no greater expression of honor that the host can perform for his guests than to personally take the bread, dip it in the dish, and place it to the mouth and lips of the one you wish to honor.

That is considered a very extreme act of kindness and benevolence. Jesus said, The one who is going to betray me is the one to whom I shall give the sop when I have dipped it.

And, he dipped the bread in the sop and put it to the mouth of Judas Iscariot. Rather remarkable thing, don't you think?

[8 : 45] Bestowing honor and privilege on one that he knew was going to ultimately betray him. Yet, that's exactly what he did. And, do you know how Judas repaid that kindness?

Not only with the betrayal and entering into a dastardly kind of agreement with the scribes and Pharisees, but in talking with them about how Jesus was to be identified, because they were coming to arrest him just a few hours after this incident that we are considering here in Luke. They are coming to arrest him, and it will be in the wee hours of the morning. Probably somewhere around 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

And, this is why the disciples are sleeping so often. It had been a long, exhausting day. And, these fellows were worn out. And, they sat down and relaxed. And, the next thing you know, Jesus was off praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And, they were sacked out. They were tired. They were weary. And, they dozed off. The scribes and Pharisees, officers from the temple who were going to conduct the arrest, with the detachment of Roman soldiers accompanying them, are coming with lanterns and torches in the middle of the night, wending their way up this circuitous path that leads up to Gethsemane, where Jesus would be with his disciples and praying.

[10 : 26] And, someone said to Judas, well, if Jesus is going to be there, and 11 of his disciples are going to be there, and it's going to be dark, how are we going to identify him?

How will we know which one is Jesus, so that he won't get away? Because, they probably thought he would try to escape. And, Judas said, he it is, whom I shall kiss.

And, in the Mid-Eastern expression among men, and the greeting of men, and you see it all the time, even to this day, whenever people in the Mid-East meet, sometimes someone comes in on the plane, and a dignitarian Arab, or someone meets them, they always embrace, and give them

this on this side, and then this on this side, and then back to that side again.

That's what he's talking about. That's what the scriptures also call, a holy kiss. They said, you will know that Jesus is the one, because he will be the one, that I will give the formal greeting to, the kiss.

Jesus responded, when that occurred, by saying to Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man, with a kiss. In other words, this kiss, in that culture, of course, was a term of endearment, a term of honor, an expression of affection, and respect, and it's as if Jesus is saying, Judas, of all things, you betray me with a kiss.

[12 : 14] It's kind of like saying, how low can you get? To be betrayed, with the very act, that is an expression, of friendship, and loyalty, and yet, in this case, it was all wrapped up, in betrayal.

What a tragedy. So, here they are, hours before that time, gathered in this upper room, and, we read, in verse 14, that he reclined, at the table, and the apostles, with him, and by the way, this is also how John, leaned, on Jesus' bosom, which is a curious expression, how did he lean?

You see, if we are sitting at chairs, around the table, like we ordinarily think about it, how is he leaning, on his bosom? But, if everybody is reclined, and, your forefront, is to the table, and, you are extended out, with your feet, out behind, which also explains, how Mary Magdalene, came along, and had access, to Jesus' feet, and, she, wept, great tears, and, wiped his feet, with her hair, that's why his feet, were so accessible, to her, because of the reclining, situation, at the table, and the apostles, were with him, and in verse 15, he said to them, I have earnestly, desired, to eat, this Passover, with you, before I suffer.

Now, they are not picking up, on this, at all, he has already, explained to them, this passion, that he was going, to undergo, and how he was going, to be mistreated, by the religious authorities, and ultimately, be handed over, to be crucified, they did not, take that, literally, at all, and when Jesus said, before I suffer, they simply, did not pick up, on it, and then, for I say to you, I shall never, again, eat it, until it is fulfilled, in the kingdom, of God, this deserves, some explanation, when he, participated, in this meal, and in the expression, the Lord's table, or the Lord's supper, that follows, it is, in anticipation, of the coming, of the kingdom, of heaven, or the kingdom, of God, to earth, you are all familiar, with the phrase, that is used, in the prayer, our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom, come, thy will be done, that, contains, a prayer, for the coming, of the kingdom, this, is not it, we are not, in the kingdom, kingdom, it is true, if you are, in Christ, you are, in the spiritual, kingdom, of Jesus Christ, in that you, are a member, of his spiritual, body, we are told, in Colossians, that when we, become believers, we are transferred, we are transferred, from the kingdom, of darkness, into the kingdom, of his dear son, that is, a spiritual kingdom, Jesus is not, talking about that, he is talking about, the coming, of the kingdom, of God, or the kingdom, of heaven, to earth, this is synonymous, with the millennial, reign of Christ, or the messianic kingdom, it has to do, with that time, when Christ, has returned, to the earth, has defeated, the enemy, the antichrist, Satan, is bound, for a thousand years, righteousness, and peace, now come to the earth, this is after, Armageddon, after all of the, incredible nasties, are out of the way, and the bloodshed, is over, then the kingdom, or the millennial reign, of Christ, will be established, and he will rule, and reign, with a rod of iron, that's the kingdom, that he's talking about, and now, he is telling his disciples, that he will never again, eat of this, until, that time comes, it hasn't come yet, it will come, most assuredly, but there is nothing, that has ever happened, in history, that even comes close, to the establishment, of the kingdom of God, on earth, it is a subject, for prayer,

