

# The Virgin Birth

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Well, it's really a wonderful opportunity for us tonight to gather and not only remember the birth of Christ but to commemorate his death in the way that he appointed by the celebration of the Lord's Table. Whenever we celebrate Communion together, we like to have a meditation of some kind to prepare our hearts for it.

The Bible says that we are to take the Lord's Table, take the elements in a worthy manner, and in 1 Corinthians 11, it warns us not to take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. It says in chapter 11, verse 27,

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

Scripture teaches us that Communion is a serious time, it's a matter to be reflected upon in a mature way. It's something that is only for Christians and for Christians who have the capacity to be able to evaluate themselves in terms of whether there is any unconfessed sin in their lives or disruptions in relationships that have gone unaddressed for a long period of time. Scripture tells us to contemplate those things and to confess our sins before we come to the Table, and if we're unwilling to confess sin and, you know, we're not willing to be a repentant believer in that moment of time, that it's better to just let the elements pass. This is the Lord's Table. It's for the Lord's people, those who are following the Lord rather than those who would, you know, just walk off the street and not have any idea about what it means to be a Christian or have any appreciation for the sacrifice of the Lord. And because Scripture places a premium on the importance of Communion, we at Truth Community Church, what we like to do and what we think is a good practice, a good tradition, is that we have a meditation on Scripture before we come to the Table to get our thoughts in the right place. You know, you're like I am. You know, you go through different things in the day and your mind is cluttered and, you know, maybe you've had some carnal reactions to things that have happened during the day, you know,

we're all in that boat, but the answer to that is not to just rush into Communion, the answer is to step back, let the word of God refresh our thinking, refresh our hearts, refresh our minds, and give us the right perspective as we come to the Lord's Table to take the elements.

One of the reasons, I'm just giving a little bit of background here on our practice of Communion, one of the reasons that we don't practice Communion more often is that we, and this is just a matter of judgment, this is not required by Scripture, Scripture says just, you know, "As often as you do it, do this in remembrance of Me," and so there's liberty for a local church to decide, you know, how often to take it. We practice it on a roughly every other month, maybe eight times a year we'll celebrate Communion together. Part of the reason that we do that is so that we don't take it for granted, so that it doesn't become routine, when we have the opportunity we realize it's something special, and so that's why we try to do it and not let a familiar routine make it something that we lose sight of the specialness of it, and so that's kind of what we try to do.

Tonight for our meditation and in light of the season in which we're gathered here tonight, I wanted to do a meditation on the virgin birth and to give that as that which would prepare our hearts for Communion. It's kind of an interesting opportunity for us to remember his birth and then to remember his death in the same time, but his birth points us to his Savior-hood just as his death does as well.

What shall we think about the virgin birth? It's been a few years since I've taught on it and so I'm reviewing some things with you this evening. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of his virgin mother, Mary, by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and that this conception occurred without the contribution of a human father. The birth of Jesus was miraculous and that is essential to true Christianity to understand. Christ was not born by normal human methods, if he was, as we'll see, he would have received a sin nature that would have excluded him from being able to save anyone in his death. And so we're going to see that tonight. Christ was conceived in the womb of his virgin mother, Mary, by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. It was a miracle. It was supernatural, the conception of Christ, and it paved the way for many supernatural things to occur during the course of his earthly life and his resurrection.

Why is that important? Why is the virgin birth so important to our faith? One writer puts it this way, "If Jesus was imply the illegitimate child of Mary's infidelity or even if he is the child of Joseph's natural marital union with Mary, he is not God; and if he is not God, his claims are all lies; and if his claims are lies, his salvation is a hoax; and if his salvation is a hoax, we are all doomed." Because we are all still in our sins. So as you trace back, you can kind of reverse engineer it going back to the saving significance of his death is predicated on the fact that he is God in human flesh, and to be God in human flesh means that he could not be a man born by natural human means otherwise he would just be a natural man. And so his ability to save us depends upon his deity, his deity depends on not having a natural human birth, a supernatural birth presupposes an act of the Holy Spirit which the Bible describes as the virgin conception that took place in the womb of Mary.

What I want to do tonight is give you two broad themes to think about: the statements in Scripture about the virgin birth, and then the significance of the virgin birth. I want to start by showing you the statements of the virgin birth that you would see that the virgin birth is the clear teaching of Scripture. There are those who try to embrace a Christianity but because they are not comfortable with supernatural claims in Scripture, they will deny the virgin birth. You can't do that. You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "I'm a Christian," and simultaneously say, "I deny the virgin birth," because then you're denying the very nature of Christ in that and you've made up a god of your own imagination. No, it's like this as with other matters about true Christianity, we must come to Scripture and receive Scripture for what it says, and to let Scripture speak rather than putting our judgments and our thoughts and our human reason on top of it. That doesn't work. We either receive Christianity, we receive Christ as he is revealed in Scripture or we cannot have him at all. We don't get to make one up of our own choosing, we must believe Christ and believe about Christ as he is revealed in the Bible.

