

**Communion Series: Together at the Table** (2023)

The Attitude (*The Eucharist*) | **Luke 22:14–20**

North Center Church | July 2, 2023

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Over the course of this year (2023), on the first Sunday of each month, we have been looking at different aspects of Communion. We've looked at the significance of the **table** (*the furniture*). We looked at the significance of **bread** and **wine** (*the substance*). We looked at the connection between communion and **baptism** (*the washing that takes place before the meal*).

This morning, we are going to look at what **the attitude of our heart** should be as we eat this meal together.

**III.** Have you ever shared a meal with somebody who was ungrateful for their food? I've known lots of people like this over the years.

- When I was in *public school*...kids complained.
- When I was in *college*...kids complained.
- I've also known a few adults in my lifetime who've snubbed their nose at the food in front of them.<sup>1</sup>
  - Nothing new: **Numbers 11:4–6, 19–20**

The word that we are going to focus on in our text this morning is **εὐχαριστέω** (which is where we get the word *eucharist*), and it means "**to be thankful, to express appreciation for benefits or blessings.**"<sup>2</sup>

**III.** As parents, Liz and I spend lots of time teaching this concept of **thankfulness** to our children.

- When somebody helps you, you should express your appreciation... (*homework*)
- When somebody serves you in some way... (*making you a meal*)
- When somebody gives you a gift... (*birthday*)
- When somebody encourages you in some way... (*you did a great job*)
- **We want to cultivate thankful hearts that are quick to express appreciation**...
  - I don't know how many times I've looked at one of my children and said...
    - "Now what do you say?"
    - "Look me in the eyes. Now, what do you say?"
    - "Can you go tell so and so thank you for that thing...?"

This **heart of thankfulness** should be **our attitude** as we celebrate the Lord's Table.

It was the attitude of Christ as He prepared this meal for us.

When the hour had come, He [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them,

*"With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

Then He took the cup, and **GAVE THANKS**, and said,

*"Take this and divide it among yourselves;*

*For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

And He took bread, **GAVE THANKS** and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,

*"This is My body which is given for you;*

*do this in remembrance of Me."*

Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying,

*"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."*

~ **Luke 22:14–20**

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<sup>1</sup> When you live in a city with thousands of different restaurants & grocery stores & food delivery services at your fingertips, it's easy to develop a very particular and entitled attitude toward food.

<sup>2</sup> BDAG

Some denominations refer to this meal as “*the Eucharist*”, and this is where that word originates. When Jesus instituted this meal before the cross, **He gave thanks**<sup>3</sup> to His Father for the bread & for the cup.

And I don’t know if you’ve ever thought about the significance of Jesus giving thanks, but it’s absolutely profound. He gives them **the bread** as a symbol of His body which is going to be **broken** (*through unimaginable suffering*), and **He gives God thanks**. And then He gives them **the cup** as a symbol of His blood that would be **poured out** for them (*through unimaginable suffering*), and then **He gives God thanks**. He “*expresses appreciation for the benefits and blessings*” of what He was about to accomplish **through His death on the cross**.

It’s as if He is saying, “*Thank you for giving me a body that can be broken for My people.*”  
“*Thank you for giving me blood that can be shed for their redemption.*”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus knows what this will mean for Him in the coming hours, and His response is **NOT**, “*Why Me?*”<sup>5</sup>  
Or “*It’s not fair.*” Or “*Why would You let this happen to Me?*”

His response is to **GIVE THANKS for the bread & for the cup & for what they represented** (which was His sacrificial death on the cross)

To help us grasp the significance of **this word in this moment**, let’s take a quick glance at some of the other times it shows up in the NT.<sup>6</sup>

1. The first time it shows up in the NT is in **Matthew 15:36** when Jesus is about to miraculously feed over 4,000 people.<sup>7</sup>
  - The text says that Jesus had **compassion** on the people in their hunger because there was nobody else who could give them “*bread in the wilderness*” (15:33).
  - He **gave thanks** for the 7 loaves they had. Then He **broke** the bread, gave it to His followers, and it was **miraculously** multiplied so that it **fed** everyone who wanted it.
2. The second (*and only other*) time this word shows up in the NT is in **Matthew 26:27** when Jesus is breaking this bread with His disciples during the Last Supper.
  - There’s a connection that Matthew seems to be making in his Gospel. **When Jesus gives thanks, God is about to use something that was broken to miraculously provide for people.**<sup>8</sup>
3. The first time this word shows up in the **Gospel of Luke (17:16)** is when Jesus miraculously heals a group of foreign lepers. As Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, He passed by 10 lepers from Samaria
  - And they cried for Jesus to have mercy on them (17:13).
  - And what does Jesus do? He cleanses them (17:14).
  - Nine of them walked away, but one fell on his face, glorified God with a loud voice and said, “*Thank you.*” (17:15–16).
  - Not only was the leper healed that day, but he was also saved (17:19).
    - **Nobody** could heal this man of his leprosy; it was a certain death sentence.
    - **Nobody** could save him from his sin; it was a certain death sentence.
    - On that day, Jesus did what only He can do: He miraculously *healed* him & *saved* him.
    - And how did this restored & redeemed man respond? **He glorified God & gave thanks.**<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> εὐχαριστήσας

<sup>4</sup> See also Hebrews 10:5, 12, 14.