[17 : 02] I will not drink, of the fruit of the vine, or verse 16, I say to you, I shall never again, eat it, until it is fulfilled, in the kingdom of God, and when he had taken a cup, and given thanks, he said, take this, and share it, among yourselves, this was a common cup, it was probably, a fair sized chalice, and would hold, several ounces, of wine, it was not, grape juice, it was wine, the Jews, would not have thought, about using, grape juice, it was, fermented, wine, but, typical usage, of wine, in those days, was that, it was, very well diluted, you would have to, probably, drink, an enormous amount, of this kind of wine, in order to be intoxicated, and, Proverbs makes, a distinction, between, different kinds, of wine, and strong drink, this is not, strong drink, but, it is, wine, nonetheless, and you can ask, any Jew today, by the way, and, they of course, would understand that, this common cup, was passed around,

I'm sure, that they didn't have, any concern, about hygiene, in those days, I'm sure, they weren't concerned, about cold germs, and about disease, and things like that, that we are concerned, with

today, but, this would be, considered, completely unacceptable, in our day and age, so, we go the sanitary route, and each one has, a little receptacle, and then they are disposable, so as to, reduce, or completely eliminate, possibility, of some kind of infection, or somebody passing, something around, that would not be, very nice to get, but in this day, it was just a common cup, and each one took a sip, from the cup, and they passed it around, and then, Jesus said, when he had taken some bread, and given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying, this is my body, which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of me, now there is a great deal, of controversy, that exists, and continues, has existed for centuries, regarding the meaning of this, and the interpretation of this, some of our, friends practice, what is known as, well, we'll just call it, sacramental, salvation, and, this is particularly found, among those, who are the Roman Catholic, and, Episcopal, and most of the Lutheran persuasions, many of you, have that in your background, or you know friends, or relatives, who, are presently involved, in these communions, as, as members, or attendees, or whatever, and, when you, engage, in what is known as, sacramental grace, well, let me explain it this way, whether you are, Roman Catholic, or Lutheran, or Episcopal, or Baptist, or Methodist, or Presbyterian, you may belong, to any one of those, and the historic position, of each of those, is that, we are, saved, by, grace, grace, there is no dispute there, and that salvation, is holy by grace, however, you have to define, what you mean by grace, how is grace received, and those of the liturgical bent, believe, that grace, is received, through, the sacraments, the sacraments, become the vehicle, for receiving, the grace of God, and holy communion, is one of those vehicles, so that, when you, partake, of the bread, whether it's a wafer, or bread, or whatever it is, that is being represented, as the body of Christ, if you are, of a Roman Catholic persuasion, you believe, that you, are receiving, Christ, literally, you are saved, by receiving Christ, and how do you, receive Christ, through the mouth, when you, partake of the wafer, because, when the priest, consecrates, and by the way, no one can do this, no lay person, can do this, only the priest, can do this, so you can see, why the priest, is very, very key, very important, because you cannot, receive Christ, apart from the priest, because the priest, has to consecrate, the elements, and when he, prays, over, the bread, and consecrates, the bread, the bread, becomes, the literal, actual, physical, body, of Christ, Christ, now I know, a lot of people say, oh come on, but that is, the official, Roman Catholic position, it actually, becomes, the literal, body, of Christ, we believe, that it is, symbolic, of the body, of Christ, but it isn't, actually, his flesh, likewise, with the cup, when the priest, consecrates the cup, that which, is, wine, and by the way, in the Roman Catholic Church, and I know some of this, by experience, because my wife, was born and reared, in the Roman Catholic Church, and, and you, who have a Roman Catholic, background, know, that the priest, uses, real wine, that isn't, grape juice at all, it's, it's wine, it's communion wine, but the belief is, that when, the wine, is consecrated, and no one, can consecrate it, but the priest, that the wine, becomes, the actual, literal, blood, of Christ, now, most, thinking people, have a real problem, just with the physics, of that, I mean, the blood of Christ, in thousands, and thousands, of places, all over the world, and it becomes, the literal, blood, how much blood, does Christ have, I mean, what, so we see a problem, with that, but, they simply, overcome that, by just appealing, to their faith, and they say, that you are not, to reason these things out, you are just, to believe it, so, the priest, then, consecrates, that, and it becomes, the literal, blood, of Christ, the Lutheran persuasion, is different, Lutheranism, and there, of course, are different brands, of Lutherans, and I say this, from experience too, because I have a little bit, of personal, background, with the Lutheran church, when I was a young man, they do not believe, believe, that these elements, become, the literal, blood, and body, of Christ, but they do believe, in the presence, of Christ, with those elements, and I'm not sure, exactly, how they make, that distinction, but they do not, believe it becomes, in other words, the Roman Catholics, call this, transubstantiation, and that, is the consecration, of the elements, and they become, the blood of Christ, that's, transubstantiation,

