



Christ Reformed Community Church

161 Hampton Point Dr. Suite 2 | St. Augustine, Florida | 32092 | christreformedcc.com

December 11, 2022

Dr. Andrew Smith

“The First Lord’s Supper” Mark 14: 22–26

Well, let’s take our Bibles this morning and be turning to the Gospel of Mark, Mark chapter 14, and we want to continue our study in Mark’s Gospel. And it’s amazing how the Lord providentially orchestrates the schedule of my life because we are observing the Lord’s Supper this morning, and it just so happens that we are also looking at verses 22 through 26 of Mark chapter 14. I’ve entitled this “The First Lord’s Supper,” and I want you to stand to your feet in honor of the reading of the God’s Word as it recounts to us the institution of the Lord’s Supper by our Lord, just hours really before He would be arrested, tried, and crucified. Picking up in verse 22, it says:

And as they [that is, Jesus and the disciples] were eating, he [that is, Jesus] took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Thus ends the reading of God’s Holy Word. Please be seated as we ask His help before we look at this text this morning.

Our Father, we come before You and we come under the authority now of Your Holy Word, asking that Your Holy Spirit might give us a holy yearning for Your truth and the ability to understand Your Word, which can only come by the power of God that resides in the people of God through the Holy Spirit. So, bless us now as we look at this text, we pray. For Your glory and our good we ask these things, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

As you well know, this text and really the other gospel accounts of the institution of the Lord’s Supper has been traditionally called the Last Supper, the Last Supper. But what I want you to understand this morning, and what I will seek to argue from this text is this really is not the Last Supper. This is really the last Passover, but it’s the first Lord’s Supper, and it’s not the only Lord’s Supper. There is more to follow, as is evidenced in the fact that we even gather as Christians in the new covenant today, some two thousand years later, to observe the Lord’s Supper. As you know, the Lord’s Supper is one of the two sacraments that Jesus instituted for the church in the new covenant, the Lord’s Supper being the sacrament whereby through the giving and receiving of bread and wine we show forth Christ’s death. We feed upon His body as we eat the bread. We drink His blood as we drink the cup, and we do this for our spiritual nourishment. We do this for our growth and grace because we are members of Christ’s body. Now, what I just said to you about

feeding on Christ’s body is important because throughout church history, there has been no shortage of confusion and controversy surrounding what exactly it is God’s people do when they partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Mark chapter 14 gives to us a brief account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper. If you’ve been with us, you know that in the context, Jesus is sharing a meal with the disciples. And this is not any normal meal. This is the Passover meal, and being obedient to the Old Testament Scriptures, Jesus is sharing this with the disciples, as all the other Israelites would have been doing at this time of year. It’s also important to point out the fact that during the main part of the meal, that occurs after Judas Iscariot has been dismissed from the company of Jesus and the disciples. In fact, John 13:30 tells us that after Judas received *“the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.”* It’s at this point that Mark picks up, the main part of the Passover meal, that Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper. Luke tells us in Luke chapter 22 that Jesus had earnestly desired to eat the Passover with the disciples in light of the fact that He knew He was ready to suffer; that this was His passion, this was the time that He waited His whole life for. We could say, to borrow the language of Hebrews chapter 12, *“For the joy that was set before him.”* And in accordance with the timetable of the sovereignty of His Father, Jesus was ready to endure the agony of the cross. He was ready to endure separation from His fellowship with God, separation from the disciples to secure salvation and full atonement for His people. It was that time. All the shadows of the old covenant, all of the animals that had been slaughtered, all of the lambs that had been slaughtered through all of those Passovers are now culminating in what Christ is getting ready to do by offering Himself as a sacrificial offering in the place of sinners at Mount Calvary. And so, Jesus knowing that is the case, during the Passover meal, He institutes the Lord’s Supper in light of His impending suffering upon the cross.

Now, the gospel accounts of our Lord’s institution of the supper are more than just a recording of the actual event itself. These recordings are meant to help us understand how we are to participate in the event of the Lord’s Supper itself. In other words, we are to ask ourselves the question as we study our text this morning, how are we to view the purpose of the Lord’s Supper? Why exactly did Jesus institute this? Secondly, why is it important that we actually participate, that we’re not just mindlessly doing this, that it’s not merely a ritual? Third, a very important question, what do the emblems of bread and cup symbolize, and what do they convey to us as we partake of them? And then fourth, where does the supper fit in really with our understanding of the gospel? Is the gospel separate from the Lord’s supper? Is there a connection to what we are doing?

