

# Thanksgiving 2025

## The Lord's Supper

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

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Good morning and happy Thanksgiving! I want to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 11.

As a congregation we are making our way through the book of Judges, but I opted to press pause on that series for this Thanksgiving Sunday. We were scheduled to read about how Abimelech murdered his brothers and then tried to set a tower full of women and children on fire. That didn't strike me as the most intuitive passage for a day like this. We'll dive into that next Sunday but, this morning – on a day when families across our country are gathering around their thanksgiving table – we decided that we would gather this church family around ours.

Believers have been sharing the Lord's Supper for 2,000 years. Anne Dutton – a godly Baptist woman living in the 1700's described it this way:

[The Lord's Supper] admits us into the nearest approach to his glorious *self*, that we can make in an ordinance way on the earth, on this side the presence of his glory in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

When Anne and her church came to the Table, they expected to experience the *nearest* and *sweetest* approach to the Lord that is possible in this life.

Let me ask you a question, Christian: Is that what you expect?

Do you expect to be spiritually nourished and refreshed?

Do you expect a meaningful encounter with the living God?

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Dutton as quoted in Michael A.G. Haykin, *Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands - Recovering Sacrament in the Baptist Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022), 107.

Is it possible that you expect nothing at all?

The more I read church history, the more I fear that we modern Baptists have so *underemphasized* the Lord's Supper that we have **ROBBED** ourselves of a gift that Jesus entrusted to us. And it is a gift that we *desperately* need.

It is my prayer this morning that God would open our eyes to see and expect more as we gather for the Lord's Supper. To that end, look with me now to 1 Corinthians 11. We will be reading verses 23-32. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he 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." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

<sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:23-32 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

We read this passage every communion Sunday before we partake of the Lord's Supper, but I thought we might benefit this morning by taking the opportunity to slow down and reflect.

### **What Does This Passage Teach Us About The Lord's Supper?**

The first – and perhaps the most obvious – lesson, is that:

#### **1. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus**

Paul is careful to emphasize this detail in verse 23:

**For I received from the Lord** what I also delivered to you (1 Corinthians 11:23a ESV)

This might seem like a throwaway detail, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. The Apostles didn't invent this meal. This isn't one of grandma's old traditions that we never got around to updating. Jesus himself taught us to do this. That's why it is often referred to as an *ordinance*. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper were specifically *ordained* – that is, *commanded* – by Jesus.

Slow down and think about that for a moment. 2,000 years ago, Jesus was seated with his disciples and he broke the bread and shared the cup and told them – 'Do this until I come'. And they took that seriously. In Acts 2, we find those same disciples after Christ's resurrection, and we read:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, **to the breaking of bread** and the prayers. (Acts 2:42 ESV)

The church was and continues to be DEVOTED to the breaking of bread. Down through the centuries from Justyn Martyr, to Athanasius, to Augustine, to Ann Dutton, to Elizabeth Elliot, to your grandparents, to this gathering – as we break the bread and drink the cup, we are joining our brothers and sisters through the ages as we sit at the table that Jesus himself set before us.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus. But why? That leads to the second lesson we learn in this text:

## **2. The Lord's Supper is a time of remembrance and proclamation**

Look with me again at verses 24-26 where Jesus declares:

“This is my body, which is for you. **Do this in remembrance of me.**”<sup>25</sup> In the same way also he 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.**”<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.** (1 Corinthians 11:24b-26 ESV)

When you sit silently with the bread and the cup in your hand, that is not a time to *empty your mind* or to passively allow it to wander. No, Jesus tells us here that the Lord's Supper is a time to *actively* REMEMBER.

And notice what it is that you are to be remembering! You are not to be remembering YOURSELF – your own sins and failures and unworthiness. Some of us use the Lord’s Table that way – as another opportunity to reflect on how despicable we are. That’s NOT what this is for. I remember a pastor once saying: ‘If the Lord’s Supper becomes an occasion for compounding your guilt, then you’re missing the point entirely.’<sup>2</sup>

This is not a time to remember YOU. It’s a time to remember HIM! Actively. Intentionally. Desperately! Remember that 2,000 years ago the Lord Jesus Christ bore in his body the sin of the world and took it with him to the cross. Remember that he fulfilled the just requirements of the law and that he satisfied the debt of our sin once and for all. As the devil whispers in your ear about all the ugly sin in your past, look again at that bread and cup and tell him to shut his mouth! When intrusive thoughts try to pull you away, squeeze the bread tighter and lean in with more focus.

Remember this morning the FACT that – if you are in Christ – you are forgiven! You are redeemed! You are loved! You are set free! The sinless Saviour laid down his life for you!

