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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

April 5, 2020

Communion Sunday

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, again as Fred said, this is a sacred time, this is our communion service and we just want to pray today that we would have the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would be guiding us, that you would be again accompanying our journey into your word so that we could be learning and growing ever deeper in our understanding of just what it is you've purchased for us at the cross. We pray especially for your Spirit's presence and we pray again that this would be of lasting value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, once again as we say each communion service it's the first Sunday of the month and this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. Jesus took bread and wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them

to repeat the remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis and this is what we called "the Lord's table." Now we celebrate it once a month by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, that is asking God's Holy Spirit who is now within us to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin, by then confessing that sin and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says this: *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, as I said, every month we get together to celebrate what we call "the Lord's table." I preach from one of the four gospels about Christ himself who is the center and the point of communion. We spent a long, long time in the gospel of John and now we're in the gospel of Mark, and we try to focus in on the life of Christ before we participate in the table that he established. Because of the virus we can't really gather as a church for communion, and so we're attempting to try to encourage families to have their own communion table this morning so that they can celebrate communion and kind of virtually come together as a church. Now I've said before, this is not church. Church is the gathering together of the brethren but this is the next best thing. And since we're not gathered here this morning, I thought it would be profitable to spend some time first focusing in on just what it is that the Lord

established with this last supper celebration. I want to explore this morning just what communion is.

And first let's just go over the back story of communion's origin. Shortly before Jesus' passion began, he gathered his disciples together for what would be a final meal. *Luke 22:14* says this, it says: *Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare a Passover for us, that we may eat it."* Verse 14 says: *And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* Now Jesus had gathered his disciples together to share a Passover meal in what would become a final symbolic transfer of the old covenant sacrificial system to the new covenant fulfillment of that sacrifice. Actually that sentence is incredibly filled with Christianese. Let me just explain. There's two main themes in the Bible, both of which are crucial to understanding who God is. The Old Testament teaches us that God is holy and that we are not. The New Testament teaches us that God so loved the world that he became one of us and died in order to give us the ability by faith to recapture that holiness and be made worthy of heaven. The Old Testament teaches us that God is perfect and that the very first

person Adam had a form of perfection that was untried and when it was tried, it collapsed in rebellion. Adam's disobedience is called "the fall" because it represents the collective fall of all of mankind from perfection. Adam represented us and when he fell, we all fell. And ever since that moment that Adam ate that fruit, we have been alienated from our creator by an imperfection that is inherited from birth and practiced by all of us. I mean it's God who says in *Romans 3:23*: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* And the difference between Christianity and virtually every other religion is that all the other religions really try to instruct you in the ways that you can make yourself worthy of God or heaven. Christianity insists that there's nothing that you can do to make yourself worthy because there's nothing that we can do that is absolutely transcendentally flawless which is God's standard of what is good. But you see, God himself recognized that impossibility. He became one of us and did what was impossible for us by living a flawless life and then by laying that life down as a ransom payment for our sin. We are now able to be made perfect, holy and complete not by our own individual efforts, but by placing our faith in the one effort undertaken for us by God himself on the cross. You see, the Old Testament is really all about establishing the holiness and the perfection of God. It's God insisting to his people that he is not like us, that he is altogether different, that he is altogether holy and that we

are not. I mean after the fall of man the divide between God and man was so great that God once told Moses whom he regarded as a friend, who he loved, that if God were to reveal himself fully to Moses, well that revelation, God tells him, would kill him. In *Exodus 33:20*, God said: *"You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live."* God did, however, tell Moses that there was a pathway to get right with God and it was through the shedding of blood of an innocent animal. And the whole point of the sacrificial system in the Old Testament was summed up in this one scripture in *Leviticus 17*. God said: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.*

