

Communing with Christ, His Earnest Desire

Luke 22:1-23

Halifax: 4 January 2004

Introduction

What makes for a happy wife?

- It is a wife's delight to have a husband she truly respects and admires who longs to have communion with her...
 - "Communion" in the fullest sense of that Word...
 - In the sense of a joyful exchange between persons...
 - A husband who desires to give himself to her for her happiness and good...
 - He wants to provide for her with food and clothing and pleasant things to adorn her and to adorn the house...
 - He wants to provide her with companionship and security...
 - He wants to provide her with comfort and assurance of his love...
 - He wants to provide her with wise counsel and spiritual nourishment.
 - But He also is a husband who delights in her...
 - He rejoices in her loving response to him...
 - He delights in her purity and fidelity...
 - He rejoices in her beauty and security with him...
 - He rejoices to see her blessed and happy.

Christian, I am delighted to declare to you that you have such a husband!

- You who have received the Lord Jesus Christ are His bride!
 - And I gladly proclaim to you that He is eager to commune with you—
 - As the very Son of God, He delights in giving Himself to you—
 - And oh how much He has to give!
 - And not only that,
 - But then, after He gives you His fullness...
 - Then He delights in you—
 - He rejoices in the new life He has given you.

And He longs to keep up this sweet communion with you forever!

- I had originally planned to preach on Luke 22 today to start off the New Year with the focus of communing with Christ.
- But I found that there was so much to say on this that I have decided to do a whole series on it...
 - So this will be our series on the first Sunday of the month for the next three or four months.
 - Next Sunday, I will resume our series in Matthew,
 - but then on February 1, we will look at again at communing with Christ.

Today, I want to begin this series by showing you that Jesus earnestly desires to commune with His Church.

I. Christian, Jesus has called us to come and commune with Him each Lord's Day.

A. Now I know that some you will say...

- "Each Lord's Day!"
- "I want to commune with Him every day!"

1. I appreciate your zeal!

a. And you are right,

- He does call us to the morning and evening sacrifice.
 - We ought to be diligent to set aside time for prayer and meditation on God's word each day—
 - both privately and with the members of our household...

b. In the Garden of Eden, God met with Adam each day to commune with him in the cool of the day...

- But even then there was one day of the week set apart from the other six that was—
 - a day that God blessed...
 - a day that was made for man to commune with God...
 - a day that he was freed from his other responsibilities to devote the whole day to communion with God.

2. I am talking about the special communion that God calls you to on that day!

- On the other six days, you are to live out that communion in devoted service to God and neighbour...
- Those other six days are primarily devoted to your labour for God—

- But every seventh day, you are to refrain from labour and commune with God.
- As Leviticus 23:3 says:
 - Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work *on it*; it *is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.
 - It is a day for the public worship of God,
 - a day that Christ has set aside to meet with us in order that He might nourish us spiritually with all His benefits!

3. Now you cannot see this feeding upon Christ actually occurring—

- And that is why Christ has given us bread and wine representing His body and blood.
- In this way He pledges to us that He is nourishing us,
 - He gives us a sign to show us what is he is doing to encourage us to look to Him for all we need.

B. In Luke 22:19-20, Jesus institutes the communion service (the Lord’s Supper) for His people under the New Covenant.

1. When He said,

- “Do this in remembrance of Me,”
 - a. He was obviously referring to more than that particular meeting he was having with His disciples on that night!
 - 1) Luke uses the present imperative here...
 - This refers to something that is to be done continuously—
 - “Keep doing this in remembrance of Me,” is the idea.
 - 2) And besides that,
 - The men Jesus is speaking to could not remember Him as the one who had shed His blood for them yet...
 - He had not done that yet.

TRANS> It is clear that Jesus was instituting the Lord’s Supper for the days that would follow His crucifixion.

b. Jesus was talking to the men that He had chosen to establish the Church under the New Covenant...