[25 : 06] Roman Catholic, or the Lutheran position, is called, consubstantiation, where Christ, is present, spiritually, not literally, or physically, so, Roman Catholics, and the Lutherans, part company, in that particular regard, and for the most part, the Anglican, or the Episcopal, is somewhere, in between the two, it all depends, on that particular, particular group, so, this is all about, this table, and what these elements mean, our position here, is, and has been, from our inception, that, we do not, receive Christ, by mouth, we receive Christ, by faith, and our salvation, is not sacramental, we do not believe, that when we partake, of these elements, that we are receiving grace, when we partake, of these elements, we believe, we are simply, demonstrating, a

remembrance, of what took place, when Christ died, on that cross, and the bread, is a symbol, of the body of Christ, it isn't the actual, body of Christ, and the cup, is a symbol, or a reminder, of the blood of Christ, and it isn't, the actual blood, so, in this area, we say, salvation, is by grace, through faith, and they would say, salvation, is by grace, through faith, also, however, grace, and faith, are administered, through, the sacraments, and this is just, one of them, another sacrament, of course, for liturgical churches, is water baptism, and they believe, that water baptism, for a baby, removes original sin, and we believe, that, sin, can be removed, only through, the finished work, of Christ, and ones, placing their, personal faith, and trust in him, and when that occurs, at the point of salvation, then, we stand, in the righteousness, of Jesus Christ, but that too, does not come, by a sacrament, it comes, via faith, simple belief, so this is just, one of, several areas, that would, distinguish, us from a,

I guess we would say, a liturgical church, grace is referred to, as a, non-liturgical church, in that we have, very little, almost no, ritual, and it is for, these reasons, our concern, is that, salvation, is received, by, an act, of faith, in the finished work, of Jesus Christ, and, these, while we regard them, as valuable, because our Lord instituted, and he said, as often, as you eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, you do so, in remembrance, of me, and that's the main thing, that this is all about, it is a thanksgiving service, and it is a, servants of, remembrance, of memorial, one might ask the question, well, why do we need, these things, as a remembrance, how could we forget, and my answer is, very easily, very easily, out of sight, out of mind, so all these, physical symbols, are designed to do, is to, cause us, to focus, once again, on what they mean, what they represent, it is an opportunity, to just concentrate, on the meaning, of the bread, and the meaning, of the cup, and the price, that was paid, that they represent, so that's, our communion service, and that's why, we do what we do, we believe, that other groups, or liturgical groups, whether they, practice, transubstantiation, or consubstantiation, we do not, in any way, impugn their sincerity, or their motives, we believe, that they are doing, what they are doing, because they believe, this is what God, wants them to do, and everyone, shall give account, of himself, before God, and this is the way, that we see the scriptures, so reading on here, in our gospel, in Luke 22, verse 19, when he had taken, some bread, and given thanks, he broke it, gave it to them, saying, this is my body, which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of me, now in all fairness, to those who really believe, that it becomes, the physical body, of Christ, you can understand, how they arrive at that, they say, all we're doing is, we're just, taking the scriptures, for what it says, we take it at face value, Jesus held this bread up, and said, this is my body, he didn't say, this represents my body, did he, he said, this is my body, well, you can understand, how they would reach, that conclusion, and this, is my blood, which is shed for you, they could, they could make that, connection, and, I suspect, that they made it, out of, out of a sincere conscience, and, really believing, that that's the way it is, and yet, we would say, in contrast to that, that, the Bible, often employs, figurative language, figures of speech, are an element, of, of language, and many times, we say something, in a figurative way, not expecting, anyone, to take it, in a literal way, and, I frankly believe, that this is what Christ meant, he did not mean, that, his, flesh, his actual flesh, is involved, and there are numerous, other instances too, when Jesus said,

