

Eating the Lord's Supper

Mark 14:22-26

8 November 2020: Halifax (5:30) & Glenholme (1:30)

Introduction:

Last week in our sermon series from Mark, we looked at how Jesus our Lord and Saviour led His disciples in preparing for the Passover.

- I explained to you that we can learn about preparing for the Lord's Supper by looking at how Jesus led His disciples in preparing for the Passover.
 - This is so because of the close relationship between the Passover and the Lord's Supper in which Jesus is the Passover lamb who was sacrificed for us.
 - But it is especially so because, at the Passover that is described for us in Mark 14, Jesus also instituted the Lord's Supper—
 - That means that in leading His disciples to prepare for the Passover on this occasion, He was also leading them in preparation to partake of the Lord's Supper as well as setting an example for us.
- We looked at both physical and spiritual preparation
 - Physical preparation involves finding a suitable place for the supper and preparing the meal itself along with arranging our affairs so that we can attend faithfully and be physically rested and alert.
 - Spiritual preparation involved self-examination together with an examination of what God has provided for our spiritual need so that we come with hunger.

Today we move on to Mark 14:22-26.

- Here we see Jesus actually instituting and eating the Lord's Supper.
- At the Supper, He declares to us as His people that He, as sacrificed, is available to us for our present benefit.

Listen as I read our text to you from God's Word... Mark 14:22-26:

Mark 14:22-26: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." ²³ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. ²⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy word.

It must have been quite a surprise for Jesus' disciples when He took the bread and commanded them to eat it, calling it His body—

- and then likewise, took the cup and declared to them that it was His blood of the New Covenant which was shed for many.

There is so much in this for us. I want you to consider that:

- I. **At the table, Jesus presents Himself as the source of every spiritual blessing in God's covenant and invites us to feed upon Him for these blessings.**

- A. See how Jesus presents Himself as the true sacrifice for sin at the supper.
1. Keep in mind that when Jesus' disciples were eating the Passover, they recognised that they shared in the blessing of God's people by vicarious sacrifice for sin.
 - As I reminded you last week, when Israel was in bondage in Egypt (some 3500 years ago), they were instructed by the LORD through Moses to kill a lamb as a sacrifice to God and to put the blood of the sacrifice on the door posts and lintel of their house.
 - In doing so, they were promised that when God brought the judgment He had promised on all of Egypt by killing all the first born males in the land, God would spare them.
 - He said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you!"
 - Forever thereafter, they were to have a commemorative Passover feast in which they killed a lamb and ate it in remembrance of God's mercy and deliverance.
 - This deliverance was from slavery in Egypt.
 - They were delivered from Egypt, not to be free, but to be servants to the most high God, serving Him as all people were created to do.
 - It was the highest and best of all privileges.
 - God gave them His law to show them what was required of them.
 - The moral commandments set forth how they ought to live and it also showed them how far short they came of what God requires—how sin had ruined them.
 - Besides the moral commandments, therefore, God also gave them all sorts of ceremonies involving sacrifices for sin to testify that He would cleanse them of their sin so they could be forgiven and serve Him.
 - The Passover was but one such sacrifice, showing as clearly as any of their sacrifices, that the lamb sacrificed was killed in their place—what we call a vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice.
 - And so it was that by eating the Passover, Jesus' disciples, like all the Jews, were reminded that they needed a substitutionary sacrifice...
 - one to die in their place to atone for their sins so that they might enjoy God's blessing and favour.
 2. Jesus chose the Passover feast as the occasion on which He would institute the Lord's Supper to show that **He** was to be the true sacrifice for sin.
 - a. This made it unmistakable that He Himself was to be the one who died in the place of His guilty people—as a sacrifice to atone for their sin.
 - He was essentially saying, "I am the one who is dying for all the sins of God's people so that all who are in Me can have God's blessing and favour and can be His people forever."
 - b. What He says can rightly be understood in no other way.

