

# Jesus Prepares His Disciples for His Death

Matthew 26:26-35

*Halifax: 18 March 2007*

## **Introduction:**

The Lord's Supper has become a very regular part of our worship at Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church.

- It was about three years ago that we switched from monthly to weekly communion after I preached a four part series on communion from Luke 22.
  - Some of you who were not with us in those days might be interested in listening to that series—it can be found on our web site.

As we come to Matthew's account of the Lord's Supper in our morning sermon series this week,

- I do not intend to go into all the detail I went into four years ago.
  - As I am expounding Matthew, I want to focus in particular on what Matthew presents to us in his account.
  - While Luke mentions the command of our LORD Jesus to "Do this in remembrance of Me" which,
    - if we bring out the tense that is used may be translated,
      - "Keep doing this in remembrance of Me,"
    - Matthew omits this.
      - His omission tends to put the focus on the disciples at the moment rather than on the Lord's Supper as a future aspect of public worship.
      - This has a way of drawing our attention to what the Lord's Supper meant (and should have meant) to the disciples on the night it was instituted—
      - This should lead us to consider what it means to us in the context of our lives when we come to partake.
- In Matthew, you can see how Jesus was preparing His disciples for His suffering and death.
  - He was showing them, just before the fact, precisely what the horrendous events that they were going to witness over the next 16 hours or so were all about.
  - Though they did not understand, the explanation was there for them...
    - And because it is recorded in God's word, it is there not only for the disciples, but also for us—written for our edification.

- It is therefore my intent this morning to bring this marvellous instruction of our LORD Jesus Christ on the night He was betrayed to bear upon you...
  - to show you how it pertains and applies to you.
  - My prayer is that God will speak into your life so that you will benefit from what Jesus spoke into His disciples' lives with reference to the Holy Supper...

TRANS> And so first of all, I want you to see...

### **I. The Lord's Supper as an aid to your faith**

- It is given as a help to your faith...
  - and that in two ways...
    - A. First, it is an aid to your faith because it points you to Christ crucified as the object of your faith.
      - 1. The very fact that Jesus took bread and said, "this is my body,"
        - and wine and said
          - "this is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many,"
        - showed His disciples that the death He was about to die,
          - was going to be a death that was a sacrificial offering for sin.
      - a. The disciples, of course, were quite familiar with such sacrificial offerings.
        - On that very night,
          - they were seated with the LORD to celebrate the Passover.
        - The Passover was that great event in the history of Israel when God had accepted the offering of a lamb in place of Israel's first born sons.
        - In Jesus' day, Josephus tells us that some 250,000 lambs were slain within a two hour period in preparation for the celebration of the Passover.
      - b. In these offerings, the body and blood of the sacrificial victim were separated.
        - Before they were offered to God,
          - the blood was poured out to show the pouring out of the life in place of those for whom it was offered.
          - If each of these animals had a gallon of blood, this would be enough to fill three 30 by 60 foot standard swimming pools.
        - All that blood was there to say that the wages of sin is death,
          - and that death must occur to atone for the sins of God's people.

- What death that would be was still a mystery yet to be revealed, but that there must be a substitutionary death was clear.
- c. And so it was that when Jesus took bread and said, “This is my body,” and then took a cup of wine and said, “This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for the remission of sins,”
- He was separating the body and the blood as was done with sacrifices.
    - It was, or at least should have been, crystal clear to the disciples that He was going to be that sacrifice that takes away sin...
      - He was going to be offered up as a sacrificial victim for the sins of His people.
  - He was declaring plainly that His death has a purpose...
    - It was not to be the result of His enemies finally catching up to Him...
    - It was a deliberate offering of Himself as a sacrifice to atone for sin.
    - It was God the Father striking His own Son with His dreadful curse that we, the sinful human race, had brought down on us by our sins.
      - It was an act of marvellous mercy and incomprehensible love.
2. This teaches you a very important lesson...namely,
- a. That not just the person of Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ crucified is to be the object and centre of your faith!
- If you would be reconciled to God, you must not only believe in Jesus Christ, but you must believe in Jesus Christ crucified for sin.
  - You ought to believe that He is kind and powerful and full of love and mercy...
    - that is all well and good—
    - but you cannot be saved unless you look to Him as the one who was offered as a sacrifice to take away your sin.
      - You must look to Him as the One who bore the wrath and curse of God that we ignited by our sin!
- b. You need to ask yourself this morning,
- Is Christ crucified the object of my faith?
    - Am I trusting in the general benevolence of God as I understand it,
      - or am depending on the Lamb of God that was slain to take away the sin of the world?
  - As a minister of the gospel, I declare to you in the name of the LORD,