So let's look at a couple of gospels to see the statements about the virgin birth. I invite you to turn with me to the gospel of Matthew in chapter 1 and we'll read the extended passage that Matthew gives us about the birth of Jesus Christ beginning in verse 18, but we'll treat these things in a rather brief manner here this evening, mindful that we're doing a meditation, not a full study on the virgin birth. Matthew 1:18 says this,

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: [and he quotes from Isaiah here in verse 23, Isaiah 7:14] 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us" 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

And so we see this emphasis on the Holy Spirit, first of all, in the conception of Christ there at end of verse 18, "she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit." The angel told Joseph again in verse 20, "the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Twice you see the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus Christ. That immediately lifts it out of the natural realm and into the realm of the supernatural, and you see twice being mentioned here in this passage that Mary was a virgin, she had not engaged in sexual intercourse at any time prior to the birth of Christ.

Verse 23, "the virgin shall be with child." Verse 25, Joseph "kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son." And so a conception by the Holy Spirit worked upon a virgin named Mary, and so Mary had never engaged in sexual intercourse and yet she was with child.

This is a miracle just as there are so many other miracles in Scripture. The resurrection is a miracle. The new birth for a Christian is a miracle. Creation by divine fiat was a miracle. And on and on we could go. Christianity is a supernatural religion. It does not accord with the natural philosophies of men. It condemns and exposes them as being human reasoning not in accord with the truth of God. And so we don't shy away from the reality of the virgin birth because it's miraculous. My friends, if we did away with the miraculous and we were ashamed of the miraculous that we find in Scripture, we would be throwing Christianity itself out, and if we throw out Christianity itself out, you and I are still in our sins and we are miserably doomed, and as Paul said with regard to the resurrection, we of all men are most to be pitied for we are still in our sins believing something that God has not revealed.

So this is the teaching of Scripture is my point for now, is for you to see that this is what the Bible says about the birth of Jesus, and so we are confronted with the reality of whether we are going to believe Scripture on its own terms, accept what God has said about the birth of Christ in his own word, or are we going to deny that in favor of human philosophy and in the process, I say it reverently, throw the baby out with the bathwater of human reasoning. You cannot have it both ways. Scripture says that he was born of a virgin, we believe that, we accept that without qualification and without shame or embarrassment. We're not ashamed, beloved, to believe the word of God, are we? We're not ashamed to take God at his word and say, "I believe what You have said."

Now with those thoughts in mind, turn over to the gospel of Luke 1 where we have another account that supplies more background to the birth of Christ. Luke 1, beginning in verse 26, and we're skipping much of the context for the sake of time tonight. Luke 1:26,

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Now pause there for just a moment. I want you to see that twice in those two brief verses, actually twice in the one verse, verse 27, Mary is described as a virgin. You cannot miss this. It's repeated for the sake of emphasis that Mary was a virgin. And so the text goes on, the narrative goes on in verse 28,

28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and

the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

In that brief moment of statement, the angel has given stunning news to this young girl that she is going to bear the Son of God and he is going to reign over the house of Jacob forever and he will be a King whose kingdom has no end. It's just stunning how massive the promise and the announcement is even as we read it 2,000 years later, and Mary herself is astonished. What the angel has just told her is outside the realm of nature and she states this plainly, repeating for a third time what we see in this narrative portion from Luke 1.

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Literally it's translated what Mary said, "I do not know a man." In other words, "I do not engage in intimate relations. How can I give birth to a son? This is humanly impossible. What you are saying is humanly impossible, how can this be?" Well, the angel answers her in verse 35 and we see the same emphasis in Luke's gospel that we saw earlier from Matthew's gospel.

35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. 36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

And so the angel explains to her, "Mary, something supernatural is going to take place. It's true that you are a virgin, it's true that humanly speaking children cannot be born without a union between a man and a woman, but this is unique, Mary, this is an instance where the Holy Spirit is going to do something supernatural upon you and bring to bear, bring into your womb a child who you will give birth to." And so both in Matthew's gospel and in Luke's gospel we see this repeated emphasis that Mary is a virgin, we see this repeated emphasis that the Holy Spirit is the one forming the child in her womb so that this is a supernatural occurrence that is taking place, and the testimony is given in Matthew's gospel that the reason God is doing this, so that a child would be born who would one day be in a position to save his people from their sins. This one in verse 32 of Luke, who would be great and called the Son of the Most High, and given the throne of his father David. On and on it goes. This is of such magnificent import and we have the privilege of understanding it and receiving it here today. Those are the statements of the biblical record: a virgin birth, conceived in the womb by the Holy Spirit.