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 ESV)

As we partake together, this room full of sinners who should be SEPERATED from God are PROCLAIMING together that JESUS HAS PURCHASED OUR FORGIVENNESS! We are proclaiming that sin and death no longer have the final word. We are proclaiming that – while this world IS broken, and while our lives are NOT perfect – Jesus has guaranteed our hope. At the first gathering around the Lord’s Supper, Jesus said:

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.” (Matthew 26:29 ESV)

Do you see that? One day, we will sit down with Jesus for a feast in the Father’s kingdom! Which means that the Lord’s Supper is almost like an appetizer. Have you ever thought of it that way? The bread and the cup are a foretaste of what is to come – a reminder of the glory that is to be

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<sup>2</sup> Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord’s Supper*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 65.

revealed! Therefore, when you partake and you feel a sense of *lack* let that point your hope forward!

Today, we partake as a room full of forgiven sinners. Our bodies are plagued with sickness and disease. Our world is rife with war and division. We feel the sting of the death of our loved ones. We feel the dissonance because things are not what they should be.

But Christ has won! At the Lord's supper, we remember and we proclaim that truth. And, more than that:

### **3. The Lord's Supper is a time of special communion with Jesus**

Look again at those opening verses:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "**This is my body**, which is for you. (1 Corinthians 11:23-24a ESV)

What does Jesus mean when he says of the bread 'This is my body'? That question has sparked a great deal of discussion down through the ages.

The catholic church came to believe that Jesus' words were to be understood in a strictly literal sense. Their view – known as transubstantiation – teaches that the bread and wine become the *physical* body and blood of Christ when they are blessed by the priest and received in faith.

You might think to yourself, 'Well, that DOES seem to be what Jesus says. "This is my body" sounds pretty straightforward.' But before we rush to that conclusion, let's remember that elsewhere Jesus declared:

I am the door. (John 10:9a ESV)

Yet no one interprets that verse in a strictly literal sense.

If Jesus' physical body were truly broken again each and every time the Lord's Supper was observed, then that would mean that his once and for all sacrifice for sin needs to be repeated. Protestants have rightly pushed *against* that.

But if that's *not* what Jesus means, then what does he mean?

Many have argued<sup>3</sup> that Jesus was only speaking symbolically here. They would suggest that communion is a *mere memorial*. I suspect that many of us – whether intentionally or not – approach the table this way. This view holds that the bread and the cup are simply *symbolic*. They are *memory tools*.

But this is not how the earliest Baptists understood the Lord's Supper. Listen to it is described in the Second London Confession:

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible Elements in this Ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, **yet not carnally, and corporally, but spiritually receive**, and feed upon Christ crucified & all the benefits of his death: **the Body and Blood of Christ, being then not corporally, or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of Believers**, in that Ordinance, as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.<sup>4</sup>

The Lord's Supper IS a time to remember, but it is so much MORE than that. When you receive the bread and the cup in faith, Jesus is spiritually present with you in a *unique* and *powerful* way. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul was writing to warn the church that – when they partook in pagan feasts – they were literally sharing the table with unseen demons. He proved his argument by referencing the Lord's Supper:

The cup of blessing that we bless, **is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?** The bread that we break, **is it not a participation in the body of Christ?** (1 Corinthians 10:16 ESV)

To state it in clearer terms: We are not merely *remembering* Jesus when we come to the Lord's Supper. We have *fellowship* with him. He is HERE WITH US at the table! He is the host!

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<sup>3</sup> Most notably Ulrich Zwingli.

<sup>4</sup> Second London Confession 30.7 as quoted in Michael A.G. Haykin, *Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands - Recovering Sacrament in the Baptist Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022), 32.

Now, of course, there is a very real sense in which he is *always* with us. He said that before he ascended to heaven:

And behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20b ESV)

Yes. That is true. And YET – Paul reminds us here – Jesus spiritual presence is *uniquely* and *particularly* manifested at the Lord’s Supper. Consider these words written by a Christian named Irenaeus who live in the age that immediately followed the Apostles. This is how the earliest believers approached the table:

For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, after it has received the invocation of God, **is no longer common bread**, but the eucharist, **consisting of two realities, the earthly and the heavenly**, so also our bodies, when they receive the eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but have the hope of resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

These elements are more than mere symbols. Jesus promises to meet with you here. When the elder breaks the bread and hands it to you this morning, see beyond the man in front of you and recognize that Jesus himself is serving you. More than that, Jesus is there – spiritually – in that bread – sustaining your weary soul and nourishing your faith. He is there – spiritually – in that cup, reminding you that you are forgiven that a place has been prepared for you in glory.

When we come to the table, we come to meet with Jesus.

