

Supernatural Eating

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 10-11; John 13

Preached on: Sunday, October 2, 2022

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John 13:1, “It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love,” or “he loved them to the uttermost.”

Now look at verse 2, there’s something very striking here. Do people ever come to worship, do they ever come into church with bad motives? Yeah. Look here at verse 2, “The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.”

So, I want you to see something there: Judas came to church not because he wanted to worship the Lord but for ulterior motives. It reminds me when I first moved to Louisiana and how involved politicians were in coming to church, and it was very interesting. Why did they come?

They wanted to be recognized as one of us. Anyhow, Judas came to church, but he came with a bad heart, and notice here the role of Satan, the devil. The devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. He came there with a deliberate purpose of harming Jesus, of enriching himself with that 30 pieces of silver and betraying Jesus, and he’s there.

Now I want you to notice something that is interesting here. As we read through the scriptures, we discover something, and I have to say that this is not of the essence of the Lord’s Supper. When I say this is not of the essence of the Lord’s Supper, it is a part of the Lord’s Supper, and what is that?

Well, Jesus when the evening meal was served, anyhow, Jesus gets up, takes off his outer clothes, he still had on his inner clothes, and he wrapped a towel around himself.

In verse 5, “He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

Now, I don't think that's of the essence of the Lord's Supper. If it were the essence of the Lord's Supper, whenever we have the Lord's Supper we should wash each other's feet, but if you read further when he finishes this in verse 12 on the next page:

“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place,” and he says,

“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

So, think about it for a moment: Should we ever wash feet? I'm going to give you the answer: I believe we should and maybe on Maundy Thursday of 2023, we just might do that. It's not of the essence.

(By the way, in Rome the Pope, on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, gathers 12 beggars off the streets of Rome, and he washes their feet. That's an interesting thing.)

So, in some traditions, at least, this continues on. Of course, there's a basic meaning to washing feet, and that is that we've been called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus to serve other people rather than to be served.

Washing someone's feet was the lowliest task of a servant in a house, to wash the feet of those who came in off the streets. Should we do it?

I think we should, but I don't think it's of the essence of the Lord's Supper and how we do the Lord's Supper is not of the essence of it.

Should we have a common cup of real wine? I think we should. Should we have one loaf and break it off, unleavened bread, matzah?

I think we should. But it's not of the essence of the Lord's Supper. We can have shot glasses of grape juice, and we can have little pieces of cracker, and we can have a big loaf and break it. None of those things are of the essence of the Lord's Supper. The thing I want to stress here is that how they did it in Jesus' day as the Last Supper, because the Last Supper is the Old Testament Passover out of which Jesus takes two elements, not the lamb, not the bitter herbs, but he takes two elements, the matzah, the unleavened

bread, and the wine, and he lifts them out of the one covenant and places them down into the next covenant, the new covenant.

Old covenant—roasted lamb. Old covenant—bitter herbs. Old covenant—matzah and wine. New covenant—matzah and wine. Do we have to do it exactly the way that Jesus did it at the Last Supper? I say no. The important thing is **that** we do it, and **that we do it regularly**, and we'll continue on.

Now, notice something here: Jesus washed Judas' feet. Have you thought about that? Jesus washed Judas' feet. Wow!

And during that time Judas is admitted to the Lord's Table, to the Lord's Supper. Wow!

And during that meal Jesus has said to them—and notice he's very troubled in verse 21, he's troubled in his spirit. Why?

Is he afraid to die? Well, he doesn't want to die, but he's willing to die, and he submits to the will of the Father so that you can—I could be saved from our sins.

But he's deeply troubled because a man who had been his friend—a man who had been his companion for three years, a man who had camped on the hillsides with the Lord Jesus and the other disciples—is going to knife him in the back. He's going to be betrayed, and betrayal never ever feels good.

And I think that Jesus is also disturbed because, ultimately, he feels human compassion for Judas because he knows that Judas, who is about to betray him, is going to end up in remorse and self-pity, committing suicide.

