

Communion: A New Beginning

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- [0 : 00] All right, take your Bibles if you would, turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. 1 Corinthians chapter 11.
- If you would put a thumb there and then turn with me over to 1 Peter chapter 1. So if you want to mark 1 Corinthians 11 and then go over to 1 Peter chapter 1.
- If you don't have a Bible, there should be one there in your pew back. You may have an app on your phone you can use or look on with someone next to you.
- 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Peter 1. As you're turning to these two passages, I'd like to talk to you about the subject of communion or the Lord's Supper.
- Those terms can be used interchangeably. Communion, the Lord's Supper, both represent this time of honoring and recognizing and remembering the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.
- [1 : 14] And this harkens back to the Passover. If you read back in the Old Testament, you would understand what we're talking about when we say the Passover. This became a great Jewish tradition for the Hebrew people, remembering back what God did in rescuing them from His judgment.
- So where does this Lord's Supper come from or the communion come from? We read about it in the book of Exodus, this Passover feast when God's people, the Israelite people, were trapped in the nation of Egypt.
- And he would not let them go. And God sent judgment after judgment upon the Egyptian people because of Pharaoh's resistance to let them go. And finally, he allowed the death angel to pass over all the households.
- And the firstborn son in each household would die. And so it was a terrible thing. But he rescued his people from that judgment by telling them to swipe the top and the doorposts of their households with the blood of a sacrificial lamb.
- And that, when the death angel passed over, when he saw that blood on the doorpost, he would not take the life of the firstborn son in that house. So a very dark moment, a very tragic moment, but something that would pave the way for how important blood sacrifice is in paying the penalty for sin.
- [2 : 49] You see, sin is a huge deal in God's eyes. We like to gloss it over. We like to try to act like it's not really as bad as it is.
- And yet sin not only separates us from God, it causes irreparable harm to us, those we care about, and then people we may not even realize are affected by sin.
- So God does not tolerate sin. Sin must be paid for. A price must be paid. And of course, this blood of these sacrificial lambs that was painted on the doorpost was a type, a representation of what would come when Jesus Christ, called the Lamb of God, became a sacrificial lamb himself.
- For all people of all time. And his blood is what is necessary to cleanse us. And so when God then sees the blood of his son that has washed our sins away, then he says, you're safe.

You're forgiven. You don't have to pay that terrible penalty for sin. So that's where we get this idea of the Passover. And then I'd love to go to 1 Corinthians 11 here.

[4 : 20] Because what the question we need to ask or the understanding that we need to come to is the final Passover then became the first communion.

So as Jesus sat in the upper room, we read about it in Luke 22. He sat there in the upper room before his crucifixion and his disciples are there and they're gathered and they take the Passover together.

He is then paving the way for this transition from the Passover to communion.

So we no longer have to recognize as the Hebrew people did. And there's nothing wrong with having a Passover feast. But now we are under a different commandment of now taking communion together.

Well, why do we call it communion? Because that word represents not only the community of believers, but being in a spirit of communion, communing with the Lord himself as we recognize and remember his great sacrifice that happened for us.

[5 : 26] So this Passover, this communion, Lord's Supper are all tied together inextricably. So let's go to 1 Corinthians 11 now. 1 Corinthians 11, and we'll read down at the end of the passage in verse 23.

For I received from the Lord, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, and he says, I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. On the night when Jesus was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, 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. Verse 25. In the same way also he took the cup after supper and said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

What a powerful thing to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. That is our instruction. All throughout Scripture from Matthew 28 and Mark 16, and all throughout the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament, God's people have always been commanded to proclaim him, to proclaim God to the nations.

[6 : 53] We are not just to keep our faith silent. We are to proclaim it. Proclaiming is the same word in Scripture as preaching. And that's not just a job for the pastor.

That's a job for all of us to preach this gospel, this good news of the Lord's sacrificial death, not just for us that are sitting in these pews, but for everyone, everywhere.

So, when we proclaim his death, what are we doing? We are bringing it back to the gospel. We're bringing it back to the good news.

My friend Dan Curry preached last week all about the gospel, how we are supposed to be proud of this gospel, this good news that God has given to us, free gift from him.

