

Communion: The Promise and The Price

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[0 : 00] Would you take your copy of the Word of God and turn with me to Luke chapter 22?! Luke chapter 22, we're going to look at verse 14.

In just a few minutes, we are going to take communion together, or otherwise known as the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table. How many of you grew up in church taking communion or the Lord's Supper?

Would you slip your hand up? Good. For many of you, this will be very familiar. It'll feel normal. The bread, the cup, the quiet reflection. It's part of what we do in church.

For some of you, if you didn't grow up that way, it might feel very strange what we're about to do. And if we stop and think about it, it is kind of a strange practice.

But we're going to look at what Jesus teaches about it and say, why do we do this? Why do we pass out a tiny little cracker and a tiny little cup of grape juice?

[1 : 24] And why do we read in scripture that Jesus says, when you do this, this is my body and this is my blood? Sounds weird, doesn't it? If you think about it.

If you didn't grow up with it and you're not used to it, then it might feel strange. But it's also easy for those of us who did grow up with it to forget how truly radical this is, how truly life-changing this practice is supposed to be.

So let's look at Luke chapter 22. We'll look at verse 19 first. And he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it.

And he gave it to them. Of course, this is Jesus doing this. And he said, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. That's what this moment is all about.

[2 : 40] Jesus for us. You can actually summarize and reduce the gospel message or the good news story of Jesus down to those three words.

Jesus for us. He took our place. And what he was doing with this practice, which he then said, do it in remembrance of me as often as you'll do it.

Some churches do it every single Sunday, every time they meet. Some churches do it once a month. This church does it four times a year quarterly. We'll gather together and we'll remember what Jesus did for us.

But it's not just a ritual. So much more than a ritual. And it's not just a reenactment. We're not just putting the famous picture of the Lord's Supper and Jesus and his disciples up on the screen and trying to reenact what Jesus did.

It's so much more than that. It's a declaration that the entire story of God and his dealings with man, thousands of years long, written across generations and covenants and kings, has reached its climax with sacrifice.

[4 : 00] And that's what we're going to talk about today. Sacrifice. Covenants. The promise and the price. A promise made long before you or I was born.

And a price that was paid when you and I could not pay anything back. So let's look at number one, the price. What sacrifice really is.

What sacrifice really is. We read it just a moment ago. Jesus took the bread. He gave it. He broke it. And he said, this is my body given for you.

This was the sacrifice. He said, this cup is my blood poured out for you. There was a real cost, a real price to be paid in this situation.

Why was that? Jesus said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Let's stop there for a moment and figure out what he's teaching us. No rabbi, Jewish rabbi.

[5 : 02] Remember, it's easy. We had our starting point course this morning. Just kick off upstairs, room 203. If you're not in Sunday school, come jump in and join us in room 203 with our starting point class.

But we stopped and we had to say, look, it's easy to just look at the Christian faith as we see it today and forget its roots. Forget its origins.

You realize that Jesus was seen as a Jewish rabbi. And so people expected him to be like the other Jewish rabbis or teachers. But he wasn't.

He was saying different things. He was teaching radically different things than anyone else was teaching. And ultimately, he came to say that I am God. I am the Messiah.

I am the one that you've been waiting for. I'm not here just to teach you about God. I'm here to reveal God to you. It's me. My father has sent me.

[5 : 59] So we have to go back to the beginnings and remember that this is the faith that we're holding on to. It's this radical spinoff of that Jewish faith that turns it on its head and says, now it's all about Jesus.

It's not about the law anymore. It's not about the Ten Commandments anymore. It's not about impressing God. It's about the person of Jesus choosing him and following him.

And so no rabbi had ever said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. The old covenants were treasured by the Jewish people.

They were lifted up. They were held onto as precious gifts from God. And Jesus is here to introduce a new covenant. No teacher had ever dared to make himself the sacrifice.

But that's exactly what Jesus was. He wasn't just teaching us about forgiveness. He was literally purchasing forgiveness with his blood.

[7 : 02] The language we read in the New Testament about what Jesus did on the cross for us is transactional. He bought us back.