- Here they were, eating the body of a lamb and Jesus takes bread, blesses it and breaks it (see verse 22), gives it to them, and says “Take, eat, this is my body.”
 - And then He takes the cup and says (v. 24): “this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.”
 - For Him to do this and say this at the Passover was clearly to declare that in the New Covenant, He was to be the victim that was sacrificed for His people.
 - He was replacing all the blood of the old covenant which was the blood of many animals, with the shedding of His own blood.
 - This was the true sacrifice that was needed to reconcile sinners to God. The others were just types and figures of our Lord Jesus.
3. God had already declared that the days would come when He would make a new covenant with His people—not like the old covenant.
- It would have three important differences.
 - a. First, that by it He would forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.
 - In other words, that there would be more than ritual cleansing and forgiveness—that by virtue of that covenant there would be true cleansing from sin forever.
 - By Christ, they would be brought into God’s favour forever.
 - b. Second, He said that He would write His law in their heart so that they would obey Him and not depart from Him.
 - In other words, He would give them eternal life by which they would truly know Him and so live for Him.
 - Jesus was the first man to truly have this life with God and it is by our union with Him that we obtain this life through the blessing of His Spirit.
 - By Him, we enter into life with God—we feed upon Him as the One who was offered to us for life.
 - c. A third difference was that God would call people from the nations to join with His people Israel in the blessings promised in this covenant.
 - In the Old Covenant, those in Israel who believed truly obtained life with God on the basis of what Christ would do when He came.
 - But when Jesus came, He actually did what was required and it was then that the nations were called by the proclamation of what Christ did (by the preaching of the gospel).
 - He was presented as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The promise was (and is) that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

TRANS> Understand from this that Jesus here presents Himself as the only one who reconciles us to God, and that only through His suffering and death on the cross.

B. He is the sacrifice we feed upon to receive the blessings of the covenant.

- At the supper, He shows us visually and by our senses that we are to feed upon Him for the blessings of life in the covenant.
- 1. Eating of that which represents His body and blood is the principal action of the supper—signifying feeding upon Him who was sacrificed for us.
 - The supper is not a re-enactment of His crucifixion.
 - It calls to mind that He was sacrificed for us, and there is the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine, but this is more to distribute them to us than to replay His suffering.
 - He is not being crucified again, even in a ceremonial way, but He is showing us that we are partakers of the blessing that comes to us from His sacrifice that He offered two thousand years ago. By looking to that sacrifice, we obtain the blessings of God’s covenant.
 - Forgiveness of sin and new life forever with God come only through His sacrifice.
- 2. The eating is not an empty sign. Spiritual nourishment is given by it through faith.
 - It is important for you in your eating to expect the grace and blessings of the covenant to be given to you when you eat in faith—looking for those blessings.
 - In other words, we should expect that we will receive something whenever we come rightly to this table, looking to Jesus our Savior who is the mediator of the covenant.
 - We are called to feed upon Him by faith.
 - There is no benefit from simply ingesting the bread and the wine.
 - The blessing comes to those who look to Him in faith for the blessing that is promised.
 - That is one of the reasons that Paul says that we must discern the Lord’s body when we partake.
 - If we come in a way that is mindless of the fact that we are here feeding upon Christ crucified who is represented by the bread and wine, we bring not blessing but judgement on ourselves.
 - Moreover, Jesus has appointed the elders to receive people into the church when they profess their faith, and to watch over them...
 - And to remove those (or to bar them from the table) who fall into sin and do not repent.
 - That is the reason that those administering the Lord’s Supper should warn those who are not under the active care of the elders that Jesus has appointed not to come.
 - It doesn’t necessarily mean that they are unbelievers, but that they need to come under the authority of Christ, who has appointed elders to watch for their souls, to participate in the sacraments of the church.
 - But when we come in the right way, we should expect to actually receive blessing in the eating of the bread and wine as we look to Christ.