And there's a reason why God insisted on animal sacrifice. This is a picture that he's painting. It's a picture that he repeated constantly of the need for innocent blood to be spilled in order for sin to be forgiven. The whole point of the picture was to set the stage for the ultimate sacrifice of the ultimate lamb. When God himself as Jesus Christ presented himself to John the Baptist, it was John the Baptist who described him, that's Jesus, as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* The Passover supper that Jesus was celebrating with his disciples was the very last picture to be painted of the sacrifice that he was about to

endure on our behalf. Jesus used the bread and the wine which was commonly consumed at a Passover supper as symbols of his own flesh and blood which he knew was about to be sacrificed in order to pay the sin debt of his sheep. And in describing in the Passover meal as a sacrifice of his flesh and blood, Jesus was connecting the original Passover in Egypt in which a lamb's blood protected the Jews from death to his Passover which he was about to enact where his own blood was once again going to protect those from death. I mean The Passover, as you probably know, was an historical remembrance of the events that took place on the night when God enacted the tenth and final plague against Egypt. It was an angel of death who descended on Egypt killing the firstborn of every household that was not protected, and the protection consisted of the blood of an innocent lamb spread over the doorposts and lintels of each household that had placed their faith in God's provision of rescue for the Jewish people. I mean the angel of death swept into Egypt and killed every one of the firstborn except those who were protected and they were protected by being under the blood of this lamb. And for years afterwards God commanded his people this way in *Exodus 12:13*, he said this: *The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you or destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your*

generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast." For hundreds of years the Jews did just that until the very night that Jesus had called for that last Passover supper, and there he announced he was going to become the fulfillment of what that Passover stood for. And as the blood of a lamb would save each family from death, so too the blood of the ultimate lamb Jesus Christ would save each person who placed their trust in him. It was no accident that as Jesus is bleeding out on the cross that the Passover lambs all over Israel were being bled out by various Jewish families.

And so we begin each communion service by re-reading the account of that last Passover supper in Matthew. This is *Matthew 26:26*. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* Jesus not only identified the bread and the wine as his body and his blood but he also asked his disciples to repeat this remembrance on a regular basis. *1 Corinthians 11* says: *And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my*

body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." And that's why we celebrate communion on a regular basis. I mean for us it's once a month. It's a regular celebration and it consists of four very distinct parts. There is preparation, there is participation, there is proclamation and finally there is provision.

So first let's look at preparation. *1 Corinthians 11* says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* Now if you have ever participated in our communion service, you know that as the communion bread is being passed out we read that warning just as I have that Paul gave us in *1 Corinthians*. I pointed out that God severely judged the Corinthian church for how disgracefully they were participating in the communion service. And again there's a back story to this. Paul was writing to the Corinthian church which had devolved the communion table into something that was absolutely disgraceful.

This is what Paul wrote. He said: *But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What? Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.* Now this warning that Paul gives seemed particularly dire, considering that Paul says that some had literally lost their lives because they disrespected the communion table. When Paul says some are weak and sick and many sleep, he's literally saying that God has stricken some with sickness and some he has killed in response to their attitude towards communion. See, the ordinance that God had established in order to honor his Son's sacrifice had been turned into dishonor, it had been turned into disgrace and God simply wouldn't have it. *Deuteronomy 4:24* says: *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.* We're reminded of a statement made by Joshua to God's people way back in the time of the original first time Passover. This is what it said: *Joshua said to the*

people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins." See God has no problem readily admitting that he is indeed a jealous God. I mean jealousy in human beings is unquestionably wrong, it's being envious of someone or something that someone else has. I mean you could argue that it falls under the rubric of one of the ten commandments, "thou shalt not covet." I mean to be jealous according to one dictionary definition is to be "feeling or showing envy of someone or their achievements and advantages." Well we know God certainly can't be accused of that definition of jealousy because in fact he claims in the very same Bible to be the author of everyone's achievements and advantages. I mean this is what he says in *James 1:17*, he says: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* But God has said that he is a jealous God. Well there is, however, another dictionary definition of the word "jealousy" that fits God far, far better. It's this: "Fiercely protective or vigilant of one's rights or possessions." Well on that count I would say God is guilty as charged. You see God's jealousy is altogether different than ours. God is a jealous God but it's due to the fact that he claims primary ownership over that which he is jealous of. And yes, he is fiercely protective and fiercely vigilant of his rights and possessions, but that includes us and it also includes