- 1) It was to them that He had given the plan of how God was to be worshipped now that He, their Messiah had come!
 - And so in commanding that this communion supper be done in remembrance of Him...
 - Jesus was giving a command to the whole Church.
 - It was something the apostles received and were to pass on to all of us.

- 2) When we look to see how they carried out this command...
 - It seems pretty clear that it was something they did as a regular part of worship along with preaching of the word.
 - a) In Acts 2:42, the church under their leadership is said to have...
 - “continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers.”
 - These are the things that were done when the Church gathered for public worship.
 - But “the breaking of the bread” surely refers to the Lord’s Supper.
 - There are several reason for saying this...
 - First, because it is joined with these other acts of public worship...
 - Secondly, because Jesus had instituted it for public worship...
 - Thirdly, because it wouldn’t make much sense to say:
 - “they continued steadfastly in eating” if eating is all that is meant by breaking of bread here.
 - Fourthly, because the definite article is used—it is not merely “breaking of bread,”
 - but **the** breaking of **the** bread—
 - not just bread, but **the** bread.
 - b) Although in Acts 2, the Church met daily,
 - It should be remembered that this was during a time when everyone had come up to Jerusalem for a feast—
 - They were away from their regular responsibilities and took advantage of the time to sit at the apostle’s feet and learn more about Jesus.

- Acts 20 shows us what the churches did when they were established in a regular cycle,
 - Acts 20:7: says that they came together weekly to break bread on the first day of the week.
 - It refers to this practice as customary when it says:
 - “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them.”
 - He waited until Sunday when they met to break bread and preached to them at this assembly.
 - By the apostle’s authority,
 - the churches under their care began to consecrate the first day of the week because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead...
 - And this makes perfect sense...
 - Because as we shall see shortly,
 - the great thing now to be celebrated in our public worship is God’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice for His people’s sins...
 - That acceptance was declared on the first of the week when He was raised from the dead!
 - In New Testament worship, we are to rejoice in His resurrection as God’s new creation!
- c) The early church fathers show this same practice in their writings as well.
- Justin Martyr (who died in 165) describes the weekly meetings of the church in this way:
 - “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people ascent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given.”

TRANS> Now that we, at Covenant Reformed Presbyterian, are an organised congregation,

- the elders are desirous to conform to the apostolic practice of weekly communion.
- I say these things now to let you know the scriptural basis for this change that will soon be enacted.
- We will inform you when the change is actually made.

2. Why does Jesus want this supper to be done so often in His Church?

a. Well, just as He says, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”

1) Jesus, of course, was getting ready to go away to be with the Father...

- His body was to be spatially removed from His church on earth...
- He would no longer be walking around with us and eating and drinking with us.
- But I don't think this really gets at the real reason He wants to be remembered.

2) What He wants us to remember is what He did for us!

a) He wants us to remember that one great act of His by which our destiny was changed forever!

- He wants us to remember how He gave Himself as a sacrifice for us!

b) Look at the language!

- Giving us bread, He says,
 - “This is my body which is given for you!”
 - And giving us the cup He says,
 - “This is the New Covenant in my blood which is shed for you.”
- The language is clearly that of a sacrifice—
 - His body was **given** for us and His blood was **shed** for us.
- And notice that in both cases He says “for you.”
 - He is telling us, His people, that He was sacrificed for us!
 - That is why He tells us to eat it—
 - because it is for us, it is for our benefit!

b. We desperately need Christ crucified...

- 1) We need Him sacrificed because we have all participated in the rebellion of the human race against God.
 - It has little to do with whether you are nice to other people or whether you try to do good in the world...
 - The real problem is that the whole human race rejected God as our Lord and Master.
 - We turned away from our Creator to go our own way!

- 2) Now because we have all participated in this original sin,
 - it doesn't seem all that bad to us,
 - but it is!
 - In fact,
 - it is unprovoked treason of the worst kind!

 - a) God is our Creator and He has a right to rule us—He made us for Himself.
 - And it is not right for the creature to say to His Creator,
 - “I will establish my own purpose, thank you very much!”