The word is redeemed. He purchased us with his blood. Why? Why was that necessary? Because you and I had sinned. You and I still sin, don't we? We still break God's laws.

We still go astray. Every one of us has gone into our own ways. And God has poured out on his son, Jesus, the iniquity or the sin, the wrongdoing of all of us.

He took the punishment. He was the sacrifice. But we cheapen the word sacrifice. We'll use the word sacrifice in our day-to-day life.

You say, I sacrificed my Saturday morning to go help somebody move. Maybe that was a sacrifice in your mind, but it pales in comparison to the real sacrifice that Jesus was, right?

[8 : 04] Say, I sacrificed my dessert for my diet. Sometimes that feels like a sacrifice, all right? Let's be real. They just gave me a bunch of candy.

And I'm trying to think, how much of that can I actually eat? How much of that do I have to sacrifice and give away to you people? But the sacrifices we make are not real sacrifices.

Jesus was a sacrifice. He gave everything. He paid the ultimate price. In the Bible, sacrifice isn't about inconvenience.

It's about substitution. Placing yourself in someone else's place to receive wrath, to receive penalty, to receive suffering.

Something or someone dies so that someone else can live. The Jewish people would have understood that. Because animal sacrifices had been dating back to their earliest origins.

[9 : 14] The very beginning, God had commanded them to take their very best of their flocks and go sacrifice it as a penalty, as a payment for their sins, their wrongdoing.

And all this, it was never about the animals. It was all pointing forward to Jesus, who would be the ultimate final sacrifice. So we don't go out and do animal sacrifices because Jesus was the final one.

So they would have understood that term. And they would have understood the strength that came behind it when Jesus painted himself as the sacrifice. And that's what he was saying.

This bread that you tear apart means that I'm about to be torn apart. This bread that you break is like my body, which is about to be broken.

This cup shows you that I'm about to bleed. It's not a theory. It's not something for us to argue about. This is the cost.

[10 : 14] This is the price for forgiveness. This is the price for forgiveness. Communion reminds us that grace is free, but it's never cheap.

Grace is free, but it's never cheap. It came at a great cost. Jesus' own life.

Jesus' own blood. We thank God that in power he raised him back up from the dead. But that does not minimize the suffering, the real pain and anguish and torment and death that Jesus experienced on that cross.

So when we pause in our annual calendar and we stop everything else we're doing and we stop to remember what Jesus did, let us remember the words that we read in John chapter 10 and verse 18.

No one takes my life from me, Jesus said. I lay it down of my own accord. I lay it down willingly. Not only was he a sacrifice, he was a willing sacrifice.

[11 : 28] And so then when we read in Romans chapter 12 and verses 1 and 2 and he says, now you go and be a willing sacrifice for me, it's a whole lot easier for someone to tell you that when they've been a willing sacrifice for you.

You say, what have you ever done for me? Why would you ask all of this? Why would you ask me to dedicate my life to you when you've never done anything for me? But Jesus can look at us and say, I did everything for you.

I gave everything for you. I held nothing back. Now with that picture of generosity, we've just spent the last six weeks studying how generous God was toward us and how he wants us to be generous in return.

He can say, this is generosity displayed. Me on the cross as the sacrifice, the willing sacrifice for you. Those people might have thought they took my life for me, but that was always the plan from the very beginning.

You can look back at the prophets and see their prediction of this son of God who would willingly lay down his life and suffer just as he did on that cross.

[12 : 37] So God's grace is given freely to us now today, but it was not cheap. It cost Jesus everything. And that's the second part.

Jesus didn't lose his life. He gave it. He offered it up willingly. He wasn't the victim here. He was the author of this story.

He wasn't the victim of sacrifice. He was the author of it. This was according to God's plan. Out of his great love, he offered up his greatest treasure, his greatest possession.

John 3, 16 calls it his only begotten son. The greatest he had. And he said, I give it to you.

From the very beginning, God's people knew that sin carried a price. In the Garden of Eden, when God created everything, Adam and Eve sinned, and an animal had to die to clothe their shame.