his Son. To dishonor the communion table as the Corinthian church did is to take the greatest sacrifice ever undertaken by the most sacred being in all of creation and reduce it and him to a mockery. God says in *Hebrews 10:29*: *How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Now when we're delivering the communion bread, I repeat this warning because I want folks to know, I want them to know that if you are not a child of God, if you have not placed your faith in Jesus Christ, then you really have no business participating in communion. I mean I tell folks you are literally courting disaster if you proceed if you're outside the community of believers. And so communion involves first and foremost preparation. Again, *let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* And that preparation means recognizing how incredibly important the body of Christ is to God. And again we do it by meditating on what Christ did on the cross, by examining ourselves and again we're recognizing that God's Holy Spirit now lives inside us and so we examine ourselves and in doing that we're asking God's

Spirit to convict us of sin, and then we confess our sins and then we participate in the elements. Preparation is seeking first to be forgiven and cleansed and prepared.

And next from preparation is participation. Participation has a back story as well. You see in the Old Testament God had one sacred location on the entire face of the earth in which he was willing to meet with man and that was the temple. And inside the temple, inside the Holy of Holies, inside the ark of the covenant was the presence of God, and only once a year the high priest could enter into that presence. The Holy of Holies in fact was separated from the temple by a veil that was some thirty feet high and it was made of material as thick as your hand, almost an inch. It represented the barrier that existed between a holy God and his no longer holy people. Among the miraculous things that took place at the cross was what happened to that veil the moment that Jesus completed his sacrifice. *Matthew 27:50* describes it. It says this: *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.* Well, the symbolism of that miracle was obvious. I mean the access to God once denied by sin was now by the death of the sin-bearer miraculously torn open forever. No longer would God be sequestered in the sacred Holy of Holies in the temple, God would now take up

residence in his sheep, in his people. God would now turn his people into living temples. *1 Corinthians 6:19* says: *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* You see the New Testament describes how God is now building a brand new temple and the temple consists of human beings. I mean Peter refers to us as living stones that are being used to build a brand new temple. *1 Peter 2:5* says: *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* Now being a living stone necessitates that we be joined to other stones if God is going to build this temple. And that's why the most incredibly important part of church is community.

Charles Spurgeon was the prince of preachers. He once said this to his church of thousands in London in the late 1800's. He said this: "I know there are some who say, 'Well, I've given myself to the Lord, but I don't intend to give myself to any church.' I say, 'Now why not?' And they answer, 'Because I can be just as good a Christian without it.' I say, 'Are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord's commands as by being obedient? There's a brick. What is the brick

made for? It's made to build a house. It is of no use for the brick to tell you that it's just as good a brick while it's kicking around on the ground by itself, as it would be as part of a house. Actually, it's a good-for-nothing brick. So, you rolling stone Christians, I don't believe that you're answering the purpose for which Christ saved you. You're living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live and you are much to blame for the injury you do.'" That was Charles Spurgeon. God says in *1 Corinthians 12:27*: *Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*

See the reason why I keep on insisting that this is a virtual service but it is not the church is because folks think that by simply hearing a sermon and listening to a couple of songs that that's what church is all about. And they're mistaken. I mean so many thousands of people think that on a Sunday morning you can just go into your living room and turn on the TV and do church. They can't. And here's why. Jesus said this in *John 13*, he said: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* Now Jesus gave us this command to love but he also gave us a place to showcase that love. He gave us the church for the practical outworking of that command. And by his design people from every tribe, tongue and nation, people from every different socioeconomic

background would be united by one thing and one thing only and that's their love for Jesus Christ. Because of that love they would come together in this thing called "the church," also known as the body of Christ, a brand new temple made out of living human stones, each of them housing the Holy Spirit and collectively representing just what it means to love one another not in some kind of sappy Hallmark card kind of way but in actually doing the hard work of having to love people you just might not like. That's why the communion table of the church in Corinth was such a disgrace. I mean the idea was to share a common table in which all of these different parts would come together united by their love for Christ, and instead it was an ongoing demonstration of partisanship, of one upmanship and class hatred. I mean this is a communion service that the enemy would have absolutely loved.

