

## SERIES: COME TO THE TABLE

“The Cup of Blessing” | *1 Cor 10:16*

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*Pastor Jeremiah Knoop*

On the first Sunday of each month, we are going through a sermon series where we are looking at this meal that Jesus gave to the local church. We started by looking at the **FURNITURE**. We are invited to a **TABLE** – the Lord’s Table – where we spend time together in the presence of God. The **TABLE** is a picture of *fellowship*. It’s a picture of *family & friendship*. It’s a picture of *lingering* in the presence of one another. It’s a picture of *unrushed time* together. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, we are all invited to *linger* in the *presence* of God through faith in Christ.

Then we looked at the **BREAD**. Throughout the story of the Bible, we see that bread is symbolic of *life* (Gen 3:19; John 6:48). It is a picture of *God providing* for His people (Exod 16:8–15; Ruth 1:6). It is a picture of God taking many peoples and *bringing us together* into one (1 Cor 10:17). And when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He used bread as a visual of His body being broken for us. His life was broken so that our lives could be made whole.

After giving us bread to eat, Jesus gave us a **CUP** to drink (**1 Cor 11:25**). This is what we are going to look at today. **What’s in this cup?** *Water? Milk? Coffee? Lemonade? Some kind of juice?* We have at least 3 clues here in 1 Corinthians that help us to answer this question.

1. First, it is given as a symbol of Christ’s blood (**1 Cor 11:25**). So, we are expecting the liquid in the cup to have some physical resemblance to blood – just as bread has some physical resemblance to the body. Therefore, we would expect that the most appropriate color for this drink would be **red**.
2. The second clue comes in the section right before this verse – where Paul is reprimanding the church in Corinth for abusing this meal (**1 Cor 11:17–22**). In verse 21, we read that instead of eating this meal together, some of the people were eating and drinking everything before the rest of the church arrived. The result of this selfish practice is that some people were hungry, and some people were drunk (**11:21**). In other words, if this cup was abused, it had the **potential to intoxicate people**.
3. The final clue comes in **1 Cor 10:16**. Here we learn that this cup is called “*The cup of blessing*” or “*the cup of thanksgiving*”. You remember that when Jesus instituted this meal, it was during **the Passover**.<sup>1</sup> The Passover meal is a Jewish celebration where they remember what God did in rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> During this meal, the Jews eat & drink specific things at specific times which symbolize this historic rescue. As part of this meal, they drink **4 cups of wine**.
  1. The first cup is the **Cup of Sanctification**.
  2. The second cup is the **Cup of Deliverance** or (the **Cup of Plagues**).
  3. The third cup is the **Cup of Redemption** or (the **Cup of Blessing/Thanksgiving**).

Most biblical scholars believe that **THIS third cup** was the cup Jesus was holding when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. Instead of using this cup to bless God (*to thank God*) for their redemption from Egypt through the blood of a sacrificial lamb, Jesus uses it to teach about an eternal redemption through His own blood which He would shed for the world. And if Jesus was using the same drink that the Jews had always used for the Passover meal, then He was giving them wine.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 26:17, 26; Mark 14:12, 22; Luke 22:7, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Exod 12:11–28.

Ever since **the temperance movement** in the 1800's, many protestant churches switched from wine to grape juice because of all the negative associations with alcohol. But throughout the vast majority of our history, the Jews used wine for the Passover, and the church used wine for the Lord's Supper. So, this morning, we want to take a brief look at **the story of wine in the Bible** to see the significance of this drink in this meal.

### 1. A Symbol of Divine Victory | *Genesis 14:18*

The very first time God delivered His chosen people in a battle over the enemy, Melchizedek (the first priest in the Bible) brings out **bread and wine** to celebrate the victory.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. A Symbol of Divine Blessing | *Genesis 27:27–29*

When Isaac prayed his great fatherly blessing over his son Jacob, he asked God to give Jacob an abundance of **grain and wine**. Similarly, the *final blessing* from the lips of Moses was that God's people would dwell "*in a land of grain and new wine*" (Deut 33:28).<sup>4</sup>

### 3. A Symbol of Divine Care | *Numbers 18:8–12*

In the OT, God set apart one of the tribes of Israel (the Levites) to lead His people in worship. Their entire life was set apart for the worship of God, which means they were uniquely dependent on God to provide for them. Here, **wine and grain** were a testimony that God only gives the best gifts to His people (Num 18:12).<sup>5</sup> Again, the prophet Isaiah calls everyone who is thirsty to come to God and *buy wine without money and without price* (Isa 55:1).<sup>6</sup> God is calling us to come to Him to experience a kind of happiness that cannot be earned or purchased.

