

Sunday, October 23, 2022 | Upon This Rock

Luke 22:1-27 | "Church Ordinances: Communion"

A couple weeks ago, we started a new series called *Upon This Rock*. And this study is designed to help the believer answer two questions: "what is the church" and "what is its purpose." How a person answers those questions will significantly impact their life. And we began to answer those questions by looking at the church's origins in Matthew 16. There we learned that Peter, like all true believers, is the substance of the church. The church is not a building but a people who confess that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. But we also discovered that even though when we are at our best, we can be the foundation of the church, we become a stumbling block when we're at our worst. This is precisely what happened to Peter. He misunderstood Jesus' mission and tried to stand in the Messiah's way. Therefore, to avoid making the same mistakes that Peter made, we must understand that to follow Jesus—i.e., to be the church—we must deny what we want and devote ourselves to Jesus' suffering.

Last week, we unpacked the church's objective from Mathew 28. Often called "the great commission," our prerogative is to be disciples making disciples of all nations. Our mission in life is global, not just local. And that purpose not only stands on the principle that Jesus has all authority; it also has a few methods which assist us in our endeavors. And those methods are baptizing in the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching new disciples to obey all the commands of Jesus. And while all who profess the name of Jesus can rest assured that the Lord, at that moment of salvation, takes up residence in their heart, the great commission, nevertheless, ends with a promise that those who obey and make disciples will have the presence of Jesus all the days of their life. Only the believer actively trying to make disciples will genuinely understand what Jesus' never-ending presence actually means.

Now that we've addressed the church's origin (i.e., What is the church? A community of disciples.) and the church's objective (i.e., What is its purpose? Disciples making disciples.), today, we'll move to unpack what is called the "ordinances" of the church; or, how we are to do church.

"Ordinance" is a term that refers to an order, law, or rule that some governing body has laid out to direct a person's actions. Typically, these regulations make sure that something is made correctly. For instance, when it comes to construction, there are specific rules that an architect has to abide by to ensure that a structure is safe. These "rules" are often referred to as "building codes" (i.e., no asbestos, wheelchair accessible, emergency exits, etc.). If a set of

stairs has a riser height of 7 ¾ in. and a tread depth of 10 in., an inspector will sign off on the stairs indicating that they are "up to code" and, therefore, safe to use. Had the stairs' measurements been off, they would need to be redone to avoid the potential for injury. How many of us have tripped going up a set of stairs that weren't up to code?

Likewise, God has set down "codes" that govern church life. He has instituted ordinances that ensure the building of *his* church follows *his* blueprint. When we abide by his guidelines, the church is not only healthy, but it is "up to code," which is to say, it is structurally sound. However, when we disregard God's guidelines for the church, the faith community becomes unhealthy and structurally unsound.

Specifically, the Lord has ordained two practices that ought to be foundational to every disciple community. The first ordinance is baptism, and the second is communion, also known as "the Lord's Supper" and the "eucharist." Considering we'll be baptizing several people next week, we'll save our discussion of baptism till then. It seems appropriate to explain baptism on a day when we, as a church, are baptizing new disciples. Thus, today, we'll be discussing communion.

READ: Luke 22:1-23 (ESV)

¹ Now the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** drew near, which is called the **Passover**. ² And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. ³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴ He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

⁷ Then came the day of **Unleavened Bread**, on which the **Passover** lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the **Passover** for us, that we may eat it." ⁹ They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰ He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹ and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the **Passover** with my disciples?' ¹² And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." ¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the **Passover**.

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this **Passover** with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a

cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my **body**, which is given **for you**. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the **cup** after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new **covenant** in my blood. ²¹ But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²² For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" ²³ And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

Communion is characterized by **three** things:

i. It is a meal for recollection.

