

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Church's Core Activities, Pt 4

Acts 2:41-42

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: the Lord's Supper is one of the key aspects of actual Christian fellowship and yet it is often misunderstood or downplayed in the minds many Christians. In this sermon we have the opportunity to examine this ordinance to see what it is and how it functions. Most importantly, we also are able to learn why we should guard it, love it and practice it faithfully as a church.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 2:41-42.
- B. We have before us the first description of the normal activities of this new entity within creation—the Church.
 1. Baptism, membership, attention to the Apostle's teaching, and fellowship.
 2. Recall that the term fellowship is very rich and nuanced. Speaks of a participation and sharing.
 - a. Not in a vague way but in a very real way.
 - b. We have fellowship with Jesus. Not some idea of a nice friendship. We share in what belongs to Jesus. Because we are "in Christ" what is His becomes ours.
 - c. We have a special relationship between believer because we all share/have fellowship in the gospel. Diverse people with diverse stories that all end up at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. It doesn't matter how you feel, it is a simple reality that we share life together through the gospel.
 - d. This means we share in the mission of our Lord, or we are not in fellowship with Him, we walk in darkness.
 - (1) The gospel in a rational idea that contains specific things that must be believe and understood.
 - (2) But it also engages the whole of a person so that it affects their life and walk and conduct. Because we now share in

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the life of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit our lives begin to be conformed to the character and mission of God.

- (3) As a result we also reject any sharing in the things that belong to this fallen age. That is not where our true participation lies.
- e. Finally, this fellowship shows itself in our gifts, whether they be time, talent or money. Paul speaks repeatedly of people who sent money to support suffering believers. And he called that activity, *koinonia*. Why? Because by giving to help them the people then began to share in their sufferings. The same can be made for supporting missionaries or even the gifts to local church. You share in the work in a very simple and practical way.
- C. What we are going to do over the next two sermons is zoom in on how fellowship is done in the early church—through the Lord’s Supper and through prayer.
 1. A doctrinal sermon.
 2. We need to understand some of the terms we say so that we better appreciate what we are doing in remember the Lord's Supper.

II. Core Activities of The Church—Lord’s Supper.

- A. Terminology:
 1. The scripture gives us a few different ways this activity is called.
 2. Breaking of bread:
 - a. Acts 2:42.
 - b. Acts 20:7 “On the first day of the week [note this as well], wehn we were gathered together to break bread. . . .” This is an infinitive of purpose.
 3. In 1 Corinthians we see Paul use several terms to speak of the same activity. This helps us see that we must not lock onto one term as the only acceptable one.
 - a. Communion/sharing — *Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?* (1 Corinthians 10:16) **Here it is *koinonia*.**
 - b. Lord’s table and the Lord’s cup — *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the*

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Lord and the table of demons. (1 Corinthians 10:21) **Here you see the familial aspect of this *koinonia* or fellowship.**

- c. The Lord's Supper— *Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper* (1 Corinthians 11:20).
- d. "Eucharist" — *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.* (1 Corinthians 11:24).

(1) to give thanks is the Greek word *eucharisteo*.

(2) Many will stumble over this due to how the Roman Catholic Church uses this to describe their eating and drinking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. But it is actually quite neutral in itself.

- 4. Observe how these passages speak of a corporate activity. When the local church gathered together. This is why it is so intimately connected to true Christian fellowship.

B. Key Views:

1. Roman Catholic Church/Eastern Orthodox.

- a. During the Mass the bread and wine actually become the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.
- b. Called Transubstantiation and developed over the centuries. It is not found in any sense in the bible but is steeped in Greek philosophy. Aquinas was the key theologian who developed how the bread and wine were changed while keeping their same qualities.
- c. Believed that in taking the elements you are feasting on the literal blood and flesh of Christ. Critical in your salvation, forgiveness of sins and adds to the grace necessary to bring you to heaven.
- d. This change can only occur by priests ordained by bishops under the pope with apostolic succession. Or bishops with apostolic succession within the Eastern Orthodox church. By the proper recitation of the rite the change is then made by these men.
- e. They believe that any of the elements left over may be worshiped, adored and that His body and blood remain until consumed. If anyone rejects any part of this then they are accursed of God.

