

# Unified at the Table

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Preached on:** Sunday, October 26, 2014

**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

If you are here as a visitor this evening, this is our, a week ago this past Sunday, we inaugurated Truth Community Church and that was on October 19 and so we are here on October 26 celebrating our first communion as a formal New Testament church body and so we're glad that you're here with us. We welcome you and we're glad that you are a part of this service tonight. For those of us that are part of Truth Community Church, we had a great privilege last week to be able to share in that inaugural service together and that service represented many, many things. It was the culmination of a spiritual process in planting a new church body, it was the start of something new, and at the heart of the service was the recognition that 2,000 years after the Lord Jesus Christ walked on this earth, he is still building his church just like he said that he would. Truth Community Church is one local manifestation of a far greater reality and it is a joy to share in that together. It seemed fitting to us as elders that one of the earliest things that we would do as a church would be to celebrate communion together and so a week later, here we are at the Lord's table. This is a joyful, glorious time from us. We have every, I want you to think about it this way, we have every right, every privilege, every prerogative to be doing exactly what we're doing tonight. This is what the Lord would have us do. He calls us, he commands us to remember him in exactly this way, and it is our privilege and prerogative to do that without anyone else asserting any kind of claim over us. This is the Lord's table and because we belong to the Lord, it is appropriate for us to do it together.

What is the point of celebrating communion? In his provocative style, Martyn Lloyd Jones raised that same question. He said and I quote, "At a communion service, we have a table in front of us with bread and wine upon it. What does all that mean? Why do we do this? Is it some strange ritual that we are just perpetuating because we do not have the good sense to stop doing it? Is it some pagan rite?" He answered his own question by saying this, "What is this bread, this wine? They bring us immediately to history. They bring us back to this blessed person, Jesus Christ, who while having that last supper with his disciples, took bread and broke it and then poured out wine into a vessel. This is history. He did it the night when he was betrayed." Communion reminds us, brothers and sisters in Christ, communion reminds us that we have a faith that is grounded in historical fact. We do not follow a moral code or embrace a theoretical abstract philosophy about life. We follow a living person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who literally walked on this earth. He was a real man in time and space who left literal footprints when he walked in the dusty roads of Palestine. God took on human flesh. He lived as a matter of historical

reality. He died as a matter of historical reality. He was resurrected as a matter of historical reality after he was buried. Our faith is based on time and space historical events. We don't follow myths, we don't follow the fables of old women, we follow that which has been exactly lived out in time and space in history. This is real and the bread and the cup which we will soon partake of is a reminder, it is a symbol of the fact that Christ was really here and Scripture interprets the spiritual significance of those historical facts for us.

Turn to the book of Romans 5. It's important for us to remember that you cannot separate the reality of salvation, you cannot separate the reality of what we teach from the historical foundation which gives rise to it. When you start to deny the historicity of Scripture, the historicity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and think that you can perpetuate the morality that comes from that, you have destroyed the foundation. Everything collapses. And so we uphold the historical facts and understand that the Bible interprets the spiritual significance of those facts for us.

Look at Romans 5:6. The Bible says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." There is the spiritual significance. It was an act of substitution for those who could not save themselves. Verse 7, "For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." So, beloved, in the bread and in the cup, we have not just a reminder of the historical fact of Christ's death and resurrection, we do have that represented for us here today, but we also have a symbol, a token to remind us that in our sin, God loved us. God showed mercy and kindness to us. God had our well-being in mind when he sent Christ. Christ had our spiritual salvation in mind in love, in goodness. Because he loves his sheep, because he loves his people, he willingly laid down his life for us, that his blood might become that which washes away the stain of our sin.