So now the disciples are wondering what in the world is going on, and you notice the Last Supper—unlike paintings that you see—they recline. Because what they did, they had little couches, and they would rest on the left shoulder, and they would use the right hand to feed themselves. And so, when you read these words, you see it that way and look at verse 22, he says:

“His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, ‘Ask him which one he means.’ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’”

So, here is John the apostle, and he's on Jesus' right side, and he leans back and asks Jesus, “Who is it?”

Now notice in verse 26:

“Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’”

Now look at those next words,

“Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.”

Verse 27, “As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.”

Notice the devil had already put into his heart what to do. Notice the devil had already entrapped him, ensnared him, had him motivated to have Jesus betrayed. But now something happens when he takes Communion.

Look at it. It’s not the devil, that’s one of the names *diabolos* (διάβολος). It is Satan (Σατανᾶς), the accuser. It’s one and the same person: Satan and the accuser, but Satan’s name also means adversary. So, the adversary of everything that’s holy and good, the adversary of God, the adversary of light, Satan, he actually enters inside Judas Iscariot when Judas eats the bread. That’s disturbing, isn’t it?

Well, turn back with me, if you will, to 1 Corinthians 10, and he warns us about supernatural eating, page 1,783, and he says in verse 18,

“Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar,” they share in the altar. And so, we have this sense of giving and receiving. When the Jewish people ate of the sacrifices, they had communion, they participated in the altar. They participated in it. When they ate, they were receiving something supernatural.

Then he says, “Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything?”

Now that’s curious. Are the gods of the nations real? And the answer to that, that the Bible gives us if we really survey it, is they’re not gods. There’s only one living and true God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but they’re, nevertheless, real entities, real beings, real persons.

And notice what he says in verse 20,

“The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants,” that is, to partake, he says, “with demons.” Think about it. When Judas took the Lord’s Supper, when Judas took the bread of the Passover as Jesus handed it to him, and he took it from the hands of Jesus, at that moment, he received not simply a demon; he received Satan himself into his heart.

He came with bad intentions. He came guilty. He came planning to sin. But at the last moment when he made that choice—and notice in the way Jesus incites him to do it—when he took that bread, Satan personally entered into him.

So, he says, “I don’t want you to become participants,” that is, sharers, “with demons.” There are two Greek words here both of which mean to receive something: *koinōnia* (κοινωνία) and *metechō* (μετέχω).

When we receive the Lord’s Supper, we receive physical bread and physical wine, but we also receive something else.

And if we were to go to a pagan worship service, and we were to participate with them in their feasts, we would receive something: We would receive what they were offering physically, but we’d also receive something demonic.

We need to see this because he says then in verse 21,

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.”

Now, he refers to it as the Lord’s table. Why does he call it a table? What do we have here?

This is a table, and it isn’t an altar. In our understanding of scripture in the New Testament, the last altar was the cross.

This is a table, and it’s a table because it’s modeled, even though this piece of furniture doesn’t look like it, it’s modeled after the Last Supper. The Lord’s Supper is an extension of that Last Supper.

And he says you cannot participate (*metechō*, μετέχω) in the—you can’t take part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.

Now, how literally do we take words? When we receive the bread, we receive something in addition to the bread. When we receive the wine, we receive something in addition to the wine.

When we receive the table, we’re a termite—if we eat the table.

That’s obviously not absolutely literal, and we need to say that. Jesus said many things that were hyperbolic and not meant to be understood in an absolutely, strictly, literal way.

So, it’s the table of the Lord, we receive the table of the Lord, we participate in it. That’s why we call what we’re about to do Holy Communion because in Communion (*koinōnia*, κοινωνία) we receive something. When we

commune with each other in fellowship, that's that Greek word *koinōnia* (κοινωνία), we give of ourselves to others, and we receive from others for ourselves. Fellowship is a giving and receiving. But the fellowship of the table is where we receive bread and wine, but also something else, something supernatural.

Now I want you to turn over to chapter 11 with me for a moment, and he says in verse 23, 1 Corinthians 11:23, page 1,784:

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks.”

What is that word “when he had given thanks”? That's the Greek verb *eucharisteō* (εὐχαριστέω). We get the word “eucharist” from that. In many Christian traditions, we refer to the Lord's Supper as the Eucharist, particularly the bread. Why?