Well, notice, first of all, in verse 22, it tells us, *“And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’”* Jesus is the head and the host of this meal, and He would have taken unleavened bread as was the custom during the Passover, and He would have pronounced, as verse 22 says, a blessing over the bread. He probably would have said something like, *“Praise be thou, O Lord, sovereign of the world, who causes bread to come forth from the earth,”* to which the disciples would have responded, *“Amen.”* That would have been some sort of traditional prayer that Jesus would have prayed. And normally the bread would have been eaten in silence, but this time it says that after Jesus broke the bread and He gave it to them, He makes this statement at the end of verse 22: *“Take; this is my body.”* *“This is my body”*—a stunning statement, identifying Himself as the Passover bread. The disciples would have never heard of this before. And then as verse 23 indicates, Jesus took the third cup of wine

traditionally used during the feast, *“He took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.”* Perhaps Jesus prayed something like other heads of homes would pray years later, *“May the All-Merciful One make us worthy of the days of the Messiah and of the life of the world to come. He brings salvation of His King. He shows covenant faithfulness to His anointed, to David and to his seed forever. He makes peace in His heavenly places. May He secure peace for us and for all Israel,”* and you say, *“Amen.”*

And then we read in verse 24—notice your Bibles—*“And he said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’”* Jesus actually says that the red wine in the cup symbolizes his blood, and the language really is: *“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”* The disciples would have never experienced a Passover like this. They would have been wondering and asking questions in their hearts and their minds as to what in the world Jesus was speaking about. And then, finally Jesus announced in verse 25 that He Himself would not drink the fourth cup of the feast. Notice verse 25: *“Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine,”* meaning, *“I’m not going to drink this fourth cup, ‘until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’”* And then verse 26 says, *“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”* They would have sung Psalm 116, 117 and 118. This would have been the traditional closing praise, and Mark tells us they went out to the Mount of Olives, which means that they would have crossed the Kidron. They would have entered the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus eventually would be arrested.

Now, it’s helpful for us to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 because it’s there that the apostle Paul tells us that this Lord’s Supper is to be observed by all Christians for all time. First Corinthians 11:24 says, *“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.’”* And verse 25: *“In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”* So, Paul informs us that this graphic illustration of the bread and the cup, representing the body and blood of Jesus is a remembrance. That’s what it is; a remembrance feast of what Jesus did for His people to atone for their sins. And as such, because it’s a remembrance feast, Paul tells us in this context that if we are going to be obedient to the Lord in celebrating the gospel, we will continue to observe the Lord’s Supper. Skip back to verse 23, Paul says, *“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.”* So, Paul is saying, *“I received from the Lord”* through inspiration this matter of fact that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, and He wants you to observe it, verse 26, *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,”* Paul says, *“you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”* Now, what I have said thus far this morning should not be shocking to you because you are a new covenant believer, but putting Mark 14 in its proper context means that we understand it within the context of the canon of Scripture and what the rest of the New Testament says regarding its significance. It is a celebration of the gospel. It is an ongoing celebration of the gospel. It is a mandatory celebration of the gospel. As Paul says, until the Lord comes, and with that in mind, I think that from our text this morning, the Lord’s Supper is meant to orient God’s covenant people in three important directions.

First of all, we are to have a past orientation as we partake of the Lord’s Supper; secondly, a present orientation; and third, a future orientation. Now, before people begin to freak out in a few moments, my points this morning are hardly alliterated, and my points this morning do not have specific verses that come after each one of them. Doing something a little bit different this morning. This

would be maybe what you would call a thematic exposition of these verses, and the reason I’m doing this is very important. We are so familiar with this text, it is easy to read it and to gloss over what is being said; and/or if you go through it in some sort of detailed and tedious fashion, you can sort of miss the forest for the trees. So, I am giving to you this morning a theology of the Lord’s Supper that is also practical because we’re partaking of it this morning, by which you can understand how you are to partake of it. You are to have a past orientation, a present orientation, and a future orientation.