[13 : 40] In Exodus, a lamb's blood marked the doors so that the death angel would pass over. At the temple, sacrifice after sacrifice was offered as a substitute for sin.

And all of it was pointing to this when Jesus would give his life on a hill called Calvary, a cross where the Lamb of God, the final sacrifice, would take away the sin of the world.

And here's the part that just staggers you, staggers me. No one forced him. If I knew that what Jesus endured was waiting around the corner, I would have walked away.

Jesus even knelt in the garden the night before and said, God, let this cup pass from me. In his humanity, knowing what he was about to endure, it almost seems as though he prayed, is there any other way?

But then he came back to, not my will, but yours be done. This is the love that Jesus has for us.

[15 : 05] This is the love that the Father has for us. He would endure any amount of suffering. He would endure any amount of pain. So you and I could have a path to forgiveness.

So you and I could have a fresh start with Jesus. So you and I could have eternal security for all time as the children of God.

But that was impossible. The relationship was broken. There was no way we could undo what we as humans had done and continue to do.

So there had to be a willing sacrifice. And there was. And that was the price that had to be paid. But thank God there's also a promise there.

And that's number two. The promise is what his blood really means. In just a few minutes, we're going to take the cup and we're going to drink it. And Jesus says, this symbolizes my blood.

[16 : 07] This represents my blood that was poured out on the cross. Back in Luke 22, look at the phrase that Jesus uses with the cup. This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

We're going to talk about what that covenant means. If you've been in church a while, you've heard that line probably a thousand times. But to a Jewish listener, those words would explode like fireworks.

The covenants were important to them. They knew exactly what a covenant was. It was a part of their everyday life. It was a part of their existence, their identity. A covenant was more than a contract.

It was more than a handshake. It was a binding, blood-sealed promise. They lived by covenants. The kind that could not be broken without blood being shed.

So from the very beginning, God has been a covenant-making God. I wrote down some of the covenants. And these are by no means all. But some of the covenants in Genesis 12, God promised Abraham, through your offspring, all nations on the earth will be blessed.

[17 : 15] In Exodus chapter 24, God made a covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai. And Moses sprinkled the blood of bulls on the altar and the people, sealing this covenant that God made.

In 2 Samuel chapter 7, God promised David that one of his descendants would reign forever. Remember, in Jeremiah 31, centuries before Jesus, God promised a new covenant would come.

One that would forgive sin once and for all. And one that would write God's law on our hearts, not on tablets of stone.

Every covenant was God saying, I will be faithful to my people. But every covenant was sealed with blood.

Have you ever heard the saying, blood is thicker than water? Anybody ever heard that? Blood is thicker than water. Just real quick, what do you think it means?

[18 : 17] Somebody yell it out. Deep insight, Wade. What are they trying to say? Blood is thicker than water.

The bond of blood is stronger than the bond of water. Okay. What's the context they usually use it in? Family. Family.

There it is. Family, right? Well, blood is thicker than water. All right. Let's actually figure out what that meant. Back in the 1100s, a German poet named, here we go.

We got some people with German roots in this. Are y'all going to correct me so badly? Heinrich der Glitcher. I don't know how to read that face.

I got the Shoffners over here looking at me like, I don't know about that. Gabe, that was the best I could do. All right. Heinrich der Glitcher wrote that the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.

[19 : 29] Think about that. The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb. That's where that saying came from. The idea was not that family is thicker than any other bond.

The idea was that the bonds of covenant friendship or kinship, the kind made by choice, are stronger than those naturally existing because of family relationships.

You ever heard somebody say you can't choose your family? And look, I'm not ragging on families here, but I'm saying it's interesting because we have actually taken this saying to express the opposite of what the author of this saying actually meant.

He was writing about brothers in arms going out to fight and he said, the bond, the blood of kinship, the blood of the covenant made between soldiers or those who have become like brothers is actually stronger than that bond that exists just from being related.

Covenants have always been seen as the ultimate bond and blood is usually the price of these promises. On the night before Jesus died, Jesus took the cup and he said, this is it.

[20 : 57] This is the covenant that Jeremiah was talking about. This is the promise to Abraham fulfilled. This is the plan from the Garden of Eden now come to pass in me.