 - b) And that is especially the case when you consider how kind and gracious a King God is!
 - He was out for nothing but our perfection and happiness!
 - He gave us a whole world filled with rich blessings of every description.
 - He gave us companionship with each other.
 - He gave us callings to fulfil.
 - And most of all, He gave us fellowship with Himself.

 - c) For the human race to reject Him was absolutely inexcusable!
 - By this, we have upset the whole order of God's good creation and corrupted ourselves from our very purpose!
 - We have all had a part in it—
 - every last one of us

TRANS> But I still haven't really told you why we needed Jesus to give Himself as a sacrifice...

- 3) We needed Him to give Himself as a sacrifice because that is the only way we could be forgiven for our sin.
- a) God declared that rejecting Him would condemn us to death.
- And He wasn't just talking about physical death,
 - though physical death is surely included!
 - Primarily, He was talking about spiritual death that would lead to eternal death—
 - He was telling us that we would be cursed by Him and under His wrath forever....
 - that we would be separated from His favour and under His judgement for all eternity.
- b) But Jesus is the Son of God...
- And in His great love, God sent Him to come to us in human flesh...
 - To come and live among us as one who was totally dedicated to God and without sin...
 - To live among us as what a human being ought to be...
 - And then to give Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.
 - Remember before I said that the penalty of sin is eternal death?
 - Well Jesus suffered the pain of eternal Hell on the cross.
 - He bore the penalty for our sin!
 - He did this so that His Church might be forgiven!
 - As a sacrifice, He took our place.
 - He was punished instead of us.
- c) Do you see what amazing, marvellous love Jesus has for His Church?
- Such love that He was willing to give Himself as a sacrifice!
 - Is it any wonder that He wants His Church to forever remember His body that was given for us and His blood that was shed for us?
 - This is what reverses our whole destiny!
 - We were destined to spend eternity under God's wrath and judgement!
 - Now we are destined to spend eternity under His favour and blessing!

II. And so now that Jesus has come, the focus of every worship service ought to be on Christ crucified for us and the communion we have Him.

A. Jesus is going out into all the world to gather His elect into the church in order that they might commune with Him in the sacrifice He made for them!

1. Last week, we looked at Psalm 22 where we have the words of Jesus on the cross recorded for us in full.

- Let's look at the Psalm again for a minute...

a. The first 21 verses show Jesus bearing God's curse because our sin...

- He is in great agony and He cries out for God to deliver Him...

- He is asking God to accept His offering for our sins!

b. And at the end of verse 21, He declares the good news!

- **"You have heard me!"**

- After that the whole psalm turns from grief to joy!

- God's anger toward the church's sins has been appeased!

- Jesus our sacrifice has been fully accepted!

2. And what does Jesus do then?

- He makes a promise to God in verse 22.

a. First He says, "I will declare your name to my brethren,"

- His brethren are, of course, His Church.

1) And what will He declare to them?

- He will declare that God has accepted His sacrifice for us!

- That is what verse 24 is getting at when it says that God has

- "not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted..."

- He has accepted his suffering for our forgiveness!

2) How does Jesus make this declaration to His Church?

- In this—

- He commands His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel—

- the good news that God has accepted His sacrifice for sin!

- His Church is to go into all the world and declare to everyone that God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice for our sins!

- And we are to give them the promise that whoever believes in Him will be saved!
- that those who are united to Christ by faith will have all the benefits of His sacrifice for sin!
- They will have communion or be sharers in His death that saves us from our sins!

TRANS> So the declaration that God has accepted His sacrifice is the first thing that Jesus promises in Psalm 22 for the Church after His resurrection...

- The second flows from that...

b. He says, "In the midst of the assembly (or church), I will praise you."