I am the door, by me, if any man enter, and he shall go in, and out, and find pasture, well, nobody, I don't think, would ever think, that Jesus, referred to himself, as a literal door, but he meant, I think, in a spiritual sense, I am, a spiritual door, for you, if you come, through me, the door, the spiritual door, you will go in, and out, and find pasture, likewise, he called himself, the water of life, but, nobody expects, H₂O, to come trickling, from his fingertips, he simply meant, that, he is spiritually, to us, what, real, water is, to our body, Christ is, to our soul, and the same, with the bread of life, he is the bread of life, he is the light of the world, he is the good shepherd, and he is, not only, the shepherd, he is also, the sacrifice, he is referred to, as the lamb, the lamb of God, but, no one, thinks, that Jesus, has four feet, and that, he is, in some way, a woolly lamb, but, we mean that, to say, that, he is, like a lamb, as the lamb, the literal, four-legged, bleeding animal, was key, to, the sacrifice,

Christ is saying, he is lamb-like, he is the lamb of God, that takes away, he is the sin of the world, but, no one thinks, that he has four feet, and a wiggly tail, he is, the God-man, so, there is room, for taking the scripture, literally, as is often the case, there is also room, for taking it figuratively, as is often the case, what determines, which is which, the context, the context is king, and it always determines that, so, this is my body, we take it to mean, this represents my body, which is given for

you, do this, in remembrance of me, and in the same way, he took the cup, after they had eaten, saying, this cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant, in my blood, remarkable, remarkable passage, and it is, expressed in the other gospels, as well, now, we are going to partake, of the elements, of the table, and we will ask the elders, if they will come forward, and we will, distribute the bread, while they are coming, let me assure you, that, we practice, what is referred to, as open communion, and that means, that, you're participating, in this service, is not dependent, upon you, being a member, of Grace Bible Church, it is, however, dependent, upon your being, a member, of the body of Christ, and if you have, a personal relationship, with Jesus Christ, then you are, in that spiritual body, and you are, encouraged, and invited, to participate, with us, as fellow believers, in remembering, our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.

[34 : 58] Let's spend a moment, in silent prayer, shall we? each of us, before the Lord, is admonished, to examine ourselves, before we partake, of these elements, and if we are aware, that there is something, in our life, that is displeasing, to the Lord, we need to deal, with that, and we need, to thank him, for the forgiveness, that he provides, for our sin.

Thank you, Father, for the expression, that is provided, us in scripture, for the enlightenment, that comes from it, for the fact, that there really, was, a real, physical, human body, that is represented, in this bread, and that, the, literal, physical, blood, of the Savior, coursing through his veins, is represented, in the liquid, and, we recognize, that, these are, but symbols, and that, they cannot, give life, but they can, and do, remind us, of the life, that was given, and we pray, that they may do, that very thing, to each of us, today, who partake, in Christ's name, Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Jesus took the bread, and when he had broken it, said, take eat, this is my body, which is given for you.

Of substitution, undergirds the whole of scripture, from Genesis, to Revelation. And because of that substitution, there is room for grace.

[37 : 25] biblical Christianity, is the only faith, among all of the faiths, of the world, and there are some, 3,200 religions, sects, isms, cults, splits, splinters.

Biblical Christianity, is the only one, that operates, on the basis of grace. Everything else, without exception, is based upon, the performance, of the followers, or its adherents.

And our faith, is based upon, the performance, of our founder. It is not, what we can do for God, it is what God, has already done, for us, through his son, Jesus Christ.

And he simply, asks us, to trust him, to believe in him. It is our prayer, that you know Christ, as your personal savior today, and if you do, nothing can diminish, or remove your salvation.

But if you do not, nothing can provide, salvation for you, other than placing, your faith, and trust in Christ. Partaking of these elements, will not save you.

[38 : 36] It will not, even move you, one inch, closer to God. All that can do that, is the finished work, of Jesus Christ. And that makes us, accepted, in the beloved.

And in him, we are fully, freely, forgiven, forever. So great salvation. Then, Jesus took the cup.

Our Lord took the cup, and said, this cup, is the new covenant, in my blood.

As often as you, eat of this bread, drink of this cup, you do show forth, the Lord's death, until he comes. Father, we are grateful, for gladdened hearts, gathered here this morning, celebrate not only, the remembrance, of our wonderful Lord Jesus, but to give thanks as well, for, your years of faithfulness, for the beauty of the season, this time of the year, that we enjoy, for it's being filled, so full, with, wonderful memories, of days gone by, and your faithfulness to us.

We anticipate, only more of the same, for the future, because you are, the unchanging God. we can utterly, completely, rely, and depend upon you, for your wisdom, and your gracious provision.

[40 : 08] We bless you, and thank you for it. Christ's wonderful name. Amen. We're going to give you, an opportunity now, to, share with what the Lord, has given you, as you have, ability, and desire.

You are, all aware of, what's taking place, in our national economy, it's entirely, entirely possible, that there may be, more opportunity, for benevolent offering, usage, this season, than in the past, so, with that in mind, and also taking, into consideration, your own ability, we invite you, to give, in accordance with that.

And all the people said, you are dismissed. Thank you. Thank you.