What often gets overlooked in the discussion of the Lord's Supper is that it was not an entirely new creation. It was based on something else, and that "something else" was the Passover. Luke mentions the Passover eight times in the lead-up to the Lord's Supper. Why? Because just as every Passover celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, every communion celebrates God's deliverance of humanity from sin. Thus, communion is a "looking backward" at what Jesus did for us. And this "looking backward" helps us relive the past through bread and wine. When we participate in communion, we are, in a sense, extending the same meal the disciples had 2,000 years ago into the present and beyond. What they did, we do.

Think about this for a moment: rather than giving them a sermon explaining the meaning behind the crucifixion, Jesus gave the disciples a meal. Why? Because we engage all our senses when we sit down at the Lord's Supper. We feel the bread between our fingers. We see the redness of the wine. And then, we take each element and taste it. This multifaceted act enlivens the mind and brings to memory what Jesus did for us.

EXAMPLE: Pumpkin Pie - Taste has a way of sparking memories.

ii. It is a meal for anticipation.

Jesus says, "For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Not only is communion a "looking backward," but it is also a "looking forward" to when Jesus' kingdom will be fully and completely installed on earth. There will come a day when Jesus will sit at a Lord's Supper, and instead of only 12 people seated at his table, there will be a multitude.

READ: Revelation 19:6-9 (ESV)

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

What we do in communion is not only a "looking backward" but a "looking forwards" to when all of God's work will be finished. Today, we live in the inauguration of the Kingdom of God, where Jesus has been crowned, but his rule has yet to be fully realized on earth. The powers of darkness still reign, albeit in a weakened state. But someday, all of hell will be put away, and God's kingdom will rule unchallenged, and on that day, there will be a great feast commemorating that moment. This is the moment that Jesus refers to when he says, "[I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.](#)" Communion is a reminder that a more extraordinary feast is yet to come!

iii. It is a meal for illustration.

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "[This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.](#)" Since we've already noted that this was a meal meant to remind the disciples, we'll move to ask the question, "Remind them of what?" How his body was broken for them. The bread is symbolic of Jesus' sacrifice.

When Jesus took the cup, he said, "[This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.](#)" The wine is representative of the new promise made between humanity and God. There's a new covenant, a new way that we might approach God. It is no longer through adherence to the OT Law that we gain favor from God. Instead, we plead the blood of Jesus, claiming its promises. Jesus' wording is a direct reference to Jeremiah 31:31, 33.

A person's life was thought to be tangibly represented by blood. Thus, Jesus' using the wine to symbolize his blood is an invitation for us to partake in his life. Just as we drink the wine, and it becomes a part of us, so, when we partake of communion, we are communing with Jesus' very life. But, just as Jesus' life was poured out, so will those who follow Jesus. After all, "to pour out blood" is a Hebraism that refers to murder.¹

¹ Garland, David E., *Luke*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), p. 857.

So, what's the takeaway?

Communion is not only a call to remember Christ's sacrifice but also a reminder that we ought to serve one another.

When Jesus commanded, "do this in remembrance of me," he was not simply calling for his followers to recall and memorialize what he did for us; nor was it only an appeal to institute a symbolic meal at all church gatherings. The Lord's Supper is also a reminder that, as disciples, we are to serve others as Christ served us. It's supposed to be the sort of recollection that leads us to emulate Jesus.

How do we know this?

READ: Luke 22:24-27 (ESV)

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

How do we know that communion is not just a memorial but a mandate to serve others? Because right after Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he quells a dispute about who would be greatest by saying, "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves." And the Gospel of John tells us this lesson was punctuated by Jesus actually washing the disciples' feet (cf. Jhn. 13:1-15). Moreover, Paul's beef (as it pertained to the Eucharist) with the church in Corinth was disunity and division where a select few were allowed to gorge themselves while others went hungry (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-22).

Yes, communion recalls our Savior. But may it also compel us to love and good works for others. Doing so means we are dining at the Lord's table as he intended. Serving others is how we know we have remembered Jesus well.

Video Description

Upon This Rock | Week 3 | "Church Ordinance: Communion"

TEXT: Luke 22:1-27

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: <https://docdro.id/HateSFK>