- C. We need the table as a constant reminder that the source of all redemptive blessing is Jesus crucified.
- We need it as a reminder so that we will continue to feed upon Him.
1. Indeed, where else can we find redemptive blessing than in Christ crucified?
 - Only He was worthy to die for our sins and only He has eternal life for us.
 - Only He is God in human flesh who, as man, was able to represent us and as God was able to be righteous in this fallen world and to offer a sacrifice that was worthy to take away our sins.
 - There would be no blessing apart from His death on the cross.
 - How else could our sins be atoned if not by Him crucified? They could not.
 2. But we seem to constantly drift away from reliance on the cross of Christ.
 - The truth is that our flesh (the sin that remains in us) is quite opposed to this doctrine. We have an aversion to it.
 - In our pride, we would much prefer it if God would approve of us without having to have Jesus die the cursed death of the cross.
 - Many are so brazen that they deny the justice of everlasting punishment, and they do it in a most arrogant way.
 - They set themselves up as judge instead of submitting to God's word which clearly teaches that Jesus had to die to take away our sins.
 - But the rejection of the cross does not usually begin in such a brazen way.
 - It begins with a slackening of our love for the cross of Christ—so that we don't meditate on what He has done for us as much.
 - Then we begin to desire to feel good about ourselves instead of finding our joy in Christ and His mercy.
 - That often leads to feeling sorry for ourselves and making excuses and playing the victim.
 - We move further and further away from joy in the cross.
 - We come to hate the light that exposes us and soon our Jesus is no longer the Jesus of the Bible.
 3. The Lord's Supper is given to re-centre us on Him and to renew our feeding upon Him as our source of all spiritual nourishment.
 - It is given to re-centre us—to renew our feeding in faith upon Jesus crucified,
 - so that we turn to the word and to prayer with eagerness to have Him.
 - It reminds us that the kingdoms of this world have nothing in common with the kingdom of our Lord God.
 - His is the kingdom that will displace all other the great empires of the world.
 - They will all perish, but the kingdom established by Christ crucified will endure forever and ever.
 - The supper is meant to renew our feeding upon Christ crucified, not only as we feed upon at the table, but also as we continue to do so after we go home.
 - It is meant to renew our feeding upon Him by faith—to stir up our zeal for all the means of grace.

II. What are the blessings that we are to seek from Jesus crucified?

A. Ongoing forgiveness.

1. We come to the table saying, “O Lord, forgive us our sins on the basis of what Jesus has done. We feed upon Him who was crucified for the forgiveness of sin.”
2. The promise is that if we walk in the light (which means that we live in the truth of God where our sin is exposed and the cross is understood), the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.
 - When we lose sight that we have been cleansed by His cross, we don’t see much need for ongoing forgiveness.
 - We figure we are okay.
3. But what an encouragement forgiveness by the cross is when we are walking in the light!
 - It gives us a much greater confidence as we look upon our Saviour who became a sacrificial victim for us.
 - We are made certain that if He has died for us, our sins are fully atoned.

B. At the table, we also look for ongoing growth in our obedience.

1. The Lord presents Himself as the one who feeds us by His sacrifice, so we look to have growth in grace.
 - New obedience with freshness and zeal, enabling us to put off the old man and to put on the new man that is being renewed.
 - We look for the power of that new life in Jesus crucified.
2. We look to have a growing hatred for sin coupled with a growing love for righteousness.
 - We look to be strengthened that we may be able to stand against temptations, that our sinful lusts might be put to death and replaced with a desire to be conformed to the image of God’s Son.
 - We look to be strengthened to endure trials for the glory of God, so that instead of cursing we might praise Him and serve Him all the more.

C. We look to grow in our trust in the Lord and in our sense of His goodness and love.

1. We feed on Him that we might be freed from fear, anxiety, anger, bitterness, and frustration, seeing that the Lord has sent our affliction that we might grow.
2. We look to grow in our love for God.
 - We want to see His beauty and perfection, His glory and majesty.
 - To have a better understating of Him and of His grace, of what He has done for us.
 - We look to have a growing delight in His holiness.
3. We feed on Christ that we might grow more like Him in our worship of God.
 - That we might worship Him better—more wholeheartedly, with more focus and attention, with more zeal and delight—more faithfulness.
 - That we might pray real prayers and that we might receive the word implanted deeply in us so that it is lived out.

- D. We look to feed on Jesus crucified that we might have more fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
1. This is the fruit of the Spirit and it comes by feeding on Christ crucified.
 2. Along with these we look to grow in our ministry to others—our true love and care for them—our service to them, our giving of ourselves and of what is ours for them.
 3. We desire to increase in our burden for the lost and in our bold and winsome witness to them of the hope that we have.

TRANS> All of these are things we seek from Jesus crucified at the table.