- that if you are only trusting in the general benevolence of God,
- you are still under God's condemnation and will remain so until you put your trust in Christ crucified.
  - That is what the Lord's Supper teaches you to do—to put your trust in Him and to keep it there!
  - There is nothing else to trust in.
    - Nothing else can take away your sin.

TRANS> So you see then that the Lord's Supper is an aid to your faith because it sets before you under the symbols of bread and wine Christ crucified as the object of your faith.

- It shows you to trust in Him as the one sacrificed for sin.

B. Secondly, the Lord's Supper is an aid to your faith because it makes visible His ongoing invisible work in you.

1. There is action in the Lord's Supper on our part...
  - a. We are called to take and eat, to take and drink.
    - In this way Jesus makes visible to us something invisible:
      - the fact that He is the source of our spiritual nourishment to whom we must continually resort.
  - b. He gives us something we understand quite well in our daily lives...
    - Eating and drinking.
      - We all know that without food and drink, we would soon die.
      - Jesus is showing us that without receiving the life and the cleansing that comes from His sacrifice,
        - we will die spiritually.
        - Our life in communion with God will terminate.
        - He is showing us that He is our food and drink.
  - c. You need this visual reminder because you can't see His life-giving power strengthening you and His cleansing blood being applied to you...
    - By making it visible to us that He is our source of spiritual food and drink, it encourages us to keep on looking to Him—
      - to make sure that we are feeding on Him.
      - With these visual signs connected to His promise that His body and blood are given for you,
        - He gives you confidence that He really does provide you with essential nourishment and cleansing through His sacrifice.

2. Now I want you to take a moment to think about the bread and wine separately...
  - a. The bread represents Christ crucified to nourish us.
    - 1) Nourishment is **not** something that happens all at once...
      - a) God sometimes brings radical changes in our lives—
        - sometimes we have marvellous conversion experiences...
        - sometimes we have those times when God radically gets hold of us and turns the light on.
          - But this is not the regular way of His working in our lives.
      - b) The bread teaches you rather to look to the Lord Jesus crucified as that which you must ingest over time...
        - It teaches you that growth comes for you in the same way it comes to your physical bodies.
        - Just as you eat every day, so you must feed upon Christ every day.
          - You must come to His word, you must pray, you must sit under the regular preaching of His word...
          - You can't see such growth as it occurs—
            - you can't actually see Christ putting life into you...
              - but the Lord's Supper allows you to see it symbolically.
      - 2) This is so important to understand!
        - So often I see people waiting for God to zap them with new life!
          - They are looking to get stirred up at some meeting or some spiritual event...
          - They want their children to be converted at summer camp...
        - But the Lord's Supper teaches you to rely on Christ day after day, week after week, year after year...
          - the same way you rely on food to keep you physically alive.
          - That is how real lasting growth occurs!
            - No one would think of sending their child to some great feast a couple of times of year in hopes that they would get what they need to grow!
            - You feed them a little each day, and that is what causes real lasting solid growth.
        - At creation, God called oak trees into being all at once...
          - He is able to do this!