We did nothing to earn it. And we are supposed to let it change us. Live it out. How do we do that?

[7 : 56] We live the actual gospel. So, how do you do that? How do you live the gospel? Well, you remember the truth that you did nothing to earn God's goodness and favor.

You did nothing to earn Jesus dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and offering forgiveness to you. And you take that truth, and you remind yourself of it every day, and you live that way.

That I have done nothing to earn God's favor, so I'm not going to make anybody else do anything to earn mine. I'm going to forgive freely. I'm going to show love freely.

And I'm going to tell everybody about this saving message that Jesus revealed to me. That's how we live the gospel. You live it very practically.

You live it with your family. Live it with your spouse. Live it with yourself. Reminding yourself and those around you daily of the power of the gospel.

[9 : 07] Now, guess what? You're going to fail at that. We're going to go back to our old way of thinking, and we're not going to let the gospel affect how we think and how we act at times.

But this is one of the biggest reasons why I believe Jesus told the church, and Paul repeated this instruction to the church, to stop and remind ourselves.

He said, do this in remembrance of me. So stop and remember just what Jesus did and the impact that that has on our life and our relationships.

So the Lord's Supper represents our new life in Christ. And we could remind ourselves of that every day, every week, every month.

But we are going to stop as a church and make sure we intentionally remind ourselves of that at the Lord's Supper, at communion. Last time we observed the Lord's Supper, I preached on how the Lord's Supper, the communion time, is supposed to be a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice.

[10 : 21] And that's absolutely true. That's spelled out in Scripture in black and white. But if you take it a step further, it's also a new beginning. Every time that you remember His body and His blood, it's not just a traditional religious rite that we stop and we feel fuzzy inside and we feel solemn and we feel sober and we just think, Oh, I feel holy in this moment.

I believe that, unfortunately, that's what this kind of religious rite has become for a lot of man-made religions out there. It's just become an escape from the world around us.

And you get into a holy moment like this and it makes you feel better about everything. But there's some reality missing there. There's some reality missing because there's truth missing.

Because we worship a real God. We worship a real risen Savior who really hears us when we pray. Who really works actively in our lives.

And so stopping to remember Him re-centers us on a very real power. And it reminds us of the new life and new beginning we have in Jesus Christ.

[11 : 49] So, the Lord's Supper represents our new life in Christ. Let's go now to 1 Peter chapter 1. As we think of how Jesus' death represents our life.

What a contrast there. Jesus died so we could live. That's how it's always been. Because of the evil of sin, something has had to die so something else could live.

Now, 1 Peter chapter 1. Let's look. Let's start in verse 13.

Before we get there, I want to share a quote with you. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a great theologian from Germany. A pastor. God used him powerfully during a very troubled time in Germany.

And look at this that he wrote. The cross of Jesus is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life. Which we understand that Jesus certainly lived and His followers try to live.

[13 : 08] So, this cross of Jesus is not the terrible end to this otherwise God-fearing and happy life. Instead, it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ.

You understand what he said there? So, the cross of Jesus is not this symbol of defeat. Even though that's what they hung Him on. That's what He suffered on. That's what He bled on.

And that's what He died on. So, you would think that that would be the end of it. As I'm sure the devils rejoiced. The demons threw a party. Darkness seemed like it had won the day.

But we knew. Looking back. And those who believed Him, followed Him truly, knew that His moment was not over.

The grave could not hold Him. And Jesus arose powerfully from the dead and proved that He is God. That we can trust Him. And so, the cross is not a symbol of defeat.

[14 : 12] It's not the end of the story. It's not the end of your story or mine. It meets us at the beginning of our relationship, our communion with Jesus Christ.

So, when we stop and we think about His body, we think about His blood, we're not thinking of defeat. We're not thinking of the tragic end to the story. We're thinking of the beginning.

The sacrifice that allowed us to have communion. Allowed us to have communion with God. Allowed us to have communion with one another. Allowed us to have communion and real relationship with Jesus Christ.

So, we can say rightly that communion is a new beginning. Now, you're going to understand why I highlighted the B and the E right there. We're going to get into a few different B's this morning.