Again, *1 Corinthians 11*, Paul says: *When you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part.* You see instead of community there was this same loveless division that you find in the world. There was the barriers of class and race and wealth and they were just as blatant there as they were in the world. In what must have been the oldest commendation of a church potluck we see Paul castigating the Corinthian church for completely ignoring the

community part of the gathered church meal because they were showing up with no intention whatsoever of sharing the meal. In verse 20 Paul says: *When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal.* I mean you have to understand, understand what is taking place here. This is not just sinning. This is sinning with a high hand. This is a in-your-face God type of sin in which the very meal designed to highlight the church's love for each other due to their love for Christ becomes a showcase for its very opposite. You want us to publicly demonstrate the love that we have for each other as a demonstration for our love for you, God? Well, here you go. Our first course in this meal is partisanship followed by a second course of selfishness with a side course of division topped off with something even worse. Folks were showing up at this meal drunk. Paul says: *One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What? Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.* Again Paul says as a result of this God sickened some of the participants and some he killed. It was that grievous. I mean instead of demonstrating the love of Christ and the body of Christ, the Corinthian church was practically demonstrating they're no different than anyone else. I mean there had clearly been no preparation whatsoever for the Lord's table and their participation

reflected that. You see, we prepare for communion because we recognize that it is a sacred feast. We participate in the service because we recognize that we are one small part of a huge home. Just as the body can't function without all of the parts working together, we recognize that each of us has a function and that we honor God, as we are part of his body.

Now the third thing that we do in a communion service is that we make a proclamation. We prepare, we participate, we proclaim. *1 Corinthians 11:26* says: *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* I once heard a preacher say that if he came to church one day and found that it was completely empty, which incidentally is what I'm finding exactly today, he said he would still preach his sermon because there's proclamations that you make that go out not just to human beings, they go also out to a non human population as well, to the spirit world. And communion is a proclamation to the world around us and to the spirit world that in spite of everything that the enemy and the kingdom of darkness can throw at the kingdom of light, that it will prevail. Jesus once asked his disciples in *Matthew 16*, he said this: *"Who do you say that I am?"* Simon Peter replied, *"You are the Christ, the son of the living God."* And Jesus answered him, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in*

heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now the rock on which the church would be built was not Peter, it was Jesus. I mean *Ephesians 2* makes that clear. It says: *Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* What Jesus was saying is the body of Christ will prevail day by day, year by year, century by century against everything the kingdom of darkness can throw against it because it is the church that demonstrates or proclaims not just to the physical world of flesh and blood but also to the spirit world the manifold wisdom of God.

Listen to how Paul describes his unique individual role. Paul was a proclaimer in the body and he's describing his role but in the course of describing that, he describes God's big picture plan for the church. He says this, Paul says: *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.* I mean do you hear what God is saying through Paul? Paul is telling us that God had planned this

mystery, that it was hidden for ages and ages and his plan was that his wisdom could be displayed through you and me. I mean this idea of the manifold wisdom of God, that's like the facets on a diamond. I mean there's multiple little windows of light that each demonstrates a different aspect of God's wisdom, and you and I are those facets. It's God intention that each of us fulfill our role in the body of Christ and thereby proclaim that manifold wisdom of God. The amazingly wonderful thing about that is it means, as Francis Schaeffer once put it, that there's no such thing as little people in the kingdom of God because each of us is designed by God to display and proclaim through his church the unique facet of his own wisdom. You see every one of us is going to be judged not on how successful we were according to world standards but instead on how faithful we were in using the gifts that God has given to us to proclaim his kingdom. You see because the criteria is not success, the criterion is faithfulness. And because the criterion is faithfulness it makes the playing field even for everyone. And if God has given you a tiny talent and you use that tiny talent faithfully, God is delighted and you will be blessed. If he's given you ten talents and you use only five, you may be very impressive to those around you because after all you got five more talents than the one-talent person does but you won't be impressive to God because faithfulness is the criteria. The communion table is the place where everyone comes with an equal footing with which

to proclaim the goodness of God by their lives. They do it by being faithful in their use of the gifts that he's given to them.

