

Sermon Topic – The Lord’s Supper

Sermon Title – Thanksgiving at the Lord’s Table

Gretna Baptist Church, Pastor Roger Ridley, November 4, 2007

My first experience with Communion did not occur until I was in my twenties as a new Christian. It made a lasting impression on me. The lights of the building were dimmed, the twelve deacons sat up front facing the congregation, the pastor spoke in a soft, deep voice, and the bread and cup were served with great solemnity. It almost felt like a funeral service. It a real sense that’s what the Lord’s Supper is all about, the death of Christ. Therefore it should be a solemn occasion and not treated lightly.

But on the other hand, our coming to the Lord’s Table should be a joyous occasion too. In a very real sense it is a thanksgiving service.

There are four records of the night Christ instituted the Communion Meal provided in the New Testament. I am going to briefly read each one. Listen carefully to the expressions of thanksgiving that are included:

Matthew 26:26-27...

Mark 14:22-23...

Luke 22:14-20...

1 Corinthians 11:24-25...

In each of these passages, reporting on the institution of the Lord’s Supper, the giving of thanks is highlighted, emphasizing it as a key part of its observation. I want us to consider two expressions of thanksgiving at the Lord’s Table, first that of Jesus, then our own.

I. The Lord’s Expression of Thanksgiving

Recently, Sheryl and I both got home late from the office and we were hungry for chili but it was too late to make it, so we decided to go to Wendy’s. It was interesting what happened. We got our meal, sat at a table, gave thanks, and began to eat. A family came in, got their food, sat at a table behind us, gave thanks, and began to eat. Then another couple came in, got their food, sat at a table across from us, gave thanks, and began to eat. It was interesting to me because, I rarely see that any more, and yet that night, while we were there, everyone at Wendy’s gave thanks to God for their food.

For us, the giving of thanks is a custom, which goes back to the example of Christ in the New Testament. Whenever Jesus took food He first gave thanks.

On the night Jesus instituted the Supper, did Jesus give thanks simply because it was His custom, or was there something more to it? I am convinced there was much more to it than custom. If you noticed, Jesus specifically gave thanks for both the bread and the cup.

The word for *thanks*, in the Greek, which Jesus used, was *eucharis*; it refers to *an expression of joy toward God*.

As Jesus instituted the Supper it was not with any sense of regret. There certainly could have been. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, the disciples would scatter, He would be arrested, Peter would deny knowing Him, He would be crucified, and the crowd would curse and spit upon Him. Jesus knew all that would happen, but rather than regret, He instituted the Supper with gratitude, with an expression of joy toward God. In Luke 22:15, He said He did so with *desire*, strong, intense emotion.

Instituting the Supper filled Jesus with joyful gratitude to God because of what it symbolized: His *body given* for us, and His *blood shed* for us.

Hebrews 12:2 helps us to understand...

Jesus did not enjoy being betrayed, falsely accused, mocked and spit upon, and crucified. That's why in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39), He prayed, "*O my Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me.*"

But He voluntarily submitted to the Father's will, and He willingly ***endured*** the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood on the cross for the joy that was sit before Him.

That word *endured* says a lot to me, Jesus did not have to do it; He did not owe us anything. As mankind stood at the foot of the cross we proved we did not deserve His mercy. But according to John 13:1, having loved us to the end, He endured the humiliation, He endured the shame, He endured the cross, and He did so for the joy sit before Him as the *author and finisher of our faith*.

In John 15:11, on the night Jesus instituted the Supper, He said to His disciples, “*I’ve spoken these things to you so that your joy might be full.*”

How was our joy to be made full? Look with me at Romans 5:8-11...

The death of Christ, His body given for us, and His blood shed for us, gave us atonement for sin and reconciled us with God.

That joy that you and I have by faith in Christ is the joy that was sit before Him, and that’s why, on the night Jesus instituted the Supper He did so with an intense expression of joy toward God.

With that background, as Jesus took the bread and gave thanks, then took the cup and gave thanks it was not for custom sake, but with deep gratitude toward God for our sake.

II. Our Expression of Thanksgiving

As Jesus came to the Table with thanksgiving, how can we not do the same? If the meaning of it brought an expression of joy toward God from Jesus, as the recipients of His blessing, each time we approach the Table certainly it should be with joyful gratitude.

Did you notice what Jesus said in every New Testament record we read? “*Do this in remembrance of Me.*” In 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul said, “*As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup.*”

Every single time you and I come to the Lord’s Table, it should be with a strong, emotional feeling of joy towards God as we remember Jesus Christ, and what He accomplished at the cross for us. He made our joy full by bringing us into a permanent relationship with the Father.

It also says in 1 Corinthians 11:26 that every time we come to the Lord’s Table we *show* or *proclaim* the Lord’s death until He comes.

In Luke 8:39, when the man with the legion of demons was healed by Jesus, it says, “*He went his way and **proclaimed** throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.*” His proclamation was clearly an expression of his gratitude.

And every time you and I come to the Lord's Table, take the bread and the cup; it is a proclamation, an expression of thanksgiving for what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Is that the way you feel when you come to the Lord's Table? In 1Corinthians 11:27, the Apostle Paul warns us about coming to the Table without such gratitude, he says...

The word *unworthily* clearly implies this can be done in a number of ways. It is not just referring to division or immorality, both of which existed at the church in Corinth; it can also refer to ingratitude. To be ungrateful is to show no appreciation or to give no response for kindness shown to us.

In Luke 17 it describes how Jesus healed ten lepers but only one of them came back, threw himself at the feet of Jesus, and emotionally thanked Him. Were the others glad to have been healed? Sure they were! But they failed to show it.

When we fail to approach the Lord's Table when it is available, or when we simply approach it out of ritual or custom, we may be glad Jesus gave His body and blood for us, but we fail to show it.

When you and I approach the Lord's Table, is it with a deep sense of gratitude? I Corinthians 11:28 encourages us to examine ourselves before taking Communion so we can.

This morning, let's make sure our approach to the Lord's Table is not with regret, or even out of custom, but as a Thanksgiving Service, full of joy for what Jesus Christ has done in our behalf.