

Remnant Life Church
01.08.23
Understanding Communion
Matthew 26:26-29

This morning I would like to address 2 questions before we come to the Table

- What is Communion
- And why do we embrace and participate in it as a part of our church life?

Communion goes by several different names, but it is known generally as an ordinance

- It is, by the definition of that word, a religious activity
- But it is much more than that for us as Christians
 - It is something maintained in the church because we saw Jesus model it for us
 - This includes baptism, communion, and He modeled the importance of humility by washing the feet of His disciples – something that many churches participate in
 - Jesus was a physical part of each of these and as such we realize the importance and significance of them for us today
- But communion goes beyond being just an something we do at church on occasion

READ – *Matthew 26:26-29*

- The details of the first Communion are recorded in the first 3 books of the NT
 - And so we read in Luke's account of the event and Jesus' words to His disciples
 - *Luke 22:19* – *This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.*
 - The word 'do' in the original language is *Pay-ay-oh*
 - It means to celebrate or keep
 - IOW continue to engage in that activity
 - Jesus was not saying to remember Him at that moment alone
 - But to keep remembering
- Why?
 - So that we may not only remember what He did for us
 - But realize the significance, importance, and power of the act of Communion

But I wonder how many of us know the historical significance of what we do and why we take communion the way we do today?

The supper that Jesus participated in with His disciples on that Thursday evening was not a unique meal stemming from His imminent arrest and death inside the next 24 hours

- It was, in fact, the time of the Passover celebration (*Ex 12*)
- This was done to remember and give thanks to God for the people's freedom from the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians
 - The 10 plagues culminating with the coming of the death angel (*Ex 7-12*)
 - But the Hebrews were spared, or "passed over" only by the presence of the blood of the sacrificial lamb on their doorway posts and across the lintel.

Passover was one of the prescribed feasts and festivals of the OT

- These were times and places, established by God throughout the course of the year, that were set apart for a particular purpose
- There are 7 festivals described in the Pentateuch which are the first 5 books of the OT
 - Then there are 2 more added following the Hebrew people's return from the time of exile by the Babylonians
 - A total of 9
 - All feasts are festivals
 - But not all festivals are feasts
 - Yet each was considered holy and celebrated every year, at the prescribed time, without fail

The Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, which was the season in which Jesus was crucified, was one of the most important

- The Passover meal, called a Seder, is a religious ceremony with very strict guidelines as to how it was to be observed
 - Those guidelines were given by God to Moses in **Exodus 12** just prior to the unleashing of the 10th plague
- The first Communion or Lord's Supper held by Jesus and His disciples in the upper room was the eating of the Passover meal
 - This was something that Jesus had participated in His entire earthly life
 - How appropriate that the final meal Jesus and His disciples would eat together was the same eaten by Moses and the Hebrew people the night before they were to be set free
 - But the meaning was now going to be of added significance and importance
 - The great difference in the two was that the Hebrew people were only spared or saved from death by the blood of a sacrificed lamb being placed around the frame of their doorway to their home.
 - Jesus was about to become the final sacrifice for all of humanity, but it was not the bondage of man that Jesus came to free us from, but from the eternal bondage of sin. And it was now the heart, the doorway of our lives, where the blood would be applied.

Yet man, in all of our supposed wisdom, have many times used Communion as a divisive tool because of different interpretations, philosophies, and even the modes of distribution.

- Author and theologian Millard Erickson who, among other works wrote the outstanding book of evangelical systematic theology called simply *Christian Theology*, regarding the division of churches over the Lord's Supper wrote the following...
 - *In some cases, the subject of the spiritual or practical value of the Lord's Supper has become lost in the dispute over theoretical issues. The theoretical questions are important as they affect the spiritual considerations and so they ought not be too quickly dismissed. But if we get bogged down in the technical issues, and do not move on to deal with the practical meaning, we will have missed the whole point of Christ having established the Supper.*

And so, what was the point of Jesus spending some of His final hours in this way with His disciples aside from obeying the law of Moses?

- IOW, why do we continue, over 2000 years later, to come to the table of the Lord?

1. Because it was established by Jesus Himself

- a. The evidence is overwhelming through the 3 Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke – and this is in spite of some who have tried to question it
- b. And while the Apostle John does not review the details of the meal like the other 3, he does write in his gospel of other things that happened while they were together including Jesus washing the disciple's feet.
- c. In addition, the Apostle Paul in **I Corinthians 11** confirms the details in his own account of what had taken place likely passed on to Him by those who were there.
- d. And so first, we do this because Jesus did

2. Second, Jesus told us to repeat the event

- a. Some claim that because Matthew and Mark do not specify this it is not and cannot be confirmed
- b. But both Luke and Paul repeat the command, *do this in remembrance of me.*
 - i. How many times must something be said in the Bible to be true?
 - ii. Once
- c. And if the Supper was intended only for Jesus and the 11 that evening, we must then ask what the point of the Lord's Supper would have been since all 3 of the Synoptic Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke take the time to include it in their accounts
- d. The fact that 5 separate sources record the Last Supper, speaks not only to the importance of what was happening, but to its need to be repeated.