<sup>5</sup> **Has that ever been your response** when you’ve gone through times of suffering? *Why me? It’s not fair.*

<sup>6</sup> εὐχαριστέω appears 37 times in the GNT.

<sup>7</sup> See also Mark 8:6; John 6:11, 23.

<sup>8</sup> The same is true in the **Gospel of Mark (1)** breaking bread in the wilderness, (2) breaking bread with His disciples (8:6; 14:23).

<sup>9</sup> So, here, this thanksgiving is connected with the miraculous work of Jesus & the glory of God.

4. This word shows up three times in the **Gospel of John**. The first two times are about the day that Jesus miraculously fed the crowd of 4,000 (**6:11, 23**). And the third time is when Jesus is about to raise Lazarus from the dead (**11:41**).
  - The crowd is about to see the glory of God (**11:40**) as Jesus raises a dead man back to life (**11:43–44**).
  - And the Bible says that “**Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, ‘Father...thank You...’**” (**11:41**).

When you finish surveying the word “thank you” in **the gospels**, you see that it wasn’t a cheap word. It wasn’t simply the appropriate & expected cultural response to acts of kindness. Rather, it was the response of a heart that was witnessing the glory of God through miraculous deliverance and supernatural provision.

In **the Gospels**, the hearts that were truly **thankful** were the hearts that had witnessed the **glory** of God.

5. This is why, when Paul describes the **greatest tragedy** in the universe in the opening chapter of his letter to the Romans, he describes unthankful people.

**Although [these people] knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

~ *Romans 1:21*

You could say that the **greatest tragedy** in the universe is when people who clearly see the evidence of God (**1:20**) *do not treasure* Him and are *not thankful* for what He has done (**1:21**).

And you could say that the **greatest testimony** in the universe is when the people of God *treasure* Him above all else and are *vocally thankful* for what He has done.

6. This idea of God-focused thankfulness becomes a constant theme throughout the NT.
  - When God has made Himself known to us...
  - When He has provided for us in ways that we never could...
  - When He has rescued us from something that would have surely taken our life...
  - When He has raised us from death to life...

...the only appropriate response to this *kind* of experience with this *kind* of God is a thankful *kind* of heart.

- **Rom 14:5–9** | Whether we *live or die*, we should be a thankful people.
- **1 Cor 10:27–31** | Whether you *eat or drink* or whatever you do, do to the glory of God & give thanks
- **Col 3:16–17** | Whatever you do in *word or deed*, do all in the name of Jesus...giving thanks to God
- **1 Thess 5:18** | In *everything* give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

This makes Christians so gloriously different from others around us...

- Instead of being so quickly *triggered*, we are quick to be *thankful*...
- Instead of being notoriously *anxious* and *fearful*, we are notoriously *thankful*...
- Instead of being regularly *discontent* with life, we are regularly *thankful*...
- Instead of being *self-seeking & self-serving* (**like the 9 lepers**), we are *thankful*...

When we have a heart that gives God thanks in the midst of our brokenness...it’s so radically different.

And if there was ever a time to express our heart of thanks to God, it is during **the Lord’s Table**.

- This ISN’T a time to wallow in the depths of our sin & depravity. It’s NOT a time where we try to stir up emotions of sorrow for the suffering that Christ endured. It’s NOT a time for deep introspection.
- **It’s a time for thanksgiving.** This is our attitude at the table.

## CONCLUSION

To **give thanks** (**εὐχαριστέω**) is to “*express appreciation for benefits or blessings*”, and this meal represents the greatest benefits and blessings in your entire life.

- Jesus gave His life for yours.
- His body was broken so that you could be made whole.
- He emptied Himself so that you could be filled.
- He was put to death so that you could be raised to life.
- He absorbed the wrath of God for our sin so that the only thing left for us to receive is grace.
- He was forsaken by the Father so that we would never know what that feels like.
- He trampled over the powers of sin and death so that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

This meal represents God providing for you in ways that nobody else ever could.

It represents the miraculous power of God to bring dead people to life.

It represents the glory of God in the sacrifice of His Son.

And, with all this on His mind, Jesus broke the bread, He poured the cup, He looked to His Father, and he said, “*Thank You.*”

This meal is **not** about the magnitude of our sin. It’s about the magnificence of our Savior.

It’s about the stunning gift of our God.

And so what should be the attitude of our heart as we come to this table?

It should be, “*Thank You, Father.*”