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2. Lutheran.
 - a. The presence of Christ’s body and blood is found “in, with, and under” the elements. So the elements remain unchanged but Jesus Christ is mystically present throughout and around it.
 - b. Again, it conveys grace but not to make one saved. It also restores fellowship. By participating in this your faith is somehow enlarged
 - c. It is not dependent upon the Pope or bishops. Nor does the elements continue to have the presence of Christ afterwards.
3. Reformed.
 - a. This is another step away from the Catholic view. The common way it is said is that Christ is present when we take the Lord’s Supper. So the elements are known as the seal, what they are a sign of is forgiveness of sins and they are brought together in what is called a sacramental union of sign and seal.
 - b. Again, in some way God grants grace for the person to grow in their Christian faith. It is not a physical conferring, but a spiritual one where the person is feeding on Christ, who is in heaven (not in the elements). It is vital to a person’s growth in godliness.
4. Zwinglian.
 - a. Swiss reformer in early 1500's. He argued that it was a memorial. What is happening is not some conference of saving or sanctifying grace; rather, it is bringing our minds back to what has already been accomplished. In this event the people proclaim that Jesus Christ did die for the forgiveness of sin.
 - b. The other views call the Lord's Supper a “sacrament” because they see that it is used by God to give grace for salvation or sanctification.
 - c. The memorial view calls this an ordinance which is worth noting. The Lord's Supper is something ordained by Jesus Christ but it does not possess some spiritual power to effect some change. It is a symbol designed to help us remember.
 - d. This is the view of Missio Dei Fellowship and we did a whole podcast on these terms.

C. Key Passages:

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1. It is instituted by Jesus Christ Himself.
 - a. Matthew 26:26-28.
 - (1) This is a passage that records the transition from one time or epoch to another. The mission to the people of Israel is ending and the mission of the Church is beginning. So we have here the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper.
 - (2) It is the Passover and He gathers with His disciples to celebrate it. But He wanted to do it with the disciples. Luke 22:15 says that He earnestly desired to do this.
 - (3) They ate together and celebrated the Passover and then at the end He takes the bread and a cup of wine and say, "Take, eat; this is My body" and "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."
 - (4) This is reported in Matthew, Mark and Luke.
 - b. Mark 14:22-25 gives some additional details.
 - (1) We see that the bread represents His body and the wine represents His blood for the covenant.
 - (2) But He also said that He will not drink wine until the Kingdom of God. This is a reference to His coming earthly reign.
 - c. In Luke 22:15-20 we see more details.
 - (1) He will celebrate the Passover in the Kingdom of God. Again this speaks of the millennial kingdom.
 - (2) The key phrase we should note is that He tells them to do this in remembrance of Him.
2. So we see that the Lord's Supper functions in two ways:
 - a. First, it is a symbol.
 - (1) The disciples knew it was not His body and blood and there is no indication that some strange, mystical event occurred at the pronouncement by Christ that it was His blood and body.

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- (2) This is nothing more than a metaphor. Jesus is the Lamb of God. Jesus is the Vine. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the great shepherd, etc. Those who insist that somehow we are feasting on Jesus are simply ripping normal language to pieces.
- b. Second, it is a memorial.
 - (1) In Luke 22:19 Jesus says, “do this in remembrance of Me.” This is an actual command of Jesus and is in the present tense indicating that it is to be an ongoing activity.
 - (2) Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 11 in vs 24-25 where both the cup and the bread are to be done in remembrance of Christ.
 - (3) The point is not to somehow have a spiritual experience or mysterious meal of the body of Jesus. It is to remember what His death accomplished.
3. What specifically is it that we ought to remember?
 - a. In Luke and 1 Corinthians 11 we see the bread as an image of Christ’s body. The phrase “for you” is important to note. It speaks of the glorious truth of Christ as our substitute. “On behalf of or in the place of” is the idea.
 - (1) All are under the dominion of sin and therefore we commit sin.
 - (2) The power of sin is death. Not only physical but spiritual and it is eternal.
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 5:21.
 - (4) Galatians 3:13.
 - (5) And when our hope is in this truth we also then receive His righteousness upon us.
 - (6) This is something we forget as we fall into sin and it is something we need to remember over and over.
 - b. The wine is to remind us that Jesus’s blood was poured out to accomplish two things. The first is the inauguration of a covenant and the second is the forgiveness of sin.

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- (1) The inauguration of a covenant is speaking of the “New Covenant.”
- (2) Remember that in the gospels the people are still under the Old Covenant made back in the time of the Exodus.
 - (a) The Passover was part of that. A time to remember God passing over the Israelites who had the blood of the lamb over their doors. A time of redemption out of slavery. A time of being strangers traveling toward a promised land.
 - (b) The whole Passover service was built around this. And there were three times wine was drank. Most likely it was the third glass that Jesus then explained the meaning of the Lord's Supper.
 - (c) In three days Jesus will hang on that cross and die in our place.
 - (d) What countless lambs and goats and bulls could never fully accomplish, Jesus would. The payment for sin would be made in Him alone.
 - (e) But it also ushered in the beginning of the New Covenant. Jeremiah 31 speaks of this with the nation Israel. It is marked by the Spirit of God, the regeneration of their hearts and the forgiveness of sin.
 - (f) This covenant began at His death and continues to be unfolded, culminating in the conversion of Israel as described in Matthew 24 and Romans 11.
 - (g) The book of Acts shows that we too, as gentiles partakers of it through our union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - (h) But the **way** a covenant is brought about is through the shedding of blood. So in Hebrews 9, which we will go to in a moment, we see in vss 18-20 that the Old Covenant with Moses and Israel was inaugurated with blood. And in a much better, perfect and eternal way the New Covenant is inaugurated too through the blood of Jesus Christ.