And, as we commune with Jesus, he changes our hearts towards one another. That’s the next thing that we see in this passage:

#### **4. The Lord’s Supper is a declaration of our unity**

Look with me again at verses 28-29:

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<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus as quoted in Thomas R. Schreiner, Matthew R. Crawford et. al. eds., *The Lord's Supper - Remembering And Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 110.

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks **without discerning the body** eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Corinthians 11:28-29 ESV)\

When Paul speaks of the ‘body’ here, he is not *only* referring to the body of Jesus. He is also referring to the *body of Christ* – that is, the church. We know this because he said the same thing in chapter 10 verse 17:

Because there is one bread, **we who are many are one body**, for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:17 ESV)

The ONE reminds the MANY partakers that they are all united by the sacrifice of Jesus.

We lose some of that imagery with the individual cubes in cups that we normally use and so, this morning, we have stationed five tables in the room with a whole loaf of bread. As the elder breaks off a piece for you, reflect on the visible reminder that we are all united together in Christ.

It’s quite miraculous! We should be divided. We sin against one another. We offend each other. We’re clumsy with our words. Humanly speaking, many of us would never want to be friends with each other – let alone FAMILY!

And yet – in spite of all our differences and all the ways that we hurt each other – as the bread is torn apart, I remember that Jesus body was broken for your sin in the same way that it was broken for mine. His death was OUR death, and his life is OUR life. If you can’t celebrate that then this is not the table for you. In the same way that you can’t sit at my dinner table while you curse and despise my children, neither can you come to Jesus’ table while you curse and despise the men and women that he bled and died for. As one author notes:

If you claim Christ as your Saviour in the Lord's Supper, you necessarily claim his people as your brothers and sisters.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 31.

In the same way that I regularly need to be reminded that I am forgiven, I also need to regularly be reminded that you are forgiven too. And if your sin has been nailed to that cross, then who am I to peel that sin off and wave it in your face? This table is the place where grudges go to die.

We need to take that seriously. Because fifth and finally:

## 5. The Lord's Supper is not to be taken lightly

Paul reminds us in this passage that there is a wrong way to partake of the Lord's Supper. We catch a glimpse into the bad practices in Corinth in verses 33-34:

<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— <sup>34</sup> if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come. (1 Corinthians 11:33-34 ESV)

The Corinthians had disregarded the *unity* aspect of the Lord's Supper. They were fractured and divided. The wealthy believers who didn't need to work arrived at the gathering well before the impoverished believers who had jobs. Those who did not work went ahead and partook of the Lord's Supper before the working class could even arrive because – according to verse 34 – they were *hungry*. They didn't care to wait.

The rich feasted. The poor partook of the scraps later on. Everyone resented each other. And they called it the Lord's Supper.

But so what? Does God really care if I partake of the Lord's Supper even though I'm living in my sin and have no intention of ever letting it go? Does God care if I partake of the Lord's Supper even though I'm rude and unkind to the other believers in His church? Look again at verses 27-31:

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 27-31 ESV)

This table is meant to be a blessing for you, Christian. But there is a way of partaking that turns it into a curse. God is loving, merciful and gracious, but let us not mistake Him for a fool. If you are determined to hang on to your sin – if you are determined to carry on with your grudge – then don't come to the Table and pretend otherwise. That is to lie to the church and – infinitely worse – to lie to the Lord. To play that game is to spit on the cross. If your conscience is THAT seared, then God just might mercifully stop you in your tracks before you run headlong into hell.

If you won't exercise right judgement of your own heart, then God will intervene. That's what Paul says here:

But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:31-32 ESV)

Judge yourself truly. Discern the body. Are you trusting in Christ? Do you love His people? Remember – this isn't a question of whether or not you have *earned* grace. That's not how grace works. This is a question of whether or not you have *surrendered* to Jesus and are *trusting* in his sacrifice. If the answer is no, then you need to lay some things down before you come to the table.

We need to remember this morning that this is sacred ground. The Lord's Supper is a beautiful gift! But it is not to be taken lightly.

To that end, we have carved out some extra time this morning for Communion. I'm going to leave a few minutes of silence to give you space to deal honestly with the Lord, and then I'll pray for us. After that I want to invite you to get up from your seat and to go to one of the five tables where one of our elders will serve you the bread and the cup. (For those of you who have allergies, the loaf in the back right corner is gluten free.) Bring that back to your seat, and spend the next few minutes remembering what Christ has accomplished. Then, when everyone is ready, we will partake together. If you cannot get to one of the tables, raise your hand and we will come to you.

Jesus promises to meet us here in a special way. Let's invite him – and expect him – to do that now.