- but in His ordinary providence, He raises up oak trees from acorns, nourishing them up... imperceptibly.
  - He changes them day after day, week after week, year after year—and how great the change is at last!
  - You cannot actually see the growth if you earnestly watch the tree all day,
    - but if you come back after twenty years, what a change!
  - But you need encouragement from God to know that He is working...
    - And so He makes the feeding of Christ to you visible in the bread that we receive at the Lord's Table.
    - In this way He says to you...
      - Keep on looking to Christ to nourish you—He is nourishing you—do not despair—if you are feeding on Him, change will come—you will grow.
- 3) Do you know one of the reasons why the early church had the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis and why we do now?
- It's because we so easily forget that our nourishment comes from Christ crucified unless it is made visible to us.
  - What happens when you hear a convicting sermon about your duty?
    - You think,
      - “Oh, I'm such a failure—I've got to try harder.”
      - I suppose that's true enough...you are a failure and you do need to try harder...
  - But there is something much more important you need to do...
    - You must remember that Christ crucified is there to nourish you...
    - At the Lord's Table He calls to you and says, “Take, eat, this is my body, given for you!”
      - You can try harder, but what you need for real and lasting change is to feed on Jesus Christ!
      - He is the bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world and unless you feed on Him, you will die.
        - He, by virtue of His death, gives His Spirit to all who ask, and the Spirit is the one who gives you strength to live a new life for God's glory.

- b. Now let's look at the wine...
- 1) The wine, of course, represents the blood of Jesus, the blood of the covenant that Jesus shed for the remission of our sins.
    - By giving us this symbol week after week, the Lord Jesus reminds us that we must continually look to Him for the forgiveness of our sin.
      - Justification indeed is complete at conversion—from the moment you put your trust in the Lord.
      - But those who are justified still sin...
        - And because we still sin, we need to continually look to Christ crucified for our forgiveness.
        - Not only do we commit actual sin, but we also find that our sinful nature has not been eradicated.
  - 2) The wine we drink teaches us to look to Christ alone for our forgiveness.
    - In giving to us, there is a pledge that the blood He shed is there for us to cleanse us as we are those who continually trust in Him.
      - It is a visual reminder we need that Jesus crucified and He alone is the source of cleansing.
  - 3) When you drink the wine of the LORD's Supper and you hear the words, "this is the my blood of the New covenant, shed for the remission (or forgiveness) of the sins of many,"
    - it calls you back to your confidence in God's promise in Christ!
      - "The blood of Christ was shed for me!"
      - "Surely the death of God's very own Son is sufficient to atone for my sins!"
      - "I will look to Him for my cleansing!"
  - 4) How good it is to be brought back to Christ—to be reminded!
    - a) Too often, you try to deal with your sin by avoiding God—trying to hide from him...
      - but at the table you are told
        - "Stop that you fool!"
        - "You cannot hide from God and you need hide...
          - Christ has died and his blood is able to cleanse you...
          - Come to Him and receive God's forgiveness."

- b) And then there are those times when beat yourself up and feel that you must do penance...
  - Your service to God is done out of guilt rather than gratitude...
    - I must do this or the LORD will be angry—and worse still—I must do this because He is angry.
  - Well, the Lord is angry with sin...
    - But at the Lord’s Table, He reminds us that Christ is crucified for us and that by receiving His blood we are cleansed.
    - “This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for the remission of your sins.”
      - This blood is well able to cleanse you from all defilement so that you can render cheerful service to God out of gratitude instead of doleful service out of guilt.

TRANS> And so you see that the Lord’s Supper is an aid to your faith...

- it points you to the object of faith which is Christ crucified...
- and it makes visible to you His ongoing work of nourishing and cleansing so that you will look to Him day after day as you go on for the Lord.
- Having seen the Lord’s Supper as an aid to your faith, I now want you to see...

## **II. The Lord’s Supper as an assurance to your hope...**

- It is all too easy for us to lose hope as we go on in the Christian life...
  - and one of the reasons for this is that we have misplaced expectations...
    - And so for our well being,

### **A. Christ teaches you at His table to expect the cross before glory...**

1. You know how the disciples were—
  - a. All along they kept thinking that Christ was going to set up His kingdom of glory at any moment!
    - They thought that He would destroy the Romans,
      - and that they would be seated on thrones ruling over the house of Israel,
    - and that Israel would rule the whole world.
  - b. They certainly had high hopes,
    - but their hopes were false hopes that kept being disappointed.
    - They were not hoping in what God had promised—