First of all, then, we are to have a past orientation as we partake of the Lord’s Supper. This reminds us that Jesus is the final Passover Lamb of the new covenant to which all of the lambs of the old covenant pointed forward to; to say this, that the Lord’s Supper is an extension of the Passover feast of the Old Testament. We read from the Old Testament, Exodus chapter 12 in our public reading of Scripture, where it tells us the rich history of the Passover celebration, that the ritual was led by the head of the household, usually the father of the household, and in this case, in Mark chapter 14, Jesus was the head because He was the head of the apostolic band. But there were several cups of wine that were used during the Passover meal. The first cup was drunk before the Passover food was even brought in and blessed. Then after the food was brought in, the youngest child in the family would ask this question. He would ask, “Why do we eat these foods on this night?” Now, that question was really taken from Exodus chapter 12, and I read it earlier for you, *“And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’ And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.”*

So, there is a recapitulation by the head of the house when the youngest child asks what they are doing, where the father gives a history lesson to his children and to all of those who are partaking of the Passover feast. This would have involved a description of how each food related to their deliverance from Egypt, how the unleavened bread was used because they left with haste. There wasn’t time for the bread to rise, so they ate unleavened bread, bread without yeast. And the roasted lamb would have reminded them of the blood that was applied to the doorposts and the lintel of the homes, and how as they ate that roasted lamb, God protected them under the protection of the blood so that the angel of death and destruction would not take their firstborn. That’s why we call it the Passover. The angel passed over those homes. This was a measure of God’s provision and grace and delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage so that they could undergo an exodus.

But Jesus makes it clear that the last Passover, first Lord’s Supper, has the bread symbolizing Jesus Himself. Notice verse 22, Jesus says, *“This is my body.”* He would have broken the bread. He would have passed it around, not as a symbol of His broken body because John 19 says to fulfill Scripture, none of Jesus’ bones were broken, but the bread is broken and given to each one of the disciples, a piece of it, as a picture of the fact that their eating from the same loaf, they’re part of the same fellowship. They’ve been joined to Christ, and then as verse 24 says, *“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”* The wine and the cup represented Jesus’ blood, and Jesus intends this to be a perpetual new covenant feast. That is made clear by 1 Corinthians 11, as I read it earlier. Covenants in Scripture were always ratified by blood. Go and read Hebrews chapter 9. One of the verses in that passage says that *“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.”* Speaking about Jesus, Isaiah 53:12: *“He poured out his soul to death and was*

numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many.” Matthew’s account tells us in Matthew 26:28 that this blood was *“for the forgiveness of sins,”* and Peter speaks about the sprinkling of Christ’s blood sanctifying us.

So, we are to have a past orientation, understanding that the old bloody lambs of the old covenant were all shadows that now are fulfilled in Christ, the bloody Lamb of Calvary, our substitute who came to make full atonement to which all those other lambs pointed forward to. Now, by Jesus historically linking the Passover together with the Lord’s Supper, which is clearly what He is doing, He’s making it clear that what was essential in the first should not be lost in the second, and that is the necessity of blood to atone for sins, that all of those lambs pointed not to themselves but to the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ for His people. The Passover pointed forward to it. The Lord’s Supper points back to it. The Lord Jesus Christ died as the perfect bloody substitute, bearing the guilt of His people. *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* We could put it this way. Jesus embraced the penalty of divine wrath to satisfy divine justice, thereby ratifying the new covenant, fulfilling all of God’s age-old promises of forgiveness that came through the proclamation of the gospel that began all the way in the past in the garden, that though the serpent would strike the heel of the seed of the woman, He would bruise the serpent’s head. Prophecy of Jeremiah 31:34: *“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* This is the blood of Christ symbolized by the wine, Jesus providing a covenant ceremony whereby the new covenant is now ratified. And what happened when Jesus died upon the cross of Calvary? The veil in the temple was torn in two in the Holy of Holies. And what happened forty years later in AD 70? Jesus predicted it. The temple was destroyed by the Romans. All of these were signs indicating the fact that Jesus had come, the beginning of the new covenant had been inaugurated, and the old covenant had been done away with, but the new covenant was built on the old covenant. We are not separate from the people of God in the Old Testament, so when we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper in the same manner that the people of God partook of the Passover, understanding that we must have someone be sacrificed for our sins if we want salvation. So, the Passover gives way, obviously, to the Lord’s Supper.