Well, with that said, let's examine why it matters and what it tells us about the nature of Christianity. If you're taking notes, this is a second point: the significance of the virgin birth. The significance of the virgin birth. And as we've already said, there are three things that I want to say here tonight about this just briefly. The first thing that we want to acknowledge is that Christianity is supernatural. One of the significant aspects and

doctrinal implications of the virgin birth is that Christianity is supernatural, and that's important for us to understand for so many reasons. Let me just focus on one aspect here that pertains to and helps us to think rightly as we contemplate Communion in just a few moments.

God does not offer heaven to men based on a system of works that is within human power to accomplish. It is not within the power of man, it is not within the power of a woman, or a boy or a girl, to do anything that will achieve salvation for himself or for herself. If we are to be saved, there must be an action from God outside us upon our souls in order for us to find the power to be saved, to come to Christ and to be saved. It is not within the power of man to be saved on his own, just as much as it is not within the power of a virgin to bring about a baby in her own womb. There had to be something supernatural to occur in the womb of Mary for Christ to come to earth. In the same way, there must be a supernatural act in the soul by God before a man can become a Christian. That's why Jesus said you must be born again. There must be something that happens to you from outside you in order for you to be saved.

So Christianity is supernatural. It is not a system of morality by which men engage in self-improvement and make themselves acceptable to God. Our sin has ruined us, it has broken us. We are spiritual Humpty-Dumpty's, we have fallen off the wall in our sin, we have been shattered and no one can put us back together. No man can redeem another man. No man can redeem his own soul. Christianity is not a matter of man saving himself. Christianity is declaring to men, we declare to you tonight here in the room and over the live stream and anyone else who hears this message, you are lost, you cannot save yourself, you must come to God for mercy or you will not be saved at all. So my friends, when the gospel is preached, when we read Scripture in Romans and Galatians and Ephesians and the other 63 books of the Bible, you and I must understand this, that when the Bible offers salvation to us, it is not commending us as though we had an ability to save ourselves, it is not telling you that you have the power to save yourself. You don't. You cannot save yourself. You are lost and you are hopeless apart from Christ. God must save sinners through a supernatural act of power or they will be lost.

Now that has consequences and it's consequences that we should not shy away from, and it's certainly consequences that I as a preacher cannot hide from men. What we are saying is not that you are very sick, we're not saying that you're very sick spiritually and you need to get better, we're saying that you are dead and that you do not have the ability to save yourself, and that if God does not help you, you will be eternally lost and eternally condemned, and that shatters the pride of man, no one likes to be told that they are helpless. And let me give you a sense that will help you understand, help you to gauge whether you are properly understanding this or not. There should be a sense of desperation that comes to your mind that says, "If that's true, then that means I can't do this by myself. I'm really in trouble here. I'm helpless and you're telling me that there is nothing that I can do to save myself." That's exactly what we're saying. You are utterly dependent upon grace from God to do a work in your soul or you will be lost. There's no prescription that I can give you, nothing that I can tell you to do that will guarantee your salvation. You must go to Christ directly and plead with him for mercy to save you from

a condition of utter helplessness. "Be merciful to me the sinner," as the tax collector said in Luke 18. Christianity is supernatural and it is beyond our power to make it happen. God must do something or we will be lost. The virgin birth points us in that direction because the earthly origin of Christ was supernatural, he came bearing a supernatural salvation that must be supernaturally applied by the Holy Spirit if any man is to be saved. You must be born again. You cannot save yourself.

What else does the virgin birth teach us about the nature of Christianity? Not only that it is supernatural but, secondly, it teaches us that Christ is sinless. Christ is sinless. Men, children, inherit a sinful nature from their parents, and we trace this all the way back to Adam when he fell, and the fact that children are sinful is a fact that no one could reasonably deny. The world raises them as though they had goodness in their hearts and they just need to be let out so that all that goodness can come to pass; those of us that have been parents at any time realize the foolishness of that. No one who observes children could deny that they have a sinful nature. Those little reprobates know how to sin without anyone teaching them to do it, right? No one has to teach a child how to lie, you have to train them to tell the truth. No one has to teach a child how to be angry when someone takes their toy, their heart instructs them full good and well on how to do that, and this is just evidence of what Scripture says, that we are born into this world as sinners. And as children grow without the grace of God upon them, without renewing grace bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit, they only grow in their capacity to sin as their physical and mental maturity grows, they learn how to sin in greater ways shown by their attitudes and shown by the filth that comes out of their mouth, and shown by the way they pursue their lusts.