- it was their misguided *interpretation* of His promises,
    - but it was **not** His promises.
  - And now as Jesus was moving toward the cross,
    - He knew that His disciples were headed for the greatest disappointment of all.
    - In their minds, it would seem like the kingdom had completely failed.
2. But when Jesus instituted the Lord's Table Jesus, He called them to reality about their false hopes—as He calls us to reality about our false hopes!
- a. We have seen that He told them plainly that He was going to be offered up as a sacrificial offering for sin—that his blood was going to be poured out.
    - Then, in verse 29,
      - He goes on to tell them that this is going to cause a physical separation between Him and them—
      - He tells them that He will no longer eat with them (or drink wine with them) until the kingdom of God is fully come.
  - b. Consider that up until now, the disciples had been with Jesus and He had revealed Himself as the one who abolishes our misery.
    - While He was with them,
      - He had healed all their diseases...
      - He had multiplied bread and wine when they were out...
      - He had calmed storms and even raised the dead.
  - c. But now, at the supper, Jesus tells them that He is going to be removed from them physically.
    - He is going to the cross to be crucified...
      - And, as He had told them in Matthew 24, after He is gone, there will be years and years of tribulation for them—
        - Remember that he even told them that many of them would die in His service!
    - While He was bodily present, sickness and death were abolished!
      - But now He Himself would be crucified
        - and from that day onward it would be their lot to suffer for His sake...
          - They would now enter into the fellowship of His sufferings...
          - Jesus would no longer be sitting at the table, drinking wine

with them.

3. Oh Christian, do not have false hopes about what it means to serve Jesus in this world or you will be discouraged and frustrated!
  - a. Many who come to follow Christ think they will have less affliction in this world, but Jesus promises us persecution and tribulation in this world!
    - He tells you not to be surprised if all men hate you!
    - Persecution shows that you belong to Him—for He says,
      - as they have persecuted me, so they will persecute you!
      - Don't be discouraged when it comes...
        - You are having fellowship with Christ in His sufferings!
        - It has been given to you not only to believe, but also to suffer for Him.
  - b. This is not the time to have physical fellowship with Christ...
    - It is the time to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings...
      - to be mocked because you believe God made the world...
      - to be hated because you affirm that sexual immorality is wicked...
      - to be despised because you believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation.
  - c. When you come to the Lord's Table,
    - He guides you away from these false hopes...
      - He presents Himself as crucified and calls you to enter into His sufferings now...
      - He teaches you not to expect His physical presence that abolishes death and suffering, but to expect a cross.

TRANS> In this way, He steers you away from false hope at the table...

- but that is not all He does!
    - He also establishes your true hope!
- B. He also assures you that you will enjoy His physical presence at the end—and for all eternity!
1. He says,
    - “I will not I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on **until** that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”
    - Everything hinges on that word “until!”

- The day is coming when our gracious Lord will be physically present to us in a fresh new way!
  - We will sit at the table with Him and drink wine with Him and He will abolish death and suffering and tribulation of every kind!
    - There will be no more sorrow and no more shortages.
    - We will share with Him in His glorious inheritance!
2. While He walked in this world He showed us how He chases away the curse and its effects whenever He is bodily present...
- Sickness and death and hunger could not remain when He was present in Galilee and Judah...
  - All who came to Him were healed...
    - But in His Father's Kingdom, we shall forever be with our LORD.
    - These things will be completely taken away for all eternity and we will have blessed peace.

C. So what is the point here?

1. The point is that when you come to the Lord's Table and Jesus presents to you His body and blood—Himself as crucified for you,
- rejoice that His sacrifice has purchased an inheritance for you in His Father's Kingdom of Glory!
  - Set your hope on the promise that you who believe will one day sit down with Christ to drink wine with Him in that glorious Kingdom where there will be no more death and no more sorrow...
2. But know that before you get to that kingdom, there will be much tribulation...
- You must take up your cross and follow the LORD.
    - You will not have to bear the full weight of God's wrath and curse as Jesus did—it would take you all eternity to do so—and He has born it for you...
    - But you are called to suffer with Him now and to tread the path that He has trod.
  - This world does not look kindly on our Lord and so, if you are like Him, you will suffer here.
    - But know that your sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed which you will at last share with Christ!

TRANS> Jesus' disciples did not think He should have to suffer...

- Neither did they think they should have to suffer...