And finally there is provision. We go back to the scripture that we read each communion Sunday. We basically start out the communion service with it. It is one of the most bizarre scriptures in the Bible. We just kind of let it rattle off our tongues. This is *John 6:53*: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."* We've grown incredibly used to the language of Jesus, so it loses its impact. We've just got to go back to what those words really sounded like when they were originally spoken. And you've got to understand by this time in Jesus's ministry he had attracted huge crowds and they were primarily there for the show and for maybe to get some free food. They were not there for Jesus' sake. Jesus was committed to not just be the truth but to speak the truth and to speak it so starkly that only his sheep would be able to handle it. But even they had a hard time with it. I mean just six verses after Jesus made that statement, it says in *John 6:60*: *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"* I mean Jesus was addressing a truth that only his sheep who hear his voice could ever understand. And they could only understand it after the Holy Spirit had given them the ability to understand and

that was after Christ had ascended into heaven. I mean at this point when Jesus is preaching, I mean even Jesus' disciples can't even begin to grasp what he means. Eat flesh and drink blood? That's awful. I mean the way to fully grasp what Jesus said is to point to a question that John Piper once asked. He said this or he asked this: "Would you be okay with heaven if you knew that Christ wasn't there?" Would you be okay with a place that met every single need you could ever possibly imagine and met that need perfectly but it didn't have Jesus? His point was that if you could genuinely consider yourself happy with that kind of heaven, then you either woefully misunderstand the gospel or you're just not one of his sheep. You see heaven is eternal. It's forever. Our earthly wisdom looks at heaven and it wonders what heaven is like rooted in a very short framework of time. So what we think is absolutely wonderful just takes the passage of time to suddenly realize that it's not as wonderful as you thought. I mean how long would it take for this heavenly estate that you imagine yourself having on a cliff overlooking the ocean for even that to get boring? How many gourmet meals would it take before you would lose your taste for the best that food could ever offer? How many trophy sailfish do you have to land before even that would start to lose its thrill? The same goes with sex and with physical pleasure or with anything. How many rounds of golf would you have to have before you start looking at the whole thing as silly? I mean the

question is is how much of what this world can offer would it take for you to see that it really doesn't offer very much? The point is there is nothing outside of Christ that would eventually become not just stilted or boring but in the end awful. And there's a reason for that. See, we were created by God to define our deepest joy and greatest pleasure not in anything that this world can offer but in Christ himself. We were created by God to have this limitless appetite for him, and the fall took that appetite away. There's only one appetite that can continue to grow infinitely and be joyfully filled continuously and that is the appetite for the infinitely joyful Christ. It's an eternal appetite that grows as it's being fed and its only goal and desire is to know Christ, to grow in glory so that we can understand at greater and deeper levels and take even more pleasure in who and what we were designed for, which again is Christ.

I mean when I was a youngster I remember being told that heaven would consist of this thing that was called the beatific vision and I was told that we would stare at Jesus for all of eternity. And I remember, I was a little kid at that time thinking, well, maybe the other place might be better. I could not imagine what it would be like to be staring at Jesus for all of eternity. But that's not what the beatific vision is at all. Paul gives us a hint of it when he says in *2 Corinthians 3:18*, he says: *And we all, with*

unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. I mean what Paul is saying here, he's telling us that eternity, that heaven itself is going to consist of an ever growing appetite for Christ that is constantly being transformed as we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another as we grow in our ability to appreciate the God of all creation in whose very image we were created. That's what we're here for. That's why we exist. And human brains can barely comprehend this now. I mean it will take an eternity for us to grow the ability to fully take it in and even then we're not going to be able to. That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:9, he says: But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

So when we say that communion is provision, we're certainly not talking about the physical aspects of the meal that's probably less than ten calories, that little tiny piece of cracker and a sip of juice. I mean, no, it is not the physical appetite that demands the eating of Christ's flesh and drinking of his blood, it's the spiritual appetite that deeply hungers for the nourishment that only Christ's flesh and blood can provide. And frankly it's an appetite that leaves the rest of this world cold. Christ is speaking here only to the sheep who hear his voice and follow him.