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- (3) The New Covenant brings about then the forgiveness of sin.
 - (a) Hebrews 9:22-28 is a beautiful example of this.
 - (b) Peter reminds us that we were not redeemed from our folly and sin through silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; as a lamb with any blemish or spot. This is what that little cup of wine or juice is to remind you of.
 - (c) This is not talking about an experience. It is not talking about a command. It is describing an indicative, a fact and reality.
 - (d) You hold that cup and you remind yourself that we all are redeemed only by the blood of Christ. We live because of that fact. We sing because of that fact. We obey because of that fact. But how we feel about that fact does not matter nor does it stop making it to be a fact.
- c. Another thing is the certainty of the resurrection (Matthew 26:29).
 - (1) Though it is not explicitly stated in what Jesus said, the resurrection is strongly declared as we take the Lord's Supper.
 - (2) Look at vs 29 and you will see it. This is His last time He will drink wine until when?
 - (3) And notice also when He drinks it again with whom will He drink it?
 - (4) This shows how certain He was that He would arise victorious over sin and death. What He was approaching was a horror we cannot fathom, yet in the midst of that horror He faithfully walk toward it with full confidence.
- d. A final event is also seen in the Lord's Supper of which we are to remind ourselves. The return of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.
 - (1) Both Matthew and Mark record the reality that He shall return and establish the Kingdom of God (commend that series).
 - (2) The Kingdom of God is the grand promise of the bible. Not merely our salvation, forgiveness or even eternal life.

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Those are all secondary blessings that are connected to the promise of God establishing His perfect kingdom where all things are made new and right.

- (3) We need to remind each other of this in times of great uncertainty and darkness. When the kingdoms rage or nations fall, we proclaim that Jesus is Lord and He is returning again to make all things right.

D. Administration:

1. What are the proper elements?

- a. The bible does not actually command us in this; rather we only find examples. And how something is done is not the same as a command and great care needs to remember this.
- b. The term for bread is the broadest term. It does not necessarily mean unleavened bread. In fact in Matthew 28:17 we see the specific term used for unleavened but not in vs 26.
- c. They were using wine, not juice. It would have been watered down, but it was wine.
- d. But because we have no specific command we are given freedom here. What is most important is to keep the elements in a form that fits closest to what they symbolize and what was used.

2. How often?

- a. The Scripture does not give a specific command on this.
- b. Churches vary on how often.
- c. Acts 2 says they were continually doing these things, but gives no actual clarity of when and how often.
- d. We obviously practice it weekly and the key reason is Acts 2. The practice of the Lord's Supper is a key component to what actual Christian fellowship is. Which leads to the final point.

E. Warning:

1. 1 Corinthians 11:27-31.
2. Remember that when we take part in the Lord's Supper we are practicing biblical, Christian fellowship. We are sharing and partnering together to

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remember His death for us. If that is kept in the forefront of your mind then this passage is easy to understand.

3. Rich having no care for the poor. Became gluttons and drunkards. The result is found in vs 22, they despise the church of God.
4. This is why we speak of unity and reconciliation are urged upon you each week.
5. Vs 30 should not be ignored. And we need to see it as what Paul calls it in vs 32, discipline because He loves us. But also note that this is NOT how God is portrayed in most pulpits today. But this is how God describes Himself.

III. Conclusion.

- A. So what we find with the Lord's Supper is that it is a holy ordinance given by our Lord and He expects us to celebrate it and practice it.
- B. It is a corporate call to remember.
 1. Remember our Lord who took our punishment and our sin upon His body and bore it away. It is gone.
 2. Remember our Lord who brought into existence the long promised New Covenant. That as we see people come to faith and follow Christ it is because of the New Covenant.
 3. Remember our Lord who rose again and is seated at the right hand of His Father. He defeated death and those who are in Christ no longer need fear it.
 4. Remember our Lord who is coming again to judge the living and the dead. That when He comes we will be caught up with Him and changed into His likeness. Sin's effects upon us shall be evermore wiped away for each of us.
 5. Remember our Lord who shall celebrate with us for all eternity the eternal fellowship and sharing in life and holiness that we possess in Him. In that day we shall drink a new wine with Him as we celebrate a new life and a new heavens and earth.
- C. Therefore, as we take the Lord's Supper together, let us be filled with a sense of humility and with thanksgiving. Let that remembrance still our fearful hearts and let it encourage us to move forward in the race set before us.

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Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. May you rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and may you rejoice in the love of the Father as it flows to you in every moment and in every way. Amen.