- They were dead wrong...
  - Jesus told them, but they did not receive it!
- Do not make the same mistake!
  - Your Lord has told you that now is the time of the cross—glory will come at later...
  - He tells you this every time you come to the Table and remember His sufferings for you.
    - Believe Him or you will stumble.

And this leads us to our third point this morning...

### **III. I want you to see the Lord's Supper as a test of your allegiance.**

- A. Jesus knew good and well that though He had spoken very plainly and had told His disciples that He was going to be offered up as a sacrifice,
- His disciples had not yet received this...
    1. And so He tells them that they are going to stumble—
      - He tells them that they are going to be offended because of Him that very night.
        - a. Look at verse 31?
          - He says:
            - v. 31: All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'
        - b. God the Father was going to strike His Son...
          - He was going to make His soul an offering for sin...
          - His wrath and judgement were going to come upon Him...
          - He was going to be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.
          - He would be stricken for the transgression of His people.
        - c. Jesus had told His disciples that He was to be offered up in this way,
          - but His words had gone right past them.
            - He had told them what ought to have prepared them for His death, but they were not at all prepared!

- And because they were not prepared, they were going to stumble when these troubles came about.

2. What is it that made them stumble?

a. Was it merely that they were cowards? that they were afraid of the chief priests and their armies and their courts?

- I don't think so!
  - The disciples insisted that they were prepared to die for Him—they meant that they were ready to fight even to the death...
  - They would have gone to battle for Christ if there had been ten thousand troops that had come to arrest Him...
  - It was true!
    - You know how Peter drew His sword and began to fight, cutting off the right ear of the servant of the high priest—a man of very high rank!

1) But he stumbled because Jesus did not fight!

- Instead, He told Peter to put away his sword!
- Even though He **told** them that He was going to give His body a sacrifice and pour out His blood for the remission of the sins of many,
  - when He set out to do it...
  - when He went to the cross without a fight when they knew He had power to fight...
  - it made them stumble...
    - In their minds, it wasn't supposed to happen this way!

2) And so, just as Jesus predicted, they all stumbled... even Peter, the boldest of them all!

- Things often don't go the way we think they should in our service to God...
  - the cross surprises us and we struggle because God doesn't seem to do anything...
  - We don't realise that the cross is what He is doing!

b. But let's go a little deeper—what made them stumble?

1) Well, it was the same thing that makes every sinner stumble—the cross!

- The very idea that the Son of God should die!
- The very idea that He should have to die!

- 2) You see, none of us, coming from our father Adam as we do,
  - is naturally disposed to think our sin to be a very big deal...
  - Oh yes, it's there, but God ought surely to be big enough to over look it.
  - It can even make Peter say, when He first caught a glimpse of the glory of Christ,
    - "Depart from me for I am a sinful man."
    - Sure, many of us can see our sin...
  
- 3) But to say that our sin is so serious that the only way of pardon is through the death of God's only begotten Son is quite another matter!
  - "You mean to tell me that God can do nothing with us but send us to Hell unless God's Son offer Himself to die in our place?"
  - "Do you mean to say that that is true of my dear sweet loving grandmother?"
  - "Do you mean to say that that is true of a little baby that was just born?"
    - And really—the real question—
      - "Do you mean to say that that is true of me?"
        - "That God can have nothing to do with **me** unless His Son be offered up in my place?"
        - "Do you mean to say that I am that corrupt in God's eyes?"
  
- c. This is what the disciples had not yet come to fully accept.
  - 1) This was the glorious truth that was yet to be revealed under the New Covenant after Jesus had suffered and been raised again!
  - 2) The glory of God's perfect justice, of His awesome vengeance, of His great grace to provide His Son for sinners...
    - All these glorious truths were yet to be revealed to the disciples and to the whole church!
      - They had been revealed in a shadowy way through the Old Testament worship,
      - But at the cross, they were to be revealed in all their fullness!
  - 3) And now these glorious truths **have** been revealed!
    - After Jesus arose,
      - the disciples all saw it and the worshipped—and they forth to gladly suffer in this world for Christ.