Because it's the bread that Jesus lifts up, and he blesses it, he gives thanks for it. So, what is the eucharist? The eucharist is a thanksgiving.

When I take the Lord's Supper, I need to remember that I am giving thanks to God. When I lift the bread before you, I bless it and I break it. That's the thanksgiving, *eucharisteō* (εὐχαριστέω). Again, we get the word “eucharist” from that, the thanksgiving.

So, these are terms that are easily confused. I think it's good to call the bread the eucharist as they do in many Christian traditions because it's the thanksgiving. He gave thanks and then he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

So, we learn something here. There he is, he's at the table of the Lord, he is at the Last Supper. Why is it the last supper? Because it's the last true, actual Passover because what happens is the Passover becomes replaced with the Lord's Supper.

So, at the Last Supper, at that supper where Jesus takes the bread and gives thanks to God, that bread is the eucharist, the thanksgiving.

Then he goes on and he says,

“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

What does he mean? Well, I'm going to explore that in a minute further.

“In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”

Now, I want you to think about this for a moment. If you read Matthew's account and you read Mark's account, that's not what Jesus said. What did they say that Jesus said? He said, "This cup is my blood of the new covenant" (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24).

But St. Luke, who was a disciple of Paul, has the words this way, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).

Which is correct? Hold onto your hats: neither is correct, both are correct.

In other words, there's not exactly one way to do it. If we say, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," have we messed things up? Have we somehow or another turned the wine into the blood of a mouse? I want you to think about that for a moment.

It isn't the precision of words. What did Jesus actually say at the Last Supper? I think he said both.

If you look at Jesus' sermons, I think they're highly condensed, and I think that he had a lot of words there at the Last Supper, and I think he said, "This is my blood of the new covenant." And I think he said, "It's the new covenant in my blood." Both things are true.

The one emphasizes the fact that it's a covenant and that the blood is that which establishes or inaugurates a New Covenant.

Then I want to point this out: Beginning Tuesday evening at sunset is the highest of the High Holy Days of the Jewish people, *Yom Kippur*. It begins at sundown on Tuesday and ends at sundown on Wednesday. Think about it.

Everything is laid out in great precision in the book of Leviticus 16 how to do *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, or the Day of Atonements, as it's referred to later in Leviticus (23:27-28; 25:9)—Everything exactly.

The priest is to offer a bull first, and he sprinkles the blood of the bull seven times, not six, not eight, on the Holy of Holies, that is inside the Holy of Holies on the Ark of the Covenant (Leviticus 16:11-14). And after he's done that, he goes out and he takes a goat, and he takes the blood of a goat, and he sprinkles it seven times, not six or eight (Leviticus 16:15).

And when we read Leviticus, God is very concerned about exact, literal, highly detailed, ways of worship. In fact, I'll bet you nobody here has the right kind of underwear on.

In Leviticus the high priest had to wear a specific kind of underwear, linen (Leviticus 16:4, 23). I would think that's far more uncomfortable than cotton. I'm not trying to be silly; I'm simply saying that how things were

done in the Old Testament was with exacting detail, minutiae, “You’ll do it this way and no other way.”

And you remember when Aaron’s two oldest sons Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10 offered strange fire before the Lord, the fire flashed out and they were burned up by the holy fire (Leviticus 16:1). Wow!

So, the Old Testament is about barriers between people like you and me, sinners, and a holy God with these exacting details, “This is how you’ve got to do it.” Seven times—bull then goat.

And another goat is sent off into the wilderness to Azazel (אֲזָזֵל), whatever that means. He’s a scapegoat, and we could go into that another time (Leviticus 16:8, 10, 20-22, 26). The point is this that when they did the Last Supper Jesus said a lot of words and those words have been passed down to us through his apostles. And so, is the cup the new covenant in his blood? Yes. Is the cup his blood of the new covenant? Yes. Both are true.

Now notice that he says something here in both cases, notice at the end of verse 24 and at the end of verse 25, “do this in remembrance of me.” “In remembrance of me.” He repeats it. So, the first thing we will say here at this point is that the Lord’s Supper is a memorial, but we’re going to add, it’s more than a memorial.