But a communion is a new beginning for us. So, let's look now at 1 Peter 1 and verse 13. Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[15 : 16] Did you catch that? With your minds ready for action, be sober-minded. And then in verse 14. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.

But as the one who called you is holy, you are also to be holy in all your conduct. Because it is written, be holy because I am holy. If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers.

For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life, inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but he was revealed in these last times for you. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

Man, don't put your faith and hope in anything else. It will let you down. But put your faith and hope in God. Verse 22. Since you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth, so that you show sincere brotherly love for each other, from a pure heart, love one another constantly.

[16 : 36] Because you have been born again. Not of perishable seed, like the rest of us are, but of imperishable.

That's what happens when we are born again. Through the living and enduring word of God. It means born into a life that cannot die.

For all flesh is like grass. Everything else dies. All the glory like a flower of the grass.

The grass withers. The flower fades or falls. But the word of the Lord endures forever. And this word is the gospel that was proclaimed to you.

And is still being proclaimed to you. And by you. So, let's dive into this text. And I pray that it impacts you as it has for me.

- [17 : 38] I want to give you this line from this quote from John Newton. And we know it in this very powerful song here. Well, I'm not sure why it's not showing up.
- And I apologize for that. Here we go. Here we go. There we are. See this up here? Y'all know this because you've sung Amazing Grace many times.
- But have you ever stopped to think about this verse here? Of this part of this song?
Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come.
- Grace has brought me safe thus far. And grace will lead me home. Now, the first B.
- And I'm going to tie these two together in just a moment. But the first B, B-E, word, that I want to draw your attention to here. Was back in 1 Peter chapter 1 again that we just read in verse 13.
- [18 : 38] Be sober. Be sober. So if you're going to write something down in the notes section of your bulletin, write down number one, be sober.
- These are our instructions when it comes to proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. This communion time when we stop and we recenter ourselves on the death, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- We are commanded here to be sober. What does that look like? It looks like relying on grace. Relying on grace.
- Do you see what it says in the next part right after? Be sober minded. Verse 13. Set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Do you understand that John Newton caught a glimpse of that when he wrote this great hymn that's probably lasted longer than any other hymn that people have written?
- [19 : 45] Any other gospel song, amazing grace kind of is at the top of that pile, isn't it? And he said, grace has brought me safe this far through all the dangers, all the toils, all the snares, and grace will lead me home.
- What does that mean? It wasn't you. It wasn't me that brought us safely through these dangers, toils, and snares. It was only by God's grace.
- Well, that sobers us up a little bit. We're completely reliant and dependent on God's grace. It's not your money.
- It's not your retirement. It's not your skills, your brain power, your expertise, your experience. None of that will get you safely home.
- It's only by God's grace. So that line is so powerful when we sing it. Grace has brought me safely this far, and grace will lead me home.
- [20 : 50] That makes our minds sober. That kills pride. That kills ego. It's not me. It's God.
- Anything good you see in me is God working through me. It's not me. I don't deserve the pat on the back. Jesus deserves the praise. So being sober-minded means relying on grace.
- Being sober-minded also means being ready for action. Did you catch that line in verse 13 at the very beginning there? With your minds ready for action, be sober-minded.
- So that's what it looks like to be sober is to be ready for action. You know what I think of when I think of this being ready for action? I think of back in Judges chapter 7 when Gideon was trying to get an army together to go fight the Midianites.
- And he knew that all their soldiers combined had no chance against this mighty Midianite army that was oppressing them. And so God told him he had too many soldiers.

[22 : 03] And he said, you've got to weed these guys down here. And he told them to get down by the river and he told them to drink out of the water. And he said, watch how they do it. The guys that get down there and they set down their weapons and they just all in on drinking the water because they're thirsty, that's not the guys you're going to be able to fight with.

The guys that stay ready for action, that's the guys that you can take into battle with you. Now God knew that he wouldn't even need those soldiers because they wouldn't raise their spears or raise their swords one time in battle.

God was going to win the victory without anyone lifting a finger. He had the whole plan with the jars and the torches and the trumpets.