III. Now I want to look at four things that ought to characterise our feeding at the table.

- A. The first is hunger for Jesus crucified and these blessings I have just described.
1. I spoke to you last week about how to work up an appetite for the Lord's Supper.
 - We work up an appetite by self-examination.
 - It is part of the table to examine ourselves, and we can only do that in the Holy Spirit as we look at God's law and measure ourselves by Christ who perfectly obeyed His law.
 - If we go about this in the right way, we will see how short we come and we will hunger for deliverance from our sin into new life.
 - But our examination must not stop with the examination of ourselves.
 2. We must also examine Christ Himself.
 - We must also look upon Christ as crucified and examine how sufficient He is to be our Saviour—how worthy and how able to save us by His cross.
 - When we see our need together with His sufficiency and willingness to meet our need, it will make us very hungry to feed upon Him for new life.
 - We will come to the table with appropriate hunger.
- B. The second thing we should bring to the table is gratitude.
1. How can we come, discerning afresh that Christ was delivered up for our sins, and not be filled with gratitude?
 - With gratitude to the Father for sending His only begotten Son to save us.
 - And with gratitude to the Son for condescending the way He did and coming in our flesh to represent us—and then for going all the way to the shameful and cursed death of the cross for us.
 2. We should be thankful for the access we have to Christ crucified.
 - There He is in the bread and the wine—held out to us to eat and drink so as to show us that He, as sacrificed, is held out to us to feed upon.
 - He is dead for us and He is alive for us.
 3. We see Jesus giving thanks at the table for the bread and the wine—much more for what they represent—the sacrifice of Himself that reconciles us to God when we were enemies—
 - How can we not give thanks from the bottom of our hearts?

- There is good reason that the Supper is sometimes called the *Eucharist* from the Greek word that means to give thanks.

TRANS> And thanksgiving, when it is real, will lead to the third thing we ought to bring to the Lord's Table:

C. A renewal of our resolution to serve the Lord.

1. Let us keep in mind that the Lord has done all of this that we might serve Him forever in His house.
 - That is the outcome that He desires.
 - He had no interest in forgiving us and receiving us only that we might continue to live in rebellion against Him as our God.
 - The whole reason He went to the cross was to restore us to the Father.
2. This being so, we should cast off our sin and set our face toward obedience and dedicated service to our God.
 - We must resolve that by His grace and enablement, we will serve Him faithfully all the days of our lives.
 - We must resolve that we will present our bodies as a living sacrifice—considering that for us He has given Himself as a sacrifice to the point of a shameful, cursed death.
3. Besides all that as an obligation, we should resolve to serve Him as the way to true happiness and joy forever.
 - What is better than to be caught up in our service to Him?
 - Is that not what the hope heaven is? That we will be with God as our God whom we will perfectly serve forever?
 - Each time we come to feed upon Christ, let us freshly renew our resolve to pour out our lives for Him.

D. The fourth thing is hope in the full coming of Christ's kingdom.

1. Jesus sets this hope before His disciples in verse 25 where Jesus says.
 - **Mark 14:25: "Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."**
 - He is not speaking of the eating and drinking He did with them after He arose from the dead.
 - He is speaking of drinking the festal cup at the Messianic banquet at the last day—at the marriage supper of the Lamb when we are gathered to Him at the last day.
2. He is here in this present time to spiritually nourish us (as He shows us at the table) to preserve us and prepare us for the ultimate blessing at the last day.
 - At that last day, He gathers us to Himself even from our graves to be with Him forever in the presence of His Father that we might see the glory He had with the Father before the world began.
 - He redeems our bodies so that they are immortal and free of all infirmity.
 - He redeems the earth so that the curse is removed from it forever.
 - And He casts Satan and all who are in league with him, both angels and men, into the Lake of Fire.

- And He perfects us in holiness forever.

TRANS> Come to the table with all four of these things—hunger, thanksgiving, resolve to serve the Lord, and hope in His return.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is meant to be a very simple ordinance.

- Simple bread, simple wine to represent Christ who was sacrificed for us.
- Eating it by the people in His church to show that all our blessing comes from Christ who was crucified for us.
- This is the way that Christ has appointed to refresh our faith in Him crucified as the source of every spiritual blessing.