Now, a couple of practical questions for consideration as we identify the fact that as we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we are to have a past orientation. The question might be raised, *“Do we have to use unleavened bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper?”* And you may chuckle a little bit at that, but there is no shortage of many books and documents written throughout church history that debate these very points, and one of the reasons it’s debated is because they understand we are to have this past orientation, that the Lord’s Supper is not something Jesus invented out of thin air. It is connected with the Passover of the old covenant, convincing us in the unity and the succession of God’s covenant faithfulness. Well, Baptists often insist upon grape juice and unleavened bread, while many Presbyterians insist on red wine and leavened bread. And I should hasten to say that Baptists don’t even always agree with one another, and Presbyterians don’t always agree with one another. Interestingly, however, Calvin argued for a very frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper. He personally believed it should be taken weekly by the people of God. Now, the town council in Geneva would only allow him to officiate it quarterly. When he went to Strasbourg, he was able to do it more frequently, and Calvin’s not the final authority, but I quote Calvin to you this morning because we’re a Reformed church and we fit within the Reformed tradition, and you need to understand that these debates were occurring even among the Reformers. In his *Institutes*

of the Christian Religion, Calvin emphasizes that too much of an emphasis on whether you use unleavened bread or leavened bread or wine or grape juice can actually lead to a dangerous area. He says this and I quote:

Whether the bread is leavened or unleavened, the wine red or white—it makes no difference. These things are indifferent, and left at the church’s discretion.

He even goes on to say that insisting on unleavened bread or red wine causes a new spectacle rather than to instruct our minds in sound religion, and he says that these are lifeless and theatrical trifles, a pile of ceremonies. What he is getting at is that your focus should not be the emblems. These are indifferent things. Now, we should use bread and we should use the fruit of the vine, and I have my own opinion on what that should be, but each church has to make their own decision under the leadership of the elders. As a matter of reflection, what is the most biblical and Christ-honoring way to observe the Lord’s Supper? After all, it is connected with the Passover, so we should ask these questions. A second question we should ask, which I think is more pertinent, is “What is the place of children in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper?” As we read from Exodus chapter 12 and according to Jewish tradition, it was the youngest child who would ask the question “Why do we eat these foods this night?” And so, you can see there was a clear participation of children in the old covenant and the Passover, but yet many today say that children should not partake in the communion table, and I would make the argument that essentially every denomination holds to paedocommunion, paedocommunion meaning that children can partake of communion. I actually believe that every church holds to some form of paedobaptism because even Baptists who don’t baptize their infants are willing to baptize children on profession of faith, and even Baptists who aren’t paedocommunionists will allow children to partake of the table so long as they’ve given a profession of faith.

But here is the point, children participated in the old covenant Passover so much so that they were part of the ceremony by asking the questions. It was an opportunity for them to learn as they hungered after God, being raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But then the question is asked, “How old should children be?” Well, according to the Westminster Larger Catechism, which we have taught through here at the church, it assumes the rite of baptism has already been applied to covenant children, but it says this about children participating, and I quote. It says:

The Lord’s Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

Only given to those who are able to examine themselves. So, it’s sort of left open ended. We believe, therefore, that it will be different for different children. There is no secret age. This is left to the discretion of the parents and council with the elders of the church as to whether their children fully partake of communion, but what is clear is that it is connected with the old covenant Passover. What is clear is that it was something the whole family participated in, and so it is a declaration and an invitation. It declares the gospel, and it invites children who are truly hungering spiritually after Christ and thirsting for Him. And I’ll admit this morning that that term paedocommunion has become a toxic term, but if all we mean by that is that children should not be automatically forbidden to participate, then I heartily embrace that term.