So what we remember here at the table is something wonderful. We remember a death that we could never have deserved that was done in love on our behalf. We are brought sweetly back to the wonder of the goodness of our Savior toward us. We need to be reminded of that, don't we? We tend to forget. When life starts to veer into directions that we don't want, we're tempted to think, "Why is God doing this?" and we think wrongly about God. We start to think distorted thoughts about, "This is unfair. I wish it wasn't this way." This brings us back to what is central and most important. God has taken account of what is most important for us. He has accomplished salvation for us in the Lord Jesus Christ and he did it out of love. He did it because he cares for you. He did it because he loves you and had determined before time began that he would have you by name with him for all of eternity. That's what we remember tonight. This is glorious. This is wonderful. This draws us in affection. This draws us in priority to Christ when we're thinking about it rightly. God demonstrated his love toward us when Christ died for us.

Now in verse 9, he goes on and says, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood," having been declared righteous, having our account not only wiped clean but the positive righteousness of Christ imputed to us so that we have a perfect legal standing

with God, we are not simply declared not guilty before him, we are declared righteous. All the demands of God's law were fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf and when we put our faith in him, we received the full merit of his righteous life accounted to us, declared righteous, not merely not guilty, righteous in the sight of God. And having now been declared righteous, verse 9, "by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

So, beloved, I remind you of that which you already know, that in his death and resurrection the penalty for your sin has been paid. The guilt on your account has been erased and in its place has been put righteousness which God accepts. We come to God, we approach God, we hope in eternity not on anything that we have done but entirely on what someone else has done for us, what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. We rest not in anything good that we have done, we rest in his perfect righteousness alone. It is totally external to us. That which secures our eternity is outside us and we rest in what someone else did for us. That's what we remember at the table. Salvation is not a reward for our good works, it is an undeserved gift that we receive by faith.

Those of you who are not Christians, I invite you to take this opportunity to be reconciled to God; that these symbols would become a reality in your own heart as you confess your sin and believe in Christ as the only begotten Son of God who died to save you from sin. We can't say that enough. We never tire of inviting sinners to Christ because the offer is always open, it is always extended, it is fitting for us to repeat it again and again and again. God will forgive all of your sins if you repent and come to Christ. He will cleanse you. He will receive you. He will own you as his child forever. My unsaved friend, why would you turn away? Why would you harden your heart to such a gracious, loving offer extended to you sincerely by God himself?

Now, tonight, I also want to emphasize another aspect, what this means for us as a body. We kind of looked at it individually and we've been reminded and refreshed that this was for us out of an act of love by a holy God on our behalf, but I also want us to think about it corporately tonight. I want us to just think for a moment about the central role of church unity as we come to the table this evening and this is where it's very special for us to be able to remember just a week ago. As we formed Truth Community Church a week ago, we confessed the same Lord and the same doctrine with the same commitment all together. We did that together. We did it as one. We all came, having undergone believer's baptism by immersion, we did that together, we were all in this together, as it were. We all went through the same membership process. We all made the same public commitment together. There was such a oneness, there was such a unity in that act that we went through last week together, and what I want you to think about is this: that the inauguration of Truth Community Church last week was an outward manifestation of a pre-existing internal unity that we share together; a pre-existing internal unity between men and women who not only believe in Christ but are also committed to the same doctrine and the same biblical philosophy of ministry. There is a prevailing, deep, spiritual unity among us as a church and that is something precious. We are not assaulted

at this time by division or by people trying to disrupt things from within. We have a very special gift from God that we share in together as members of Truth Community Church.

We've been given a great gift to be able to share in this together and I want you to, I want us, myself included, I want us to value that; to recognize that; and to see how precious it is. I know that you have come from other places where, you know, that wasn't the mark of church life. Those of us that are here realize there is a unity of spirit that we share right now that is very, very special and what I want us to think about as we approach the Lord's table tonight is that with that unity, with that special gift comes privileges and also comes responsibilities. When all of these things are so fresh on our minds, it would do us good to simply remember that we need to continue in this unity with which we have started; to realize that that is a priority. Not simply from the elders, not simply because it's nice to go to a church where people love one another and care about one another as you so clearly manifest week after week that you care for one another and care for your leaders, we're grateful for that. Collectively, I'm not speaking just as elders but as a body, we love that. We appreciate that. It's so good to come to church Sunday after Sunday with people that love us and that love each other. So we want to be mindful to protect that and cultivate it, but what I want you to see tonight as we contemplate the Lord who died for us, as we remember him this evening, that unity is important to Christ as well. In fact, unity was so important to our Lord that he prayed for a unified church on the eve of his crucifixion. He was only hours away from an agonizing human death and yet what he was beseeching from his Father was unity for his people.