This is the nature of humanity. The guilt of Adam is a sign to everyone in the human race because human nature was won in Adam and Adam sinned and we all share in human nature and we all share in the guilt of his act, and the question, then, is this: how could Jesus Christ become a man and escape a sinful nature? This is a great dilemma, theologically this is a great dilemma. If humanity in Adam is fallen and we need a human savior, we need a human sacrifice in order to be redeemed, how can this be? The sacrifice would seem by its humanity to be disqualified because all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Well, the virgin birth answers that dilemman.

Look at verse 35 again of Luke 1. Luke 1:35, "The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child,' the holy thing begotten, "shall be called the Son of God." This Child is set apart. The virgin birth set Christ apart in a way that made him distinct from any other child that had been born. You see, my friends, the Holy Spirit did not simply perform a physical miracle in the womb of Mary in bringing Christ to conception, the Holy Spirit did a spiritual miracle as well. The great theologian Louis Berkhof puts it this way, "The Holy Spirit sanctified the human nature of Christ from its very inception and thus kept it free from the pollution of sin." In other words, Jesus' conception bypassed a natural human father and the Holy Spirit in a way that goes beyond what we understand, the details of how this happened are not revealed in the word of God for us, but there is enough for us to understand this, that the supernatural

conception of Christ bypassed the natural transmission of sin so that Christ was born without a sinful nature which was part of his power and his capacity to lead a sinless life throughout the course of his 33 years on earth. He lived a perfect life and that originated in his conception in the womb of his mother so that he received a human nature without the sinful nature that attaches to the rest of us, and thereby he was sanctified, he was set apart, he was protected from the transmission of sin and that was central to his ability three decades later to offer himself up as a sacrifice to God for the sins of his people. The virgin birth is the root of that.

So as we contemplate this, let's just step back for a moment here as we remember and reflect on the things that we've seen from Scripture here, we see what a magnificent event it is that we celebrate and we remember year by year in this season. Scripture doesn't prescribe a celebration of Christmas but I agree with John MacArthur who believes that it's a healthy thing for us to remember year by year the wonder of what God has done for us in sending Christ through a virgin birth. And when we reflect on it rightly and we start to recognize, we start to recognize and there should be this growing enveloping sense of holy ground and holiness that engages your thinking as we're talking about these things even now. These are things that are beyond humanity. These are things that are great and awesome and beyond reason, not contrary to reason but beyond reason. God has done something great here that we don't have the power to replicate, and the reason that God did it was that he intended to provide a Savior for his people and he did it in a supernatural way that made everything unique, that made Christ unique, and separated him out from all of the religious impostors which is every other religion except true biblical Christianity. There's nothing else like this and we realize the majesty of how his birth came to pass, the majesty of what it says about his person and this unique God-man walked on our planet for 33 years and in the majesty of his perfections went to the cross to offer himself up as a sacrifice for you and me.

Thirdly, what else is the significance of the virgin birth? Well, Christianity is supernatural, Christ is sinless, thirdly, it tells us that Christ is the Savior. Christ is the Savior. The virgin birth is the means that God used to establish two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ. He is fully God and he is fully man, 100% God, undiminished deity, undiminished humanity.

Look over at the gospel of John which you could also take as a Christmas text, maybe we'll do that sometime down the road, but just a couple of familiar verses from the gospel of John. In John 1, it speaks about the deity of Christ and it says,

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Somehow before time began, before the beginning of time, the Word was, you could say. The Greek tenses here have the picture of at the very beginning of human time, at the very beginning of creation, fix that as a moment in time in your thinking and realize that before that moment in human time, the Word was continually existing. He is pre-existent. He existed before time began. He existed before creation and that is true because he was

God and God had no beginning. Nobody made God. He eternally was, and that's what's said about the Word. And this Word was distinct, somehow distinct from God, the Word was with God, and yet this Word was God, pointing to the ineffable mystery of the Trinity, one essence in which three conscious entities all equally share. The Word was with God, the Word was God. And what happened with this Word? What did this Word do? Drop down to verse 14.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word became flesh. The Word was God. In other words, God became flesh. In other words, God became a man. God entered into humanity. The second person of the Trinity without diminishing his deity, without altering anything about his glorious perfections, took on human nature. He is fully God and fully man, and the point for tonight before I stray too far from the theme of my own message, is that the virgin birth is what provided that blood connection to humanity. Mary in her humanity provided the connection to humanity to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary provided the human nature, so to speak, and the Spirit of God established the sinless essence of God in her womb and the two were joined in one person. Fully God, fully man, one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, we say that so easily and so readily now. If you study anything about the history of doctrine in Christianity, it took theologians centuries to be able to articulate this accurately because the mystery is so great and it is so deep and it is so significant. It took centuries to be able to define this accurately and to be able to guard these great truths from the heretics who are always trying to undermine it.