And yet, here is the larger point. The Lord’s Supper is connected with the Passover for this important reason: Jesus connects it with the Passover, the Lord’s Supper, to confirm the age-old promise of the gospel seen in the continuity of the historical covenants. We are connected with father Abraham. We are considered spiritual Jews, participating in ceremonies and rituals that are very similar to what the old covenant people of God participated in, yet are new and revised in light of the reality of Christ coming. And you would not have any Jewish family viewing the Passover lightly, and therefore in the new covenant, no Christian should view the Lord’s Supper in an apathetic or a light manner because we are to participate in it with a past orientation as we partake of the bread and cup.

But there’s a second orientation to which we should be oriented that I think our text points us to, not only a past orientation, but secondly, a present orientation. Though the Lord’s Supper has a past orientation connecting it to the past of the old covenant, the Passover of the old covenant, it would be a tragic error to conclude that the Lord’s Supper is therefore only a memorial. In other words, we are not just remembering what Christ did, although we are doing that. Paul is clear about that in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. But we are not merely remembering what He did for us; we are participating in the very life of Jesus. We are communing with Him. He is here with us in the supper in an intimate way, fellowshiping with us, strengthening us, affirming in us our faith in the present, in the here and now. As the Westminster says, we feed on His body and blood to our spiritual nourishment, and He has confirmed in us, as we engage in Him intimately, He has confirmed in us our union and our communion with Jesus Christ through faith alone, in the gospel. But notice verse 22 again. It says at the end of it, Jesus says, *“Take; this is my body,”* and verse 24, *“This is my blood.”* Those are pretty straightforward words that our Lord uses, but Jesus said even more radical things than this. You remember in John chapter 6—just turn over there for a moment—Jesus made some statements that absolutely almost got Him killed prematurely. Verse 52 of John 6:

“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him,” Jesus says.

Pretty strong language, and it’s here that we have to be very, very careful not to adopt the heretical doctrine of transubstantiation, which is held by the Roman Catholic Church, which says that the elements in the Lord’s Supper mystically transform into the actual and literal body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s easy to deny that. When it becomes difficult is when you begin to research and understand that Protestants themselves are not in full agreement on what exactly is going on in the Lord’s Supper. It was Calvin and Zwingli who could not agree with the German Reformers and Luther, in particular, on whether the human nature of Jesus was physically present in the bread and the cup. Luther, you remember in that famous debate, pounded his fist on the table quoting the Latin Vulgate, *“This is my body,”* from the gospels: *“Hoc est corpus meum.”* He said it over and over and over again. *“This is my body,”* and his point was to insist the fact that Jesus did not relinquish His omnipresence in His humanity, so that Jesus could be in more than one place physically at the same time, and therefore in the supper, Jesus is really present in a physical way in, with, underneath the elements. No one would say that Luther was a heretic, and that is what

Luther believed. I’m not sure anyone understands what he was saying, and I’m not convinced that Luther himself understood what he was saying, but it’s clear that Luther believed in the true gospel. He was arguing a position completely antithetical to transubstantiation. That’s why he made the point to argue it.

But Calvin had sort of the benefit of watching this debate unfold, and Calvin argued that Jesus’ human nature is limited to time and space; Jesus can’t be in several different places at one time, but that Jesus’ divine nature could be present in more than one place. And so, Calvin argued that Jesus is spiritually present in the Lord’s Supper, fellowshiping with His people and feeding His people in an intimate—he even used the language of *mysterious*—manner. He said this: “When celebrating the supper, we should, indeed, worship him as present.” Calvin says, “He’s not merely in heaven looking down; he’s present.” And Calvin says, “This should lead us to guard against three mistakes: number one, not to confuse the spiritual blessing with the sign.” In other words, he’s saying you’re not eating salvation when you partake of the Lord’s Supper. It represents the gospel, these elements do, but we don’t believe what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. Secondly, we’re not to see Christ on earth or under earthly elements. So, He’s present with us spiritually, but He’s not under the elements or in the elements. In fact, Calvin in another place said that “Christ doesn’t come down from heaven into the bread, but believers are raised up into heaven when they partake of the Lord’s Supper,” fellowshiping with Christ. And thirdly, Calvin says, “We’re not to imagine any other kind of eating than that which draws us into the life of Christ by the secret power of the Spirit in which we obtain by faith alone.” Calvin was adamant about the fact we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. So, any sort of interaction with Christ is only done by the secret power of the Spirit of God to confirm our already union with Him.