Turn over to John 17. This is, for us, a sweet thing to see. It is something that we share in now. It's something that was represented in what we did last week. We feel it relationally. We see it in Scripture and we see that life amongst us. What I want you to see is that that's precious and something to be cherished and protected. Jesus certainly wanted to protect it. Look at what he said as he's praying to his Father in John 17:20. By the way, when you read this, I think this is an incredible passage because Christ here is praying for you and me. He's praying for you and me. He says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone," meaning the disciples that were with him, "but for those also who believe in Me through their word." Do you realize if you're a Christian that that's talking about you? You have believed in Christ through the word of the apostles? That's how we have the Gospel, that's how the truth was brought to us, it's based on the authority of God's word which he revealed through the apostles. We have believed through their word and therefore when Christ says, "I'm praying for those who believe in me through their word," he's not simply talking about those who were physically with him in the upper room, he's praying for those throughout the history of the church that would believe and therefore we ourselves are within the sphere of the intent of this prayer. That's very special. Our Lord was praying for us on the night of his crucifixion and when he died the next day, he was dying for us by name. This is all very intimate. It's very personal. Our Lord left heaven in order to do this for us. Our Lord laid his own life it down for us. So motivated by the bowels of compassion, by the depth of sacrificial love in his heart when he came to pour out his life blood on our behalf, it's fitting that we should say, "What's on his mind? What's his priority at that great redemptive moment as he prayed for us?"

Well, in verse 21, we see recorded for us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit exactly what he said. He said, "Father, I pray that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." Christ is praying for not an organizational unity as this passage is so often misrepresented to say. This is not a passage that says anyone and everywhere who names in any way the name of Christ should all come together as one great denomination. That is not what he's talking about. He's not talking about an organizational, great, final Christian denomination when he prays this way with a pope or someone else at the head who has authority and rules over it. That couldn't be it because a man, a pope or whoever, is not the head of the church, Christ is. He didn't die in order to delegate the headship over the church to someone else. He alone is the head of the church. So he's not talking about an outward, external organizational unity, he's praying for a spiritual unity; that the hearts and minds of his people would unite around common truth and commitment, and Scripture teaches us that maintaining that kind of unity is a priority for the church. We see it in the way that Christ prayed that unity was what he was praying that his Father would bless those who would believe with.

Now, turn over to the book of Ephesians, to the passage that I read earlier, Ephesians 4 in verses 1 through 3. We'll come to this passage on Sunday morning in several weeks. We've been through enough of Ephesians so far to appreciate something of the "therefore" with which Paul opens this. In light of the great grace that God has shown us and by his power and his grace has saved us and brought us into his church, into his body, what do we do then? We've been seeing on Sunday mornings declarations of fact about what God has done. In Paul's prayer, God saved us by surpassing power and by surpassing grace; they are declarative statements. Now we see as we move into chapter 4, that the imperatives come in. "In light of what I have said to you in the first three chapters, here's what it means for you now within the body of Christ," and what does it mean? What does he start with? Chapter 4, verse 1, "Therefore," in light of everything that I've said in these prior three chapters, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Now that we have gathered together as a church, as Truth Community Church, we realize that spiritual and relational unity is a priority. It's something to protect and let me just clarify lest I be misunderstood here: I'm talking about this not because I see something lacking in us, it's because I see precisely what the Lord has called us to be being lived out in your lives, in your relationships, and in your interactions with one another. It's because I see this life happening and operating and I rejoice over how wonderful it is and how much you manifest this already; it's because it exists, not because something is lacking, that I bring this passage to your attention today. I suppose in one sense, I want to highlight it so that you wouldn't take it for granted, so that we wouldn't take it for granted, to consciously realize, to consciously acknowledge, "This is special. This is

