



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: The Book of Mark

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The Lord's Supper

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I'm going to ask the ushers to come and receive our offering now. While they're doing that, let's get our Bibles open to the gospel of Mark, chapter 14. While you're doing all that, let me also say Happy Father's Day, the greatest holiday in the history of the world. Maybe Easter is above that, but you know what I'm talking about.

This morning, when I got here, Tammi sent me this quote. She said, "You can tell what the best year of your father's life was, because they seem to freeze that clothing style and ride it out." That comes from the great theologian, Jerry Seinfeld. We'll just assume he's right, there.

Let's get our Bibles open to Mark 14. In case you're brand new today, this is what we do. We go through books of the Bible verse by verse on Sunday mornings. We're working our way through the gospel of Mark right now, and we arrive at what the followers of Jesus affectionately know as the Last Supper. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this history-changing event in great detail. The apostle Paul adds a little more instruction to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians in order to help us celebrate it in a more meaningful and God-honoring way.

Before we get into the text, I want to give a very brief review of the historical Christian perspective on Communion. I'm going to go all the way back to pre-Protestant times, which we would identify as the Roman Catholic view known as *transubstantiation*. The prefix *trans-* means change. That's really the part of that big word we're concerned about. It means change.

The Catholics teach that by the prayers and consecration of the priest in the middle of the Mass, in which the Catholics believe the priest is standing in for Jesus Christ, the bread and wine are miraculously changed into the literal body and blood of Jesus. They believe when Jesus said, in John 6:54, "**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life...**" he was talking in a literal sense.

So, the Mass is about eating the transubstantiated or changed bread and wine that brings saving grace to the soul, because according to Catholicism and their Catechism, to receive Communion in the Catholic Church is actually to receive Jesus himself. Now, we don't believe Jesus meant, in

John, chapter 6, verse 54, for those words to be taken literally, and so I'm going to skip forward now to the sixteenth century to what we would call the Reformed or Protestant view, which would be a ceremonial perspective on Communion.

The Protestant Reformation, which broke away from the stronghold of Catholicism in the sixteenth century, taught that the bread and the wine are symbols. They are signs that point to the historically real crucified body and shed blood of Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead, alive forever, and seated at the right hand of the Father.

We believe that for Jesus, in John, chapter 6, the eating and drinking of his flesh and blood was metaphorical and was about believing. He promises eternal life to those who believe in him. This is why he instituted the Lord's Supper. So the two ordinances or sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are intended to be a ceremony for our public confession or celebration of our faith, our belief in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Augustine wrote this. He said something like, "These ordinances of the church are the outward invisible sign of an inward spiritual grace." Alastair Begg, a preacher in Ohio, wrote it this way. I'm paraphrasing, but I like how he says it. "The sacrament, or the sign, is a visible display that points to a reality different from and more significant than itself."

Now, in just a very simple illustration and way to understand this... Early in Tammi's and my life, we lived in Southern California for about seven years. There was a sign on the 57 South freeway in Fullerton that said, "Disneyland – 2 miles." I drove past that sign every day. It was in the next city, two miles away, known as Anaheim.

Now, if you wanted to, you could pull over and park under that sign. You could get all the kids out, crowd around the sign, and take family pictures with the sign, and you could post those pictures everywhere and anywhere you want to. There's the potential of being very familiar with the sign without ever having embraced the reality that the sign points to, a reality much different and much more significant than the sign itself. Are you with me?

In the matters of Communion and baptism, it's possible for some to participate in the outward displays of being baptized and taking Communion but never know the reality of it personally or inwardly. So we want to turn to our text now and witness for ourselves the Lord's Supper as Jesus intended it to be and instituted it.

My hope is that by the end of this morning, for all of us, this would be the celebration of an inward reality that is brought on by faith in Jesus. So, with your Bibles open and ready to go, let's stand for the reading of God's Word. We're going to pick it up right where we left off, in verse 12. Last week, we finished up in verse 11, so, verse 12.

"And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to [Jesus], 'Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?'"