In other words, Jesus in His humanity, having been raised in heaven, in His deity He’s not limited in time and space, so He comes to meet with us at the Lord’s Table. His real presence is here, and you say, “Well, isn’t His real presence with us every time we worship?” and of course the answer is, “Yes, when His Word is preached. It is Christ speaking.” But in the Lord’s Supper, there’s an intimate, mysterious fellowshiping and feeding spiritually upon Christ that strengthens our faith. Going back to Mark chapter 14, when Jesus says, “This is my body and this is my blood,” He couldn’t be saying just on the surface that the physical pieces of bread in His hand were identical with His hand. It’s not as if the bread turned into His body or the blood coursing through His veins dripped into the cup, as crude as that sounds. His body is before Him, before the disciples, clearly distinct from the bread. The bread doesn’t change into the body, the body doesn’t change into the bread; the wine doesn’t change into the blood, the blood doesn’t change into the wine. The physical properties and characteristics of the other are not fused together. There’s nothing in the gospel text that would suggest anything like that. Jesus is speaking figuratively. He had no problem doing this. He referred to Himself as a vine, didn’t He? He referred to Himself as a shepherd. He referred to Himself as a rock and a fountain, and the very bread that comes down out of heaven. He referred to Himself as the cornerstone.

So, the supper is meant to be a rite that the church participates in where they see Christ through the elements, but they don’t look to the elements alone. They figuratively represent Christ because these emblems testify to our union and our communion with Christ. As we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we remember his sacrifice in the past, and it causes us to more deeply love Him in the

present. As we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we reflect on His sacrifice in the past, and it causes us through the power of the Holy Spirit to embrace Him with a firmer grip of faith in the present, as we look forward in hope to His glorious return in the future when we’ll actually see His literal body and see Him physically. As we partake of the Lord’s Supper, it gives us hope in the present, so that as we partake of these elements, Jesus gives to us presently faith, hope, and love because He’s here with us. We see Him with spiritual eyes. We embrace Him in intimate fellowship. It is Christmastime, and during this time of the year, I read a lot about the incarnation, and you well know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that Bethlehem literally means “the house of bread” or “the city of bread.” It was the place in which it was the first location of Jesus’ incarnation being manifested to the world in the “house of bread.” And in the Lord’s Supper, we partake of the bread that represents His sinless life. We take that bread which represents the fact that He bore our sins in His body on the tree. We take that bread to emphasize the fact that His body was raised triumphantly. We eat that bread to signify the fact we believe that He ascended bodily and is at the right hand of God. Members of His body, we partake of His body because we understand that we’ve been raised with Him spiritually from our deadness in sins and trespasses, and we take it because we know He’s going to return again someday.

In fact, turn with me over to 1 Corinthians again. Paul speaks about the Lord’s Supper in this context, this time in chapter 10, and he says to the Corinthians in verse 16, “*The cup of blessing that we bless,*” speaking about the Lord’s Supper cup, “*is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break,*” Paul says, “*is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*” In other words, the bread reminds us and reinforces to us, Paul is saying, our union with Him that we are participating in His life. We are participating in Him so that as the Father looks down from heaven upon us, He sees His Son. And the bread also reminds us of our intimate union and fellowship with each other, verse 17: “*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*” What we’re doing in the Lord’s Supper is we are declaring not only our union with Christ, but our joint union with one another because we’re all unified by the gospel, and that’s why the cup symbolizes what unifies us. What unifies us? Verse 24: the “*blood of the covenant,*” the end of it, “*which is poured out for many.*” We are brought together by the blood of Christ. We are blood brothers, blood sisters in Christ. Again, to borrow the language of Isaiah 53:12: “*He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many.*” He didn’t bear the sins of all, but he also didn’t bear the sins of few. “*He bore the sin of many.*” All of those joined to Christ in union with Him through His blood, the blood of the new covenant is what verse 25 is speaking about. “*Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*” He’s speaking about the new covenant, and He referred to the covenant back in verse 24.