The Lord’s Supper is a memorial and in many ways what you see here is in this act of worship, you see the crucifixion of Christ visualized before you, and we might say, if we carry that to a logical extreme, if it were only a memorial, we could easily get rid of all of this silverware and trying to fill up little shot glasses with grape juice and wine, we could replace it with a flannelgraph.

You know, in Sunday school, Sunday school teachers often have a flannelgraph. My wife and I invested in one and taught our children with it, and you could have a flannelgraph picture up here of Christ being crucified, of Christ washing the disciples’ feet, and of the bread and the wine that were used in the Last Supper. You could do that.

If that’s all that it is, you could replace these cumbersome elements of bread and wine with a flannelgraph picture, but what I want you to see with me is that it is more than a memorial.

How do we know that? Well, first of all, the language that he’s used, it’s a participation in Christ’s body and blood. It’s a sharing in the body and blood of Christ. It is a receiving of the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16, “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing (*koinōnia*,

κοινωνία) in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing (*koinōnia*, κοινωνία) in the body of Christ?)

What do I mean? Well, let's look further down and we see in verse 27, page 1,785:

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner.”

Notice that is actually translating a Greek adverb which is **how** you do something, because it's important that we understand there's a **worthy way** and an **unworthy way**. This isn't talking about your being worthy or about me being worthy; this is about Christ who is worthy. But there's a worthy way to do it.

How did Judas do it? He came in with his heart full of sin, full of evil intention, and he had no intention of getting rid of that sin.

So, the first thing we'd have to say is that we should examine ourselves. We should examine ourselves. Is there sin in your life and mine? I am sure, let's see, whew-whew. If you have breathed in the last week, you've sinned. You probably sinned on the way here. I don't know, it depends on whoever pulled in front of you.

You haven't always said what you should have said, and you've said things you shouldn't have said. And you haven't always done what you should have done, and you've done things you shouldn't have done. And you haven't always thought the things you should think; instead, you've thought things that you shouldn't think.

So, there's sin, and when you take of the Lord's Supper you need to search your own heart. You need to pray right now, “Lord, search me and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any hindering, any destructive way in me, and lead me in the way of life everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

The time of the Lord's Supper should be a revival service. You know that churches historically, many churches hold revival services. May I say that the Lord's Supper is designed to be a revival service? It's a time of self-examination. It's like having a guest preacher come in and have, as Carol plays, “Just as I am” for 16 stanzas, waiting for you to come down the aisle. It's a revival service.

It's a time to examine yourself. "Lord, show me if there's something in my life." And if you say, "Lord, I know you want me to forgive that person but I'm not going to forgive that person," don't take the Lord's Supper.

What do you do? You say, "Lord, I know you want me to forgive that person." I'm praying for grace, even as I take the Lord's Supper, "Give me grace to be able to forgive that person."

God isn't demanding that you deal with everything in your life all at one time; he's demanding that you say to him, "Lord, I can't do this on my own."

That's what the Lord's Supper is all about; it's about a confession of our own inability. "Lord, give me grace. Lord, give me help. Lord, help me to be the man or woman I ought to be."

So, we pray for grace, and God will give us grace because we believe the Lord's Supper is indeed a means of grace.

And notice what he says in verse 26:

"Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

It's a reminder that Jesus is coming. But then the "therefore" in verse 27:

"Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord."

What does that mean? It means that somehow or another when we take of the elements of this meal, we are partaking of the body and blood of Christ.

How? That's a question that has divided Christians down through the centuries. How? But let's finish the passage a bit more.

Verse 28:

"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

When Judas took the eucharist, when Judas took the bread, Satan himself entered into Judas.

Now notice in the next verse, verse 30, this is very important because this is a supernatural eating and drinking. It's not simply a flannelgraph. It is a memorial. It is a reminder. It is a word picture to show us. It's a visible word of God. But notice what he says in verse 30:

“That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” He’s not talking about, “Who’s dozing off here this morning?” “Is he talking about me?” He’s not talking about people falling asleep in church.