- In other words,
 - Jesus will lead the Church in praising God for accepting His sacrifice for our sins!
 - He will gather the Church in His name to give thanks to God for His great mercy to us.

c. Jesus promises to do these things,

- and He has been doing them ever since His resurrection when He was accepted as our sacrifice.
- He calls us together each week as a church and declares to us what He has done,
 - and then He leads us to praise God and give thanks to His name.
 - And so you see that remembering His death and resurrection is central to our worship in the New Testament!
 - We no longer have priests and temples and altars and sacrifices and incense...
 - Now we have the declaration of what Christ has done and the giving of thanks to God.

B. Each week, Jesus gathers us together and presents us to the Father as those who are in communion with Him!

1. And because we have communion with Jesus death for us,

- we are perfectly cleansed from all our sin!
- Jesus says,
 - "Here is my beautiful bride, she has come to sing praise to you with me!"

- And because we are in communion with Christ, our praise is pleasing and acceptable to God!
2. And He and the Father rejoice in our fruit!
 - a. Through communion with Christ,
 - we begin to bear the glorious fruits of the Spirit...
 - love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
 - b. And by bearing this fruit, the Father is glorified in us!
 - The Son and Father look at us and they rejoice in us!
 - They rejoice because they see the image of Christ being restored in us who were once ruined by the fall!
- C. And each week, we come to church to receive nourishment from our communion with Jesus.
1. Don't just come to church to get information!
 - That's not what preaching is all about!
 - Every sermon is a call to feed upon Jesus.
 - a. Did the preaching of the word call you to some duty that you are not keeping, or did the Lord put his finger on some sin in your life?
 - Then the message is, come and feed upon Jesus!
 - His body is given for you and His blood is shed for you!
 - Don't go away from preaching all discouraged and troubled—
 - You come here to remember Jesus and to commune with Him!
 - b. Did the preaching of the word set forth the glory of God—did it show you His grace and beauty?
 - Did it set you longing for fellowship with Him?
 - Then the message is the same—
 - Come and feed upon Jesus Christ—
 - it is through Him that you have fellowship with God...
 - It is through Him that you can know the Father!
2. Each week you are to conclude, "I need Jesus!"

- a. And each week you are to come to Him for all you need.
 - He is our life!
 - He is the source of salvation.
 - “This is my body, given for you,”
 - “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you.”
 - b. Don’t look to gain life from other things!
 - Don’t go away saying,
 - “I must try harder.”
 - or-- “What’s the use, I can never measure up to God’s calling.”
 - c. Don’t go looking for that one magical thing that will fix your life!
 - So many go about hoping that they will finally find:
 - the right book
 - or the right experience
 - or right psychiatrist
 - or the right weekend seminar that will fix them up!
 - That is not what you need brothers and sisters!
 - The Lord’s Supper is there to remind you that you need Christ and Him crucified!
 - You don’t just need to know about Him,
 - but you need to be nourished by Him!
 - The supper reminds you that He is there, sacrificed for you, ready to feed you and to nourish you!
 - It is not the magic moment the you are to seek...
 - It is to be nourished up on your faith week by week through communion with Jesus Christ!
3. The church’s great problem is that we forget what Jesus tells us to remember!
- We act like we have to live the Christian life on our own!
 - Oh yes, Jesus saves us initially, but then we are on our own!
 - Jesus calls us to come to Him and have communion in His body and blood.
 - He is especially pleased to meet with us when we gather for public worship...
 - He calls us together to have communion with Himself.

III. Just look at how eager He is for this communion.

A. Luke's account shows us this more than the other gospels.

1. You can see first of all how he builds up to what is coming!
 - a. v. 1
 - b. v. 7
 - c. v. 14

TRANS> But not only that...