So Christ is the Savior. What this means is that God sent a Savior through the virgin birth who was free from guilt in his humanity, and participated fully in the essence of God in his deity. Fully God and at the same time fully identified with our humanity, so complete, so thorough, so full is that identification with our humanity that it goes down to the complete gestation cycle in Mary's womb. You know, God didn't just send Jesus on a weekend trip, send him down on Thursday, spend the night getting ready, offer himself up on the cross on Friday, resurrect on Sunday, and go back. No, the identification with Christ in our humanity was complete, and so gracious and so condescending in the highest sense of that word, so great is the humiliation and the condescension of Christ that he came all the way down even to the experience in the womb.

We have a Savior who has fully identified with us in our humanity, and at the cross which we remember here in Communion, and it takes my breath away, it almost shatters my mind to think about these wonders and to have my sinful tongue being the one expressing these things here for us all this evening, fully identified not only with our humanity but fully identified with our sin. He embraced the imputation, the counting, the reckoning of our sin to his account so that he could bear our sin, he could accept the wrath and punishment of God on our behalf, he identifies with us in our sin, being sinless but being reckoned, having that sin imputed to him, identified in our humanity, bearing our sins at the cross. Well did we sing earlier, "What Child is this?" What kind of person

is this, this Lord Jesus Christ? It's ineffable. It's inexpressible the greatness of Christ. He's fully God. He was born of a virgin. He loved us enough to leave heaven to come to earth to die and to sacrifice himself. He loved us enough to somehow think of us on the cross and to identify with us and to remember us even in his sufferings that he might fulfill everything that was necessary for us to be saved.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says,

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

And beloved, he did this for guilty people. He did this for those who had no claim on him. He did this for those who rejected him and there's a sense in which as he hung on the cross and he looked down at those who were crucifying him, those who were mocking him, he said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing," there's a sense in which he said that for all of his people, "Father, here I am interceding for them." I'm paraphrasing, describing what Christ did. Christ on the cross was interceding for us in which his life, his death signified and did what we could not do for our own and in that act of crucifixion Christ was crying out, "Father, forgive My people of their sins. I will accept the blame. I'll accept the punishment. Punish Me, just let them go free, My Father, in accordance with Our eternal plan."

So I ask you tonight in light of these things: have you received Christ? If so, rejoice tonight whatever else is happening because your salvation is complete and God has brought you into union with this glorious One. If you've not received Christ, look at the promise found there in the gospel of John 1. Look down at verse 12 with me. Here tonight for those of you that are not in Christ, God makes a promise through his word to you. This Christ whom we have sought to exalt before your eyes, this Christ so clearly revealed in Scripture, so great, so magnificent, so wonderful, Almighty Father, the Prince of Peace, this Christ presented to you right now Scripture says as many as received him, look at John 1:12,

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

As you know, the manger led to the cross. Christ lay down his life for everyone who believes in him, and the bread which we will soon pass, reminds us of his body offered for us on the cross, the cup reminds us of his shed blood. It's my privilege on behalf of the elders to invite everyone who truly knows Christ, who is a true Christian, to share in this Table. We only ask you in keeping with the Scripture I read at the start, to confess any known sin before you partake. If you know that you're not walking with Christ, my friends, please let the elements pass. Don't say that I share in the blood of Christ while you're holding onto the sin which he came to die for. And if you're not a Christian, please

pass on these elements until you can come with a full conviction in your heart that you belong to Christ.

Let's pray together and as I pray, the men are going to come in order to serve the elements to us.

*Our dear Lord, will we ever tire of speaking of Your glory? Will we ever stop being astonished at the wonder of who You are? God forbid. May it never be among any of us who know You, Father. May the name of Jesus always be sweet to our tongue and sweet to our ears. May the name of Christ always be our hope, always be the object and the source of our true worship. We thank You, Lord, for what You have done on our behalf, coming in such a humble way, dying in such a humble way for Your people, but now resurrected, now glorified, now ascended on high. From that position of great Lordship now, O Lord Jesus, we remember You. With profound gratitude, with a fullness of faith, and with a prayer for the hearts of those who either do not know You or who are not walking with You, have like mercy on all, dear Lord. And as we share in this time, may it be a true act of worship, pleasing in Your sight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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