Go to Hebrews chapter 8, would you? Hebrews chapter 8. We're going to be there for just a few more minutes before we stop to take the elements of the Lord's Supper. We're going to be in Hebrews chapter 8.

and then going into chapter 9. You can follow along in your Bible as I read. Hebrews 8, beginning in verse 6. But now Jesus, our high priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood.

The priests were the ones who had to go and make the sacrifices. They had to be the representatives of the people before God to say, we're killing this animal to make up for the sin that we've done.

It could never take away the sin. It was just a placeholder for the one who would come to actually pay and atone for the sin. So he said, Jesus is far superior to the old priests.

[22 : 02] He is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God based on better promises. All those covenants from God, the Israelite people would hold on to those like a lifeline.

Say, this is what we have from God. This is the promise. And Jesus is saying, I'm coming with better promises. I'm coming with a new and better covenant.

And it's not just for the Israelite people. It's for anyone who will come to God based on better promises. Back in Hebrews 8, if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it.

But it wasn't faultless, was it? It had faults. When God speaks of a new covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

Kind of like technology. Soon as you buy a new phone, it feels like it's out of date, obsolete, and will soon disappear and be replaced by the newest, latest, and greatest version.

[23 : 14] I'm going to have to probably buy a phone this year because my old one is starting to feel very obsolete and out of date. It's what they do to you. I've held on as long as I can. So God is replacing the old covenant.

He said, this is now out of date. It's obsolete. I'm going to do away with it. I'm going to give you a new one that's far better, but I'm not going to charge you hundreds of dollars for it.

You're not going to have to get a subscription plan. It is a once for all. It's a free gift. Then get into chapter 9, Hebrews chapter 9, verse 1. That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth.

This is an illustration, skipped out, pointing to the present time, verse 9. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them.

They couldn't do you any real good. The old system, sinning, having the priests go and confess your sin and kill an animal as a sacrifice, none of that could really do anything good for you.

[24 : 33] It was just a symbol of what Jesus was going to do. That old system deals with only food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies, physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established.

So Christ has now become the high priest over all good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect tabernacle in heaven which was not made by human hands because anything made by human hands is not perfect.

Y'all know that, right? Anything you've made, you might be very proud of it, but it's not perfect. It could always be improved. But in heaven, it truly is perfect.

It's not part of this created world. With his own blood, what did Jesus do? Not the blood of goats and calves. His own blood. He entered the most holy place.

And without taking a lot of time to get into all the rules and regulations of the temple back then, when that priest would go in to atone for the sin of his people, only he could enter into this most holy place.

[25 : 45] They called it the holy of holies. Behind all these curtains and there was this one big thick curtain that was sewn so thick no one could even cut it. It was so long and so thick and so heavy.

And when Jesus died, when he gave up the ghost, his spirit left him on the cross. That temple, God tore it from top to bottom.

That covering. What am I trying to say? That curtain. There we go. Thank you. That curtain, God tore it from top to bottom because the holy of holies, that most holy place was now obsolete.

It held no special significance anymore because that system was now gone. No more sacrifices. No more priests going in on our behalf.

That's why you don't need to come and sit in a confessional booth and tell me the wrong things you've done. I don't want to hear it. Trust me. And I don't want to tell you mine.

[26 : 52] We tell it to Jesus. You ever heard that song? Tell it to Jesus. Tell it to Jesus. There's no other such a friend or brother. Tell it to Jesus alone because God made the old way obsolete.

Now, man-made religions will still try to hold on to things. And they'll try to hold on to certain traditions and say, no, this is how we got to do it because look back, it's been done for thousands of years. Yeah, until Jesus came.

And now Jesus gave us a new way. The temple made with hands no longer has any significance. Now, it's the temple made in heaven waiting for you and I to get there.

and the New Testament actually teaches us that our bodies are now like the temple of God. Kind of gives us some pause when we go eat Tex-Mex or whatever.

How well are we treating this temple right now, right? But individually, we are the temples of God walking around because we are now the holy place.