- And now you must also believe in the glory of God revealed by the cross!
  - To be reconciled to God now, in these New Testament times, you **must** believe in the glory of the cross or you cannot be saved.
- Now that Jesus has actually offered Himself and been raised up again,
  - there is no place for the ignorance that the disciples had before His death and resurrection.
  - Those who are yet ignorant are not yet reconciled to God.

B. And so you see, the test of your allegiance is right here at the Lord's Table!

1. You must not come away from this Table the way the disciples did...
  - What were they thinking?
  - They should have been thinking...
    - "Our gracious Lord is going to willingly offer Himself up as a sacrifice for our sins."
  - But it seems that instead they were thinking about how they would boldly fight for Him even to the point of death.
    - They were thinking about what **they** would do instead of about what He had just been telling them that **He** would do.
2. There are many baptised Christians who do exactly the same kind of thing today...
  - a. They come from the Table where Christ has just been revealed as crucified,
    - and they see nothing more than a moral example to be followed...
    - They see a man so committed to the cause of goodness and justice that He was willing to die...
    - And they are inspired to do the same!
      - "Lord," they say, "We are willing even to die for you."
      - And they mean it! They are!
    - But these persons have not grasped what Christ has done for them!
      - He's not just an example—
        - He's an offering to take away your sin!
      - It's not first of all about what **you** will do for Him,
        - it's about what **He** has done for you!

- And until you start trusting in Him as crucified for you, you stumble at the cross...
  - You are offended with God's way of salvation...
  - And as long as you remain offended at the way of salvation,
    - you cannot be saved.
  
- b. And then there are others who come from the Table where Christ has just been revealed as crucified,
  - and instead of being excited about what they are going to do, they are excited about what they have just done!
    - Of course I don't mean to say you shouldn't be excited about having come to the Lord's Table, but I mean that is all they are concerned about.
  - For them, the mere act of coming to the table is something they have done for salvation...
    - They suppose that by ingesting the bread and drinking the wine, everything will be taken care of...
    - They have faith in the sign rather than in the thing signified—
      - faith in the bread and wine rather than in Christ crucified...
      - faith in the priest at the altar rather than faith in Christ the only High Priest who offered Himself for our sins two thousand years ago.
  - Again such persons stumble at the cross...
    - They are trusting in their act of coming to the church and eating at the table instead of in Christ who is presented at the table!
    - If this is the case with you, then you too need to repent.
      - You too are offended with God's way of salvation and as long as you remain so, you cannot be saved.

TRANS> But look at what our Lord does for such persons!

- C. He gathers you and makes you allegiant to Him if you are His chosen ones.
1. This is His gracious promise to His eleven disciples, and in principle it applies to you too if you are His elect!
    - a. Look at verse 32:
      - He says:
        - v. 32: "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."
    - b. They are **all** going to stumble and Jesus knows it—



- but He schedules a meeting with them in Galilee!
  - Of course He makes some surprise appearances to them after His resurrection,
    - but here He schedules a meeting with them in Galilee...
  - A meeting after His resurrected which resurrection He speaks of as a certainty!
    - Then they will understand that His offering was made and they will accept it even as the Father will have accepted it...
    - Then they will believe and will put all their trust in Him alone as the One from Heaven who was crucified for them...
    - Then they will go forth, not to obtain salvation, but in the power of His saving grace which they will receive by faith...
      - They will go forward as those who are nourished by Him crucified and cleansed the shedding of His blood.
      - They will have communion in His body and blood.
2. This is what Jesus does for you also if you are His chosen one...
- a. He gathers you to Himself and He shows you Himself resurrected... having triumphed over your sins!
    - having abolished death and defeated Satan and having broken the bonds of the cruse for you!
  - b. He opens your eyes to see the glorious things He has done!
    - And instead of stumbling, you believe!
      - Instead of relying on what you do, you rely on what He has done!
      - And so He feeds you His flesh and cleanses you with His blood and you move forward for Him in the joyful fellowship of His sufferings until that day when comes again and brings you to glory.

## **Conclusion**

Brothers and sisters, this is the One who is presented to you every time you come to the Lord's Table—His Table!

- He calls you to look to Him as the One who was crucified for you and so is the only source of life and salvation.
- It is by Him that you will be brought to glory.
  - Joyfully rest in Him, crucified for you, and you will never stumble!