2. Luke also relates to us how Jesus expressed His strong desire to eat with them.

- d. Jesus was probably speaking Aramaic (which is like Hebrew),
 - And in that language,
 - when a person wants to emphasise something he says it twice.
 - The NKJV does a good job at rendering this:
 - “With fervent desire I have desired.”
 - An even more literal rendering would be
 - “desiring I have desired.”
- e. This is so comforting for us.
 - Jesus was longing to eat this Passover with His disciples before He suffered.
 - He tells them that His suffering will be very soon.
 - But He desired to institute the Lord's Supper because He wanted us to remember through all the ages what He has done for us!
 - Even though He was facing the cross,
 - He was delighted that He could offer Himself to His people!
 - He looked into the ages and saw all His people who would be able to commune in His death for us!
- f. This is comforting because it reminds you that Jesus *wants* to have communion with you!
 - That is the whole reason He came—to give His life a ransom for many!
 - To lay down His life for His sheep!
 - He rejoiced in the communion He would have with us even as He faced His night of greatest horror.

TRANS> And I want you to notice something else about this!

B. Jesus wouldn't let anything get in the way of this communion with His disciples!

4. He prepared carefully to make sure that there was no interruption!
 - d. He knew that Judas was looking for an opportunity to betray Him...
 - and what better time than when He was gathered alone with His disciples to eat the Passover!
 - e. But Jesus keeps the place of meeting a secret from His disciples until the last minute...
 - Since they did not know that Judas was betraying Him,
 - He keep the place of meeting a secret from all of them except those he sent to prepare—
 - and even from them as long as they were with Judas.
 - He tells them to follow a man carrying a pitcher of water...
 - And that that man will lead them to house where they are prepare.

TRANS> Jesus went out of His way to insure that He could institute this Supper for us.

- He greatly desired to do it.
5. He also calls you to prepare each week so that nothing will hinder your communion with Him.
 - What does He call you to do to prepare?
 - a. He calls you to set aside one whole day in seven to commune with Him...
 - You are to keep the Lord's Day holy.
 - This requires planning your time around the Lord's Day.
 - You have a meeting with Jesus every week.
 - Put it on your calendar and tell your family or your friends that you already have an engagement on that day.
 - It is given for you to have sweet communion with Jesus!
 - What could be more important than that?
 - What kind of bride is it who doesn't keep her dates with her husband?
 - b. Jesus also calls us to purge out the leaven of malice and wickedness and to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
 - You can't commune with Christ if you do not love your brother!

- If you are all torn up inside with bitterness and resentment because of what others have done to you...
 - It will hinder your communion with Jesus.
- Nor can you commune with Him if you are clinging to wickedness in your life...
 - Now I hear a tender conscience saying—
 - “Then what can I do?”
 - “If I can’t come to Christ unless I come without wickedness, how can I come to Him to deliver me from my wickedness?”
 - No! No!
 - That is not what keeps you away at all!
 - It is not those sins you wish to be free from that you bring to Him to cleanse...
 - It is those you wish to hold on to—
 - When you come and say,
 - “Here Lord, I want to have communion with you...
 - only let me hold on to this sin...”
 - To you He says,
 - “Purge out the leaven,
 - then I will commune with you!”
- c. And you also prepare by coming to Him with hunger!
 - Do you know what ruins your appetite?
 - Feeding on other things—
 - If you are feeding on morality, you will not be hungry for Jesus...
 - If you are feeding on immorality, you will not be hungry...
 - If you are feeding on the praise of men, you will not be hungry...
 - If you are feeding on riches, you will not be hungry for Jesus.
 - This is spiritual adultery!
 - You are not a chaste bride for Christ!
 - He will reject you unless you repent.
 - The hungry soul that looks to Him is the one who will be satisfied!

- d. Jesus will not allow you to come and commune with Him unless you are properly prepared.
 - And He promises that if you belong to Him,
 - He will chasten you until you repent!
 - He does this because He loves you and wants to commune with you!

Conclusion

How zealous He is to commune with us!

- As a minister of the word for Him,
 - I urge you to come and commune with your husband!
 - Come and commune with Him each Lord's Day!
 - He calls you to come
 - He is eager to meet with you that He might bless you!
- Come and meet His eagerness with your own eagerness!
 - If you do,
 - I can assure you that it will be a happy meeting!
 - It will be a delight both to Him and to you!