[28 : 01] He has made us holy. We didn't make ourselves holy. When we repent of our sins and turn to Jesus, He has made us holy.

So let's get back into Hebrews 9. He has entered that greater, more perfect tabernacle in heaven which was not made by human hands. It's not part of this created world.

With His blood, He entered the most holy place once for all time and secured our redemption. There's that word again, that transactional word that means buy back. He secured our redemption forever.

Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. It was never real. It was always ceremonial.

It did nothing with the heart. It was just the bodies. Just think how much more. The writer of Hebrews says, the blood of Christ will purify our conscience from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God.

[29 : 06] God can make you clean on the inside. Those sacrifices could never do that. And nothing you can do can clean your inside.

You can take all the showers. You can use all the products. you can try to get your mind into a better state. Try to forget the wrongs you've done.

Try to move on. Try to leave the past in the past. You can do all that but you cannot make your inner self clean. You can't clean your heart. You can't clean your soul.

You can't clean your memory. only God can really cleanse the real you. You can clean your shell but not you.

Just think how much more the blood of Christ can and will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so then we can really worship.

[30 : 08] For by the power of the eternal spirit Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance that God has promised us.

Told you there was better promises coming. The eternal inheritance that will last forever because of Jesus and what he did. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

So let's look at these old and new covenants. The old covenant the first covenant was the righteousness of the law and do you know what it accomplished? Condemnation. It condemned you over and over again and if you still live by the law open up the old testament read the law you and I break it all the time.

We break the law continually. So the old covenant was there to show us just how bad we really are. Here's God's standard you can't reach it.

You can't meet it. You might feel good about yourself because you feel like you're meeting it better than that guy is or better than that girl is but the truth is none of us are meeting God's standard.

[31 : 27] We continually break the law. So the new covenant came. Jesus brought the second covenant which is the righteousness of Christ and that brings us reconciliation. We can be reconciled.

things made right only by Jesus. The old covenant showed us how far apart God and us are. The new covenant shows us how that distance can be overcome, can be brought together because of what Jesus did.

So the old covenant was concerned with a clean outside, clean hands, clean rituals, clean appearances, clean habits. The new covenant is the righteousness of Christ concerned with a clean inside, a forgiven heart, a transformed spirit, a life made new from the inside out.

The cross was not God changing his plan, it was God completing his plan. This was always the plan. He didn't see how badly we were keeping the law and say okay I gotta pivot and I gotta figure something else out here.

Jesus why don't you go and make all this right? It was the plan from the beginning to show us how we needed him. You can't get somebody saved until they realize they're lost.

[32 : 54] You and I could not turn to Jesus until we realized we needed to be forgiven. Until we realized we're not good enough, we're not strong enough, we need him.

the blood of bulls and goats could only cover sin but the blood of Jesus can cancel it. And it has.

He's canceled mine. He's canceled many of yours. And if you're here today and you don't have that kind of relationship with Jesus, please don't walk out of here today without starting it.

God, this is the moment, this is the day of salvation for you. Now is the time for you to turn from sin and say, I turn to Jesus. God help me.

I can't do it on my own. Colossians chapter two and verse 13 talks about that. When you were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ.

[33 : 54] We're not going to get into the whole circumcision part. That was part of the rituals to make you clean. But it was a practice that of course now is practiced today with babies born in the hospital. But when you were dead in your sin and all these rituals that you couldn't keep up with, God made you alive with Christ.

He forgave us all of our sins having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us. It condemned us. The law always condemns you.

But then he's taken it away and he nailed it to his cross. What an awesome picture of how Jesus treated this. How he bought us our salvation. What he has to do with the law now.

He said I take it and I nail it to the cross. This is now where it hangs. It has no rule over you anymore. Now I'm to be the sole ruler over you and I want that to be a relationship.

That's the difference the cross makes. every drop of blood that fell at the cross of Jesus is God saying I keep my promises even to the death.

[35 : 08] Every drop of blood is God's promise to you. I paid for your sin. So in conclusion that's what this moment is about.

It's a price that was paid and it's a promise that was kept. So when we hold the bread this morning and we hold the cup don't let it become a routine.