God knew how it was going to work. But he wanted to make that point to Gideon that as this new leader of this army, and Gideon was the most unlikely candidate for that, but he says the new leader for this army, you've got to find the guys who are sober minded, whose minds are ready for action.

They understand what the task at hand is, and they're ready to go. It means they've set aside themselves. They've set aside their preferences.

[23 : 25] They've set aside their passions. And they've substituted the Lord's in their place. I am sober minded, understanding how important this mission is, understanding that my life has been given a meaning that it never had before, understanding that all the goals that I personally have must fall under the umbrella of Almighty God because his ways are greater than mine.

His goals are greater than mine. So mine must come underneath his. My mind must stay ready for action.

So be sober. And then 1 Peter chapter 1, we read it just a moment ago, minds ready for action, sober minded, and setting our hope completely on God's grace.

Number two, be smart. Be smart. As we're prepared to take the Lord's Supper, as we leave this place and go on about our daily lives, be sober, but be smart.

Well, where do we find that in the Scriptures? We find that back in verse 14. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former, what's that word?

[24 : 53] Ignorance. I say this frequently because the Bible just doesn't hold back, you know. I didn't write it. The Lord put it in there. The desires of your former ignorance.

Because he knows that in our flesh, in our sinful desires, we are ignorant. We're dummies. So he said, don't go back to that way of thinking.

That's not smart. Be smart. Be obedient children, and don't go back to the desires of that ignorant way of thinking.

That's going to lead you where you don't want to go. Ephesians chapter 4 sheds a little more light on this. Verse 22, down through verse 24, put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.

That's that ignorant way of thinking. To be made new in the attitude of your minds. You understand how the Lord's Supper, how communion is a new beginning?

[26 : 04] It makes us new. Because every day, we have to perform this exercise. Put off the old self. Because we recognize it's corrupted by our old, deceitful, ignorant desires.

And then we're made new in this new attitude of our minds. Romans chapter 12 calls that changing the way you think, and then putting on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness.

Skipped ahead. So, that's how we be smart. We go to God every day and say, God, make me new. Help me put off my old desires.

The ignorance that's gonna lead me away from your wisdom, from your knowledge, from your understanding. Read all about that in Proverbs.

James. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it from God. That's James. All throughout the Bible, we read that our wisdom is found in Jesus because apart from him, we're ignorant.

[27 : 11] We're not smart. So, God says, be smart as you're being sober. So, be sober, be smart, and then the last one, be sincere.

Be sincere. Back in 1 Peter 1. Verse 22, 1 Peter 1.

Would you look there with me? Since you have purified yourselves by obedience to the truth, we're being sober-minded, trying to be smart, don't go back after those ignorant desires.

So, you've purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth. What does it say? Show sincere, brotherly love for each other from a pure heart.

That's what we're commanded to do. Show sincere, brotherly love for each other. 1 Timothy 1 and verse 5 says this, the goal of our instruction, you want to know why we do this up here?

[28 : 19] Why we do the Sunday school classes? Why we do the d-groups? Why I'm preaching on Sunday mornings? The goal of all this instruction is that love comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

If that does not describe you, and if that does not describe me, then we've got to go back and be more sober-minded. We've got to go back and be smart about our old desires that's pulling us away from this, and then we've got to check our own hearts and say, am I sincere?

Am I sincerely loving God and loving my fellow brother or sister? Not just the ones you're blood related to, but the ones in the family of God, the neighbors all around you in your community, the people that God brings across your path every day, the people on the other side of the keyboard online, are you showing a sincere love from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith?

1 John 3.18 says it this way, little children, I love how he calls us little children, just kind of humbles us a little bit. Remember, it kills off that ego and pride, just in case you think you're all that.

John's reminding us that we're little children in God's eyes. He's our father. We're little children. We need to take this instruction from him. He says, let us not love in word or in speech, but in action and in truth.

[29 : 50] What is that? That's sincerity. That's being sincere. I don't just tell you I love you. I don't just tell you I'll pray for you. Don't raise your hand because it would just kill the vibe in here, okay?