The rest of the world hears this and they see nothing but cannibalism and horror in his words which is just how his contemporaries heard it. And that's why *1 Corinthians 1:18* says: *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* I mean it's not foolishness to us. We come to communion to have our appetite for Christ satisfied, to take in and make his flesh and blood a part of our flesh and blood. It's the culmination of four things. We prepare ourselves by confessing our sins and recognizing our need. We participate by coming together like we can't do today, which is why we're doing it virtually, we come together as one body to participate in the same loaf and the same cup indicating that we are with Jesus participating in the meal that he shared with his disciples. And next proclaim with our lives to the seen and the unseen world that the kingdom is still advancing and will continue to advance as it has from eternity past all the way to eternity future when the entire world will see the beauty and glory of Christ. Again: *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* And finally, we come to communion for the ultimate in provision and that is to feed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6:53 again says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his*

blood, you have no life in you." Take a moment to prepare as we are about to partake of the elements. And again, preparing is really meditating on what Christ has done, it's asking the Holy Spirit who is in you to examine your conscience and bring forward those things that you need to deal with, those things that you need to confess, it is confessing those sins. And confessing really means to agree with God. That's huge. We oftentimes don't want to confess 'cause we don't want to agree because we want to still live with the sin. Confessing means you've crossed a threshold, you're now agreeing with God that this sin is sin and that's what we do as we prepare to receive this meal.

1 Corinthians 11:24 says this, it says: *And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take, and eat.

Verse 25 says: *In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* So take, and drink.

Finally, after our communion service we have a part that I call head, heart, and feet which really involves putting feet to what it is you're doing, you're remembering Christ here, we want to be able to have a practical application for how we are remembering. And

one of the things that is so striking to me because of this virus is the fact that the body of Christ literally is his physical presence on earth, we are his feet carrying a meal to somebody, we are his arms hugging somebody, we are his mouth and his tongue speaking truth. Christ's physical presence on earth is us in the body. And it's never been more so than it is today. I mean today everything is upside down. You know my daughter-in-law passed on to me, pointed out to me that everything is now backwards. Our kids have become the parents. We've got my kids with their folded arms and they're looking at us and, you know, "Where were you last night?" I said, "Your mother and I went to Shop Rite and we went really late, it was like -- it closes at 10:00, we went at quarter to 10:00." And, "Oh, okay, so you went where all the germs of the day are accumulating. You think that was wise?" Somehow I'm thinking everything is upside down here now. The kids are the parents and the parents are the kids. It is a very strange time. But it's a time in which we can actually be the body of Christ to this world around us. We can call people, we can text people, we can pray with people, we can Zoom with people. That's becoming something very, very important. There's also something that we can do next Friday. I had a Zoom meeting with all of the local pastors in the area and we all agreed that we were going to set aside this next Friday, Good Friday as a day of prayer for what God is doing and what God is continuing to do through those who are being a

blessing through this COVID-19 circumstance. And again, we want to pray for first responders, we want to pray for those people who are literally putting their lives on the line, people who are dying in order to protect us. We want, as all churches, to spend the day in prayer and fasting so that we will come out of this knowing what God would have us do, knowing how God would have us place his body at his command, how we would use his body in the best possible way.

And finally we spent some time today speaking about terrible things that happen to people who disrespected the communion table, people who had no business taking communion because they were outside of the communion of believers. And I want to just say if that is your heart feeling, if you are outside of the community of believers, the covenant of believers, you can change that today. You can change that right now. All you need to do is cry out to God and say, God, I am a sinner. God, I am incapable of saving myself. I place my life in your hands. I ask you to take my life, I ask you to be my Lord and Savior. I give my life to you. If you do that, God says in *Romans 10:13*: *All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved*. You can make that a reality today, and I pray that you would. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.