We’re in the new covenant. “*A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,*” as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, so that the cup reminds us and declares to the world our redemption. His blood shed for us, so that every time we drink the cup, it reminds us, “Yes, I really am forgiven in Christ. I’m really joined to Him. I’m in union with Him.” So, it has a present ministry to us. It has a past orientation. It has a present orientation where Christ Himself is ministering to us in which we are giving thanks. In fact, that language in verse 23, “*And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks,*” it’s *eucharisteō*. It’s where we get the English, the *eucharist* referring to the Lord’s Supper, a giving of thanks. Just like the children of Israel, we give thanks to God for our deliverance, for our exodus from sin because ultimately, we’ve been redeemed not by animal blood

but by the final Lamb of God. We’ve been ransomed as Peter says, *“Not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”* So that the Lord’s Supper expresses our communion with Him, our sharing with Him in all that He did for His people in shedding His blood, the blood of the covenant. He is our bread of life that has come down out of heaven. And in Jesus’ day, bread was a staple food for their diet. You couldn’t exist without it. That’s sort of the point, isn’t it, every time you take the Lord’s Supper? You can’t live without Christ. You have no hope without Christ. That’s why it’s to be done often, and that’s why it’s food because it reminds us what every meal reminds us of. We need sustenance, we need nourishment, we need strengthening just to continue to exist and to get through life, and the Lord’s Supper does that for us spiritually, reminding us of that very thing.

I had you turn earlier to John chapter 6, and I want you to turn back there for a moment because I want to make just a couple of clarifications regarding what Jesus says in this passage. It was a difficult thing for the people to accept what He said. For example, in verse 53: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”* Obviously, He’s speaking figuratively. Jesus was a master of illustrations. He’s basically saying, *“Look, you need me spiritually just as you need physical food in your life.”* That’s all He’s saying. In verse 54: *“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”* Verse 58: *“This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”* Verse 51: *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”* It’s interesting there in verse 54: *“Whoever feeds on my flesh.”* Augustine used to say, *“Believe and you have eaten of Christ.”* This passage is not teaching what the Roman Catholic Church teaches; that you’re eating salvation in the Eucharist. Jesus is speaking figuratively, *“You feed on my flesh.”* In the Greek it’s a noisy feeding because the Lord’s Supper is a loud feast, declares the gospel in a visible and a tangible way; and just as you know, any time that you have a meal with others in which you’re celebrating something, it’s always noisy—silverware clanging, laughter, voices being raised. That’s exactly what we do every Lord’s Day. When we come to hear the preaching of the Word, we’re talking loudly about Christ, and when we come to partake of the Lord’s Table, we’re eating with Him, joyfully receiving nourishment from Him at the table so that the church has to admit we can’t live without food or drink. We can’t live without the body and blood of Christ. We need the gospel to survive.

So, the supper is not merely something Jesus instituted that He wanted us to do every now and then. As I said, it’s not really called the Last Supper. That is a bad title. It is the first Lord’s Supper. It is meant to be ongoing; it is meant to be a present ministry to us here and now just as it was to the disciples when Jesus first instituted it. As we feed upon Christ, our faith is strengthened. Our love toward Christ grows deeper. Our love toward one another grows deeper, and our hope for His future return is even strengthened, and that takes me to the final point. We are to have a past orientation, a present orientation, and then, third, a future orientation. Notice with me in verses 25 and 26. Jesus says, *“Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”* And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” Now, verse 25, as I said earlier, if you remember, Jesus is announcing that He would not drink the fourth cup of the Passover. So, there were four cups that the Jews drank during the Passover, and Jesus stops after the third cup, and He says in verse 25: *“Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of*

God.” What exactly is His point? Well, His point is to end the supper because we read in verse 26: *“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”* That would have been Psalm 116, 117, 118, some variety of that. The supper ended and they headed to the garden where what was pictured in the supper, Jesus being crucified, was getting ready to happen because He was going to be arrested.