But how many times have we said we'll pray for somebody and then never did? Again, don't raise your hand. I've gotten in the habit of trying to do it on the spot right then, whether I stop and pray with the person or just pray in my mind as I walk away because I'm thinking I may not remember this tomorrow.

I might write myself a note and forget to look at it. But there is a difference in loving someone in word and in speech and loving them in action and in truth.

Be sincere. As we take communion, as we gather for the Lord's Supper, let it be from a sincere heart. Not just for show, not just because that's the tradition that we're used to, but we're sincerely reminding ourselves that Jesus gave his life so we could have life.

So, Charles Deems was an old-time Methodist pastor who led one of the largest and most effective churches in New York City many, many years ago.

- [31 : 20] I found this quote by him and I wanted to share it with you today. He said, the Lord's Supper has been greatly instrumental in keeping his cause, Jesus' cause, alive.
- It's the voice of all believers preaching the Lord's death till he comes. That's what Jesus told us to do. He who believes that the Lord did come and die for us and will come again and take us to himself will not hesitate to regard this last request of our Lord and Savior.
- Do you understand the whole point of this? The Lord's Supper is to continue to proclaim and preach the Lord's death until he comes again.
- Someday, we'll trade in the Lord's Supper for the marriage supper of the Lamb. We'll all gather in heaven around a great big feast and we won't have to do this anymore.
- But until that day, we gather, we stop, we remember, and we proclaim the Lord's death. It's a new beginning for us.
- [32 : 31] Every time. You might have walked in here laden down with baggage. You might have walked in here with all kinds of baggage in your heart and in your mind. I invite you to lay it down at the cross.
- Remind yourself of the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus Christ and lay that down. Let him take it. Cast your burden on him because he cares for you.
- That's what the Lord's Supper is there to do. It's a new beginning of proclaiming the Lord's death. We don't just proclaim it to those who have never heard.
- We proclaim it to ourselves. We proclaim it to our families. And we remind ourselves to be sober, be smart, be sincere as we proclaim the Lord's death.
- Would you bow in prayer with me? God, I pray right now that you would speak to our minds. Our minds are the devil's playground. He gets in there when we lower our guard and messes us around.
- [33 : 36] I pray that you would speak to our flesh. That we would be smart and not go back to those desires that lead us away from you.
- The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life that you warn us about. I pray that we would be sincere.
- That this regular reminder as we gather to do this four times a year would take us back to that day on the cross when you held nothing back.
- When you gave up everything so I could stand up here and preach so your people could gather in this place, sing your songs of praise, fellowship with one another, lift up your name, remind ourselves of your sacrifice.
- Take us back there, Lord, and let the sincere love that you showed to us bear that same kind of sincere love within us.
- [34 : 51] The people we know would see a difference. It's in Jesus' name we ask these things. Would you keep your heads bowed in an attitude of prayer?
- I'm going to have the deacons come join me up front to distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper in just a moment. As they begin to make their way up front, let me ask you this question. Is there anybody here who would say, I know beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus is my Savior.
- I remember the day when I placed my faith in Him and He forgave me and made me His child. If that's you, would you just testify to that and signify that by slipping your hand up and say, yes, that's me.
- I know I'm a child of God. Thank you. You can put your hand down. Is there anybody who would say, I couldn't raise my hand a moment ago because I'm not sure? I've got questions.

I've got concerns and I'm not sure that I could raise my hand and say, I know I'm a child of God. Would you slip your hand up and I'll just pray for you? Everyone's heads are bowed.

[36 : 01] While we have a moment of privacy, I'd love to pray for you. Thank you. How many of you would say, God's working on me about something I've heard in the message today or something entirely different, but God's working on me right now in this moment of reminder, of remembering, of a new beginning.

I'm asking Jesus to help me with some things that are on my heart right now. Would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you, God. I pray for those that lifted their hands. I pray that you would be powerfully moving in their hearts right now, God. Through your spirit, give them wisdom. Give them clarity.

Give them understanding of what they need to do, the steps they need to take, but then help them to remember who they are as your child. Remind them of that, God, how much you value them, how much you love them.

And as they take these elements in just a moment, let it be a new beginning with Jesus that you want it to be. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[37 : 11] Amen. Amen.