This is a Christian way of referring to death. Why? Because our souls go to be with the Lord when we die, but our bodies rest in the grave as if they were in our own beds, and they’re going to rise up again. And so, we speak there of sleep that way.

What he’s saying is, “That’s why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have died.” That means this is serious business.

So, it is a memorial, but it’s more than a memorial; it is a supernatural meal. When we receive the bread, and we receive the wine, we receive something supernatural.

Now, I’m going to quickly sum up four ways that the church has understood this. The church as it came out from under persecution when Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 and then made Christianity the state religion of the empire in 325, began early on to have views of the Lord’s Supper that I find strange, and that is that the bread ceased to be bread and the wine ceased to be wine.

Now, in the Middle Ages a philosopher/theologian by the name of Thomas Aquinas came up with a theory. He used Aristotle’s philosophy, and he said the bread appears under what he called the word “accidents.”

It means just the appearance. It looks like bread, it smells like bread, it tastes like bread, but it is not bread. And he said the wine looks like wine, smells like wine, tastes like wine, but it’s not wine.

In other words, during the worship service, the physical elements of the Supper are transformed, to use the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, there is *transubstantiation*, that is, the substance of the bread ceases to be, and the substance of the wine ceases to be, and they are replaced with the actual, literal, physical, body and blood of Christ.

Now, the Orthodox Christians have a similar view, but they don’t use Aristotelian philosophy. For them, it’s much more of a mystery.

Then we have Luther. Luther believed that Christ is physically present in the meal along with the bread and wine. That word is sometimes called *consubstantiation* but that’s not the word that Martin Luther or Lutheran theologians traditionally used.

Then there is at the other extreme, the flannelgraph. The flannelgraph says it is a memorial. It's simply a word picture.

So, what I believe as a good Calvinist, I believe that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper the Holy Spirit is present in the proclamation of the gospel in such a way that we are lifted up where Christ is in heavenly places. You know, he says that in Ephesians 2 that we're seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3; 2:5). And he lifts us up, so that as we're in the presence of Jesus, somehow or another mysteriously, we not only receive the bread and the wine, we also actually receive Christ himself, his body and his blood, but in a way I can't explain.

So, there's a mystery here, and the Latin word "sacrament" refers to a mystery. It also refers to a pledge (*sacramentum*).

So, I've summed up what I believe the Bible teaches about the Lord's Supper, and then there are those who don't do the Lord's Supper at all anymore, they just replace it.

And strange as it may seem, what we believe as Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists believe, and the Anglicans, is virtually identical and that's, therefore, since the Methodists came out of the Anglicans, what we believe, and what the Methodists, and what the Anglicans, and the Congregationalists believe is virtually identical.

It's very similar, but not virtually identical to what Lutherans believe.

But there are those that just did away with it entirely. The Salvation Army doesn't do it. Jehovah's Witnesses don't do it. Of course, Jehovah's Witnesses deny who Jesus really is, that Jesus is truly God, begotten not made, who came down here and became a true human being like you and me.

So, that's the essence of the Lord's Supper. Let me, then, invite you to join me in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. I pray that our reflections on what it means will be useful to you, and I want to say that we believe in open Communion. What does that mean?

Any baptized Christian is welcome at the Lord's table, because it's the Lord's table, not our table. And we invite you, if you're looking to Christ, come to the Lord's table. Why? Because it's a means of strengthening you. It's a means of giving you grace. So, as you reflect about it, you think about some sin in your life and I want you to prepare your hearts as we distribute it what is it that you're dealing with, what is it that you want to say to God, "Hands off." When Judas went into the Last Supper to celebrate the

Passover with Jesus, he had a “hands off”. Satan had put something in his heart, and he didn’t want to let go of it. Well, that’s dangerous. So, I want you to ask yourself and I’m going to pray,

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way of life everlasting. Lord, I don't want there to be single barrier between you and me. Show me my heart, Lord, and then enable me, unlike Judas, enable me, Lord, to give it to you and say, “Lord, I don't want a ‘hands off’; I want a ‘hands on.’” Take my heart, Lord, and fill me with your Holy Spirit so that as I eat this bread, I may eat it as a blessing and not as Judas for whom the bread was the entrance of Satan into his heart.