### 4. A Symbol of Divine Joy | *Psalms 4:7*

In Psalm 4:7, David compared the gladness that God puts in our heart to the kind of gladness we have when **grain and wine** increase. Again, in Psalm 104:15 the psalmist says that God is the one who gives **wine** that makes the heart glad **and bread** which strengthens man's heart.<sup>7</sup> Thus, wine was a picture of a happy heart (*as opposed to an anxious and troubled heart*).

### 5. A Symbol of Heaven | *Isaiah 25:6*

God promises a day when all people will dine with Him in a feast that includes **the best aged wine** (Isa 25:6).<sup>8</sup> The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the day when people will stream to the goodness of the Lord where there is **wheat & wine** and where sorrow is gone forever (Jer 31:12).<sup>9</sup>

### 6. Part of their Worship | *Exodus 29:38–46*

Along with the sacrifice of a lamb, God's people were to offer **flour and wine** as a daily offering to the Lord (Exod 29:40).<sup>10</sup> And then, every year, they were to offer God a tithe of their grain and wine (Deut 14:22–23). They would travel to the place that God had chosen, and then they would eat bread and drink wine in His presence. It was called *an offering of rejoicing* (Deut 14:26).

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<sup>3</sup> When God's people sing over the destruction of the enemy, they sing "A vineyard of red wine!" (Isa 27:2). The salvation of the Lord leads to grain and new wine (Zech 9:16–17; Amos 9:14).

<sup>4</sup> See also Deut 7:13; 11:14; Prov 3:10. Similarly, wine was also a symbol of success (Neh 5:18) and luxury (Ezek 27:18).

<sup>5</sup> God ordained that those who trusted in Him alone to provide their needs would receive "all the best of the new wine and the grain..." (Num 18:12). See also 2 Chr 31:4–5.

<sup>6</sup> See also Hos 2:8.

<sup>7</sup> See also Prov 31:6–7; Eccl 9:7; Isa 16:10; Zech 10:7.

<sup>8</sup> See also Joel 2:19; 3:18; Amos 9:13; **Luke 22:18**.

<sup>9</sup> See also Prov 31:6–7. Wine has the ability to take the edge off of sorrow temporarily. In heaven, it will be gone for good.

<sup>10</sup> See also Deut 23:13; Num 15:5, 7, 10; 28:14; Deut 14:23, 26; 1 Chr 9:29; 2 Chr 31:5; Neh 10:39.

## OT SUMMARY

Wine has always had the potential to lead to a lot of harm in a person's life.<sup>11</sup> There are numerous places where the Bible warns against the *abuse* of alcohol. *Overindulgence* leads to all kinds of sinful behaviors, and *drunkenness* is always a sin.

But this is true for any of God's good gifts:

- Physical intimacy is a gift; adultery is a sin.
- Food is a gift; gluttony is a sin.
- Wealth is a gift; greed is a sin.
- Knowledge is a gift; pride is a sin.
- Fire brings warmth, and it brings destruction. (Shell Lake bonfire 😊)
- Hammers build up, and they can tear down.
- Rain & sunshine cause plants to grow; too much rain or sunshine cause plants to die.

Because wine is alcoholic, it always has the potential to lead to destruction in a person's life, and so we need to be wise and discerning when & where & how much we choose to drink. But the God-given symbol of wine in the Bible is a not picture of its destruction; **it's a picture of the good gifts of God.** It's a picture of celebration, blessing, provision, fellowship, success, and joyful worship in His presence.

## NT PICTURE

This makes it significant that Jesus would begin His public ministry by turning water into the best wine anybody had ever tasted (**John 2:10**). His very first public miracle was a beautiful picture of the kind of ministry that Jesus was going to have and the kind of life that Jesus had come to bring. In **John 15:5**, Jesus describes Himself as the vine and His people as the branches, and then He said that His desire for us is that His joy would remain in us and that our joy would be full (15:11).<sup>12</sup> In **Psalm 16:11**, we read, "*In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore.*" Fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore – this is the life that Jesus came to give.

