

CELEBRATING THE LORD'S SUPPER
(SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, 2014)

Scripture Reading: 10 Words; 1 Cor. 10:14-17

INTRODUCTION

1. Focus today will be on the Lord's Supper
2. I have talked before about the division that comes from the time of the Reformation.
 - A. Sadly there was not unity among key leaders in the Reformation concerning the Lord's Supper.
 - B. Colloquy of Marburg in 1529.
 - 1) 12 years after Luther posted the 95 Theses. (Calvin was 20 years old).
 - 2) This was an important meeting of German and Swiss Reformers.
 - 3) Agreed on 14 articles
 - 4) There was disagreement on the 15th article – the body and blood of Christ in relationship to the bread and wine.
 - 5) Luther strongly emphasized that Christ is bodily present in the bread and wine.
 - 6) Zwingli argued that Christ is only present in the hearts of believers.¹
3. Later John Calvin earnestly tried to work for unity among Protestants.
 - A. He did not agree with either Luther or Zwingli.
 - B. In some ways his position was closer to Luther's position, but he did not believe that the body of Christ was physically present in the elements.
4. Luther's successor, Melancthon, wept over the issues still dividing Protestants concerning the Lord's Supper.²
5. It is important to know our history and even more to know the teaching of God's Word.
6. We long that the meal given to the church by our Lord would truly be a meal that represents our unity in Jesus Christ.

¹ Keith Mathison, *Given for You*, 4-5.

² Noted by Erwin Lutzer, *Doctrines that Divide*.

7. Our own church has been directed in our understanding of the Lord's Supper by the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

8. The Larger Catechism in Q. 168 asks the question, What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.

9. There are seven main points in this answer that I want to discuss.

Let us rejoice in what a great salvation we have in Christ and feed on Him spiritually and all His benefits.

I. WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

1. Language has been one of the challenges throughout Church History – Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and now many modern languages.

2. Sacrament is a word from Latin.

3. The WSC says a sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied.

4. A sacrament is something we are commanded to do using **visible, physical** signs.

5. The signs and their proper use picture the salvation found in Jesus Christ.

6. The blessings of our salvation in Christ are also sealed and applied.

7. From the NT, we see clearly that Jesus gave to His church two sacraments – baptism and the Lord's Supper.

II. IN THE LORD'S SUPPER WE USE BREAD AND WINE

1. Why do we use bread and wine in the Lord's Supper and not some other liquid and food of our own choosing?

2. We follow the example of Jesus Christ and the clear instruction found in 1 Corinthians.

Matt. 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

Matt. 26:27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. **29** But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

3. The very clear instruction that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 speak of bread and the cup which contains wine.

4. The elements of bread and wine have an important connection with Melchizedek.

Gen. 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High.

5. King and Priest Melchizedek is a powerful picture of Jesus Christ as we see in Hebrews and other places.

6. It would be ludicrous to think we are free to change the elements of the Lord’s Supper.

III. THE DEATH OF JESUS IS PROCLAIMED IN CELEBRATING THE LORD’S SUPPER

1Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim** the Lord’s death till He comes.

1. The verb **proclaim** means to make known in public. This is not a hidden or secret message.

2. It is very important to recognize that in no way are we repeating the one time sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

3. We are not reenacting the sufferings of Jesus Christ either.

4. We are remembering his life, suffering, and death for us and His triumph over sin and death.

5. Our meal recalls the meal that Jesus enjoyed with His disciples before going to the cross.
6. When Jesus celebrated this Last Supper with His disciples, a Passover celebration, He made two very profound changes.
 - A. The Jewish celebration of the Passover declared, “This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.”³
 - B. Jesus declared, “This is my body.”
 - C. The third cup used in the Passover, the Cup of Blessing, Jesus declared is the blood of the new covenant.⁴
7. In our celebration we specifically focus on how Jesus gave Himself for us.
 - A. His body was broken in terms of undergoing horrific suffering.
8. The wine naturally speaks of His blood spilled to cleanse and wash us from the dark stain of sin.
9. We proclaim the one time and greatest sacrifice of all time.
10. It is this reality that should call forth awe, sorrow, celebration, and thanksgiving.

IV. IN THE LORD’S SUPPER WE FEED UPON HIS BODY AND BLOOD FOR SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT AND GROWTH IN GRACE

1. It is this language that is the most challenging in the Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.
2. How do we feed upon the body and blood of Jesus?
3. In answering this question, several points must be stressed.
 - A. We affirm the real humanity of Jesus Christ, that He truly enjoyed a physical body just like our body.
 - 1) He died because He took the curse and judgment that we deserve.
 - B. We deny that the elements of the Lord’s Supper in anyway turn into the body and blood of Jesus Christ or that the physical body of Christ surrounds them.

³ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC), 877.

⁴ Thiselton, 884.

C. Jesus Christ we affirm is now in Heaven. Through the Holy Spirit He is with us, but His physical body resides in glory.

D. Our feeding on His body and blood in no way is physical but spiritual.

1Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

E. According to the working of the Holy Spirit, we spiritually are strengthened through all that Jesus Christ is – His divinity and humanity.

F. And so we confess that Jesus Christ is truly present with us and that He strengthens us in the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper.

G. This view doesn't mean that the sacraments have this power in themselves or that it depends on the power of the person who is giving them.

H. The blessing that comes in the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper comes through the working of the Holy Spirit in those who possess truth faith.⁵

I. I realize that the language used in the Confession which summarizes some of what John Calvin especially wrote is difficult and challenging.

J. I think it is a proper reflection of the Word of God and the command of Jesus Christ – that we celebrate the meal in remembrance of Him and that we eat and drink.

K. Keith Mathison in his book, *Given for You*, uses the following analogy to explain this complex doctrine.

We can say that the body of Christ, which is locally present in heaven, is analogous to the power plant or electrical generator. God is analogous to the source that powers the generator. The divine life of God is analogous to the electricity. The Holy Spirit is analogous to the power lines that transmit the electricity and connect the power plant to millions of individual homes, while the sacramental signs are analogous to the individual light switches in those homes. The individual communicants in the church are analogous to the millions of light bulbs that receive the electricity from the plant, and the individual

⁵ Kenneth G. Talbot, *Confirming Our Faith*, 77.

communicant's faith (or lack thereof) is analogous to the filament in the light bulb (either broken or whole).⁶

K. It is important that we continue to consider this teaching in light of God's Word.

V. OUR UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IS CONFIRMED

1. Our union with Christ is one of the most precious teachings that Jesus and the NT establish for us.

Rom. 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who **are in Christ Jesus**, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Rom. 8:10 And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

1John 3:24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

2. I think it is rather clear that the Lord's Supper is then a wonderful picture of our union with Jesus Christ and our true fellowship with Him.

3. Our union means that our spiritual life entirely comes from Him.

Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

4. Our communion means that we live our lives before Him as real as we live and interact with family and friends.

⁶ Keith A. Mathison. *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Kindle Locations 3247-3252). Kindle Edition.

1John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

5. One of the important reasons that we celebrate the Lord's Supper is to confirm this truth.
6. We should never lose sight of who we are as sinners, but equally true we must never lose sight of what our great God has done and continues to do for us.
7. The Heidelberg Catechism directs us to this confirming blessing that is part of the Lord's Supper. What are you to believe?

First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup given to me, so surely His body was offered and broken for me and His blood poured out for me on the cross. **Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely He nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with His crucified body and poured-out blood.**

VI. WE TESTIFY AND RENEW OUR THANKFULNESS AND ENGAGEMENT TO GOD

1. The Lord's Supper, as I have mentioned before, is sometimes called the Eucharist.
2. The word *Eucharist* means thanksgiving.
 - A) The noun **thanksgiving** is not found in 1 Cor. 10 or 11, but you do see the verb **give thanks** used in 1 Cor. 11, referring to our Lord giving thanks before breaking the bread. Giving thanks is also found in Matt. 26.
 - B) The Didache, one of the oldest Christian writings after the NT, uses the term *Eucharist* to speak of the Lord's Supper.
 - C) Other early Christian writers also used this term.⁷

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist>

D) An important aspect of the Lord's Supper is giving thanks.

3. How could you truly celebrate the Lord's Supper and not do so with a thankful heart?

4. The celebration of the Lord's Supper as also is true with baptism means we have a divine calling to turn from sin and live entirely unto God.

1Cor. 10:14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

1Cor. 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. **22** Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

VII. WE TESTIFY AND RENEW OUR MUTUAL LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER AS MEMBERS OF THE SAME MYSTICAL BODY

1. The NT speaks of unity as the result of God's gracious work in the lives of His people.

2. Your challenge is to live in light of what God has so powerfully done for you.

3. Listen to Ephesians 4:1-5.

Eph. 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, **2** with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, **3** endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; **6** one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

4. Listen also to 1 Cor. 10:17 which has direct reference to our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

1Cor. 10:17 For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

CONCLUSION:

Let us rejoice in what a great salvation we have in Christ and feed on Him spiritually and all His benefits.

Prayer

Hymn: 365

Benediction – Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.