3. And then third, the Lord's Supper is a form of proclamation

- a. When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we are declaring the fact and the meaning of Christ's death
- b. We read this in Paul's account
 - i. **I Cor 11:26** – *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*
 - ii. It, in fact, pointing backward and declaring His death as the basis of our salvation
- c. But in addition to that, it proclaims a present-day truth
 - i. It is of the vital importance and absolute necessity of a proper frame of mind and heart toward others
 - ii. Whenever we take communion here at RLC I always present two things that each of us must be aware of and examine...

1. The first is whether we know Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior

- a. Paul continues in **I Cor 11** to say, *So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood*

of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

- i. IOW – if you have not confessed your sins and invited Jesus to become Lord of your life, to receive these sacred elements is, in effect, blasphemy against Almighty God.
 - ii. Paul says that is a direct sin against the body and blood of Christ
2. But the second part of that warning involves our relationships to one another
- a. Paul chastises the people of the Corinthian church in the first part of chapter 11 because of the divisions among them
 - b. To live for Jesus means to live in unity with one another
 - i. If there is an aspect of church life that is the most dangerous in these days, it is the elements of everyday life that now divide us
 - ii. You would think churches would disagree on theology or the way church is conducted – and unfortunately that is still very much present
 - iii. But that is not by any means the only source of division
 - c. Now it is politics, what politician you voted for, health issues, getting a shot verses not getting a shot, even whether you cover your face when you go out in public.
 - i. These are the things that are dividing churches now IN ADDITION to the others mentioned that have long split congregations
 - ii. May I then loving but firmly say again, if this is true today in your own heart, if those things are dividing your relationships than you need to stop and reassess
 - d. But that assessment is not about someone else, it is about YOU!

What does the Bible say about our relationship with others?

- **John 13:34** Jesus said - *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*
 - What about that word 'must'?
 - In the original language it means something that is necessary, a law, or a command
 - IOW – it is not a suggestion it is a directive, a command given by Jesus Himself

- **John 13:35** - *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*
 - If you are a follower Jesus Christ, that is what a disciple is, you show that by loving each other
 - Notice there are no stipulations or exceptions to that
 - One another is a general description not a specific one
 - IOW – you are not called to love only those who agree with you
- **Eph 4:2** - *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*
 - What does that mean?
 - Very simply – love the people around you ANYWAY, regardless of how you view the details of what our world has become.
 - Bad news – you are not always easy to love!

The Lord's Supper is as much a symbol of the present fellowship we have with the people in our lives as it is the symbol of the past death of Jesus Christ. In addition, it also holds a future fact, the second coming of our Lord!

- Paul continues in **I Cor 11:26**
 - *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again.*

When you recognize, embrace, and live these aspects of communion, the result of that is understanding that the partaking of communion is a direct assault on the plans of satan in your life.

- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was the final nail in satan's future
 - His eternal fate was sealed when Jesus was resurrected that Sunday morning
 - So, to celebrate, remember, and honor what Jesus did, willingly going to the cross for you and for me, assaults what satan desires for your life – which is for you to be removed or distanced from Jesus
 - Here, this morning, you are coming into the closest fellowship act of union with Him
 - You are declaring your life is given over to Him and you want to live your life for Him, seen by your love for the people you encounter, every day.

And this is why I want us to take or celebrate communion on the first Sunday we are together of the new year.

Let me ask you one more question - why are you going to be receiving communion this morning?

- First, for every one of us it is a declaration of remembrance and gratitude for what God has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ – His life, death, and resurrection resulting in our salvation.
- But there may be something more for you
 - Perhaps communion this morning is a time of warfare against the plans of satan to try and thwart the plans God has for you in 2023
 - The blessings that He has ready for you
 - Blessings of a closer walk with Him
 - Blessings of health and healing

- Blessing of renewed relationships
- Blessings of financial increase for you then to be able to bless others
- Blessings for His work to continue and be increased here at RLC

Whatever that may be, know that what you are doing today, with perhaps a better understanding of why it is so important, is a vital part of your spiritual walk with Him.

And as in all things, we give Him and Him alone all the glory and honor for that we will see done in His name in the year to come.