But Jesus is not really abruptly ending His fellowship with the disciples, though it admittedly looks that way on the surface. Rather, Jesus is communicating an abbreviation of fellowship—listen to this—so that there can be an extension of fellowship in the kingdom of God, a new feast. In other words, He’s interrupting the length of His fellowship with the disciples in the first Lord’s Supper because He has work to do. He’s not going to drink the fourth cup as an interruption for the purpose not of ending fellowship entirely, but the exact opposite—to extend it on into the future because He’s going to be raised again. Therefore, He says, “I’m not going to drink it until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. To speak forth to the disciples, He will be raised again, the feast will be ongoing, that that cup which brought to an end the Passover, Jesus was holding out on that fourth cup in order to extend fellowship. He’s promising to drink it at the beginning of eternal heavenly fellowship with His people instead of at the end of the earthly fellowship He had with the apostles. Jesus doesn’t drink that fourth cup because He wants to include more than just those eleven men. He wants to include the church, and I am aware of, though not convinced, those who say that this drinking of the new cup that Jesus speaks about in verse 25 occurred after the resurrection when He entered through the door. You remember that episode as they were eating together. I quite agree—and it probably doesn’t surprise you—with Calvin who says, “This is a reference to the eternal new heavens and new earth after the consummated kingdom,” and that’s why you have that language in verse 25 of “new.” He’s going to *“drink it new in the kingdom of God,”* the consummated kingdom when heaven meets earth in a perfect endless eternity with free and full fellowship with Christ.

As we see His resurrected body and we are in our resurrected bodies, we fellowship with Him for all of eternity. This will occur after His literal bodily return. Matthew tells us in Matthew 26:29, the words of Jesus, *“I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* That is at the close of the present age; the consummation of the new heaven and new earth where believers in both body and soul will gloriously be reunited with Christ and we will have a great feast forever, praising Him. That’s when the Passover and the Eucharist reach their fruition, their culmination. The Lamb, again, will be the head and the host of this eternal fellowship. What does Jesus say? He says, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”* *“Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”*

And so, we do that. We aren’t to do it mindlessly. We aren’t to do it with apathy because we are going to feast with Him again. There is a future orientation to what we are doing here. Again, quoting the Westminster, it tells us how we are to have our hearts, souls and minds engaged. It says:

We are to take and eat the bread and drink the wine in thankful remembrance that the body of Christ was broken and given, and His blood was shed for us. We feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not in a carnal but in a spiritual manner, yet truly and really while by faith, we receive and apply unto ourselves Christ crucified and all the benefits of His death. We receive this sacrament by examining ourselves of being in Christ, of the truth and measure of our knowledge of faith and

repentance, love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done us wrong, and new obedience, renewing the exercises of our graces by serious meditation and fervent prayer.

So, until His return, the new covenant people of God within the strictures of the local church fellowship are to continue to celebrate the hope of our future communion with Jesus Christ, but presently we’re in communion with Him now. And as we partake of these elements, that is strengthening to our faith, that gives us hope. Until He comes, as Paul says, “*We eat this bread and drink this cup.*” So, as I said, the meal Jesus institutes is an unfinished meal. It is an ongoing meal. Through the table, we proclaim His death and His resurrection and His future return. And like the apostles did on this night, we go to the table and we arise from the table, eagerly awaiting the future when we will physically see Christ and eat with Him in the Father’s kingdom. And what does all this remind us of? It reminds us of the promises of God. They can’t be thwarted.

We have a past orientation. God planned this, pictured in the Passover. We have a present orientation. We have a future orientation. We understand God is the God of history. It is His story. And until then, His kingdom has been established. He has been enthroned. So, we eat with eyes of faith. We see Him as our all in all as we celebrate and observe the Lord’s Supper. But make no mistake about it; the first Lord’s Supper is not the Last Supper. This is an ongoing feast for all of eternity, a perpetual feast. What we do this morning is something we will do in heaven. We will hear the very voice of Christ with our physical ears, and we will fellowship together with the Son and with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. That’s why Lord’s Day worship is so important. It is a foretaste of eternity. It is a foretaste of what the people of God will always do, forever joyful, forever thankful for the cross, not forgetting what Christ has done for sinners like us. And so, we come to this feast this morning, hopefully with a greater desire in partaking of it in a manner that honors the Lord, partaking of it in a worthy way, examining ourselves in light, not of our goodness or badness but in light of the perfection of Jesus Christ.