something really, really good that belongs to us that the Lord has given to us," and therefore we say, "I want to do my part to cultivate this, to help it grow even more. I want to do my part to protect it." So the public commitment that we manifested last week is enhanced and now developed through love and humility and patience toward one another and so we cultivate love for one another, we cultivate care for one another. We are quick to abandon conflict in relationships for the sake of protecting this greater unity. Our relationships with one another occur in a bigger context and we see our relationships with one another in the context of this greater wonderful unity that Christ said was his desire for the church, "Father, bless them in this direction." Paul says, "In light of all of the power and the grace of God in your salvation, now I implore you, walk in unity."

So we start to see and understand that our individual relationships with one another are occurring in a greater context where we see not just the person that's across the aisle from us but we see in this a context of unity that is to be preserved, and so we go out of our way to love one another, to humble ourselves before one another, to forgive one another, to be gentle and kind with one another because that is what cultivates and preserves this unity that we are presently enjoying. And beloved, I want you to understand with no mental reservations in my mind, I want you to understand that from my perspective as the pastor of Truth Community Church, this is exactly what's happening. I am so grateful to God to see this happening in your lives and individually. So we're here to celebrate and to cultivate, not to correct tonight, but even as we enjoy that and appreciate it and say, "This is really sweet. This is really special," we realize that the way that we individually going forward handle life in the church reflects on the greater eternal realities that first brought us together.

Look at verse 4 of Ephesians 4 and see the oneness that's there. Verse 4, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." I believe seven times the word "one" is used there. Paul says, "We're one. We are one body. We are one spirit. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God." So those of us that belong to this God through the redemptive work of Christ should reflect that oneness in the way that we relate to one another. We are united as one. Stated differently, the things that make us distinct from each other, our social status, our ethnicity, our pasts, our diverse giftedness, are all secondary to the greater eternal realities that make us one and what makes us one is summarized here at the table. We all came to Christ through his saving grace. We were all sinners. We were one in sin, you could say, and now in Christ we are one having been redeemed, washed, forgiven, cleansed, forgiven, on our way to one place, heaven together. So when it's all said and done, we're all just sinners saved by grace through this redemptive act that we remember here tonight. We all enter through the same gate, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It's his transcendent work that unites us. It's his transcendent work that we remember at the table tonight.

So as we gather here, as we share in these elements in a few moments, we remember that our salvation comes to us, it came to us, it belongs to us, it will continue with us forever because a loving, gracious Savior motivated by his own internal character, not being

attracted by anything good in us, that Christ poured out his perfect life in a blood sacrifice to appease the wrath of God against our sin so that we might be reconciled to God and that we might manifest that reconciliation in the way that we manifest life in the local church. What a privilege that we have together. So we do not casually approach this table. We gratefully remember the Christ who delivered us from our plight in sin.

Please bow with me in prayer as we prepare our hearts to share in the table.

*Our Lord, collectively as Truth Community Church, we join together in prayer. We thank you preeminently for the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, all done to secure our spiritual salvation to redeem us from sin. Lord Jesus, we know that you shed your blood out of love for us and in obedience to your Father. We exalt you. We magnify you. We thank you so much for what you have done and we are a grateful people tonight. And Father, we would not take for granted the unity that we share as a body here this evening. We join with you in what you prayed before the crucifixion and ask you to preserve it and cultivate it still more. Lord, as we come, we confess our sins, we take a moment to silence our hearts and quiet ourselves before you and to knowledge, Lord, that we need the ongoing cleansing work of your blood in our lives. We thank you that you have made provision for us and we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.*

You have been listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church. For more information about our ministry including Pastor Don's blog and our location and service times, please visit us at [truthcommunitychurch.com](http://truthcommunitychurch.com). You will also find Don's sermon library where you can download free messages on many biblical passages and topics. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.