Think of all the lifegiving miracles that Jesus did during His earthly ministry. He gives...

- *Healing to the leper ... Sight to the blind ...*
- *Strength to the lame ... Life to those who were dead ...*
- *Deliverance from demons ... Forgiveness from sin ... Freedom from addiction*<sup>13</sup> ...

What greater way to portray the kind of everlasting happiness that Jesus had come to bring than to miraculously provide **over 120 gallons of wine** for a marriage celebration that had run out!

And it was better than the best wine – **as if to say**, "*This is the kind of life I have come to bring.*" A kind of life that is better than the best this world has to offer.

Jesus came so that we might taste the happiest kind of happy. The highest kind of joy. The most superior kind of blessing. The lavishness of our Father's pleasure over us. The celebration of our victory over sin and death and hell and Satan and shame and addiction.

And not only did Jesus' public ministry **start** with this symbol of joy and celebration and blessing and divine pleasure, but it also **ended** with this symbol. In His final meal with His disciples before His crucifixion, Jesus shared this cup of wine with them.

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<sup>11</sup> It was detrimental in Noah's life. In Lot's life. It destroyed the judgment of kings and priests.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus came so that we might know what it means to live "more abundantly" in His life (John 10:10).

<sup>13</sup> Think of Zacchaeus being set free from his addiction to money.

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying,  
“This cup is the new covenant in My blood.  
This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”<sup>14</sup>  
~ *1 Corinthians 11:25*

As I was studying for this message this past week, I had a pastor ask me if I thought this cup symbolized **the cup of God’s wrath** that Jesus drank for our sin. You remember when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, “*O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me*” (Matt 26:39). As Jesus gave up His life on the cross, the Bible describes Him as drinking a cup full of God’s wrath.<sup>15</sup> It’s as if God poured out all His fury for your sin and my sin into a cup, and there on the cross, Jesus drank every last drop. And because Jesus drank that cup, it’s no longer available to us. The cup of wrath is gone forever. Jesus drank every last drop of God’s wrath, and so now the only thing left for us is God’s pleasure, joy, blessing, lavish provision, victory, and heaven.

So when my pastor friend asked me if I thought this symbolized the cup of God’s wrath, I said, “*No way!*” Jesus doesn’t share that cup with us. Instead, He gives us “*The Cup of Blessing*”.

This is the cup that we drink:

- **This cup** ... which symbolizes divine victory & joy & fellowship with God.<sup>16</sup>
- **This cup** ... which symbolizes redemption through the sacrifice of a spotless lamb.
- **This cup** ... which symbolizes the life of our Savior poured out for you.

This cup ... is for you.<sup>17</sup>

### So, what do we do with this cup?

As we drink this cup – together – in the presence of God...

- We remember what Jesus has done for us.
- We (bless/thank) God for the life He has given us in Christ.
- We rejoice.

As we prepare to drink this cup, I think it would be appropriate to spend a few moments confessing to God all the ways that you have spurned His provision and His happiness and His blessings in your life:

- God is your **provider**, and still you have grumbled often about your life.
- God longs to fill your heart with **gladness**, but you’re too focused on everything negative.
- God has given you **victory**, and still you wallow in the shame of your past sin.
- God has made **a place at His table** for you, but you trade it for video games, television, and social media.

As we prepare to drink this cup, repent of this negative attitude. Ask God to give you eyes to see the abundant life that Jesus has poured out for you. And then ask God to restore unto you the joy of your salvation in Jesus.

### PRAY

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<sup>14</sup> Read this story in Matt 26:17, 26–30; Mark 14:12, 22–26; Luke 22:7, 14–23.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Matt 20:22; Jer 25:15; Isa 51:17; Rev 14:9–10.

<sup>16</sup> Good article [here](#)

<sup>17</sup> In his famous book, the “*Institutes*”, **John Calvin** wrote, “When we see wine set forth as a symbol of blood, we must reflect on the benefits which wine imparts to the body, and so realize that the same are spiritually imparted to us by Christ’s blood. These benefits are to nourish, refresh, strengthen, and gladden.”