And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.' And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover."

The next few verses are all about Judas and his betrayal. We covered all that in detail last Sunday, so let's skip forward to verse 22 and get right to it.

"And as they were eating, [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.'"

Of course, he's talking there about the fact that in just 24 hours he was no longer going to be with them. Let's stop right there and pray.

Father in heaven, I pray in the name of Jesus that you would bless the reading and teaching of your Word today. I pray that ultimately, God, you would open our hearts in a wider, greater way to understand that historical significance and life-changing implication of what Jesus just did in this passage. God, I pray that Communion will never be the same for us.

God, I pray for those whose hearts are distracted this morning. Their hearts are heavy with important, serious, and sad things, God. I pray you would meet them in this place and surprise them with comfort that's brought on by hope, your love, and your promise to walk with them through any and every valley they have yet to face. I pray this in the name of Jesus, amen.

I confess to you that today I'm going to be more of a teacher than a preacher. I'm going to be doing more explaining than I am proclaiming, and so I want to get to, I think, what's most simple and most obvious in this passage, and then we'll spend most of our time on the last point.

1. *The Lord's Supper is for followers of Jesus.* Let's establish that right away. In verse 17, we saw that when evening came, he came with the Twelve. In verse 22, we read, **"...as they were eating..."** In this passage, the Twelve and the *they* are his disciples. They're his followers. Some even believe Judas had already left to betray Jesus before we ever get to verse 22. There's really no way to prove that. It's speculative, but it's fun to contemplate nonetheless.

The point here is that the Lord's Supper as Jesus instituted it is an act of worship by followers of Jesus who have put their faith in him. In fact, five times in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul teaches about the Lord's Supper, always in the context of the church gathering. This is not something to be done as some kind of public or religious tradition by any and all, but it is certainly exclusive for those who call themselves followers of Jesus.

As a little sidenote, I did this with my children and I would encourage you to do the same. We didn't allow our children to participate in the Lord's Supper until they were old enough to receive Jesus and to be baptized. Our point in doing that was to make sure we avoided causing a lot of confusion in our children's lives. We never wanted Communion to become some ritual that they thought somehow earned them brownie points with God in heaven, and so we saved that for what we believe is intended for followers of Jesus.

2. *The Lord's Supper is bread and wine.* Nothing is said about the kind of bread. I personally think it was garlic bread, but there's nothing said about the bread and nothing said about the age of the wine. The only statement about the cup is in verse 25, where Jesus calls it, "**...the fruit of the vine...**" so we don't make a big deal over whether or not it's grape juice or wine. Nothing forbids or commands either one. At Canyon Hills, we use juice just to protect those who are working really hard on their sobriety. We don't want to do anything in church that would make that even more difficult than it already is.

So, there you have it, the simple and the obvious. It's for believers and it's with bread and wine, in other words. I wanted to say that just because we should not take any latitude to make it silly by having M&M's and whatever to do Communion. The bread and the cup have serious significance and meaning throughout history.

3. *The Lord's Supper is the sign that points to our salvation in Jesus.* Celebrating Communion is a declaration that we are saved through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I want us to see verses 22 and following one more time. Look at it with me.

"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.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it." Here's the key. **"And he said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'"** In that one statement, history was changed, and we're going to come all the way back to that in just a minute.

Luke, in his recording of the Last Supper, writes that Jesus said, **"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant..."** He has the word *new* in there. So, what we can surmise by reading all of the Gospels' rendition of the Last Supper is that the Lord's Supper proclaims that Jesus' sacrifice of his body and blood on the cross is replacing another type of sacrifice. Jesus is declaring here that what he is about to do is going to replace the old sacrifice for sins.

This is where this really gets fun for us today. The word *Passover* is mentioned in verse 12, when you saw it there: **"And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him..."** The context of this Last Supper is that it's happening during the Feast of Passover.

We're going to spend the next several minutes going back several thousand years and coming forward to Mark 14. For some of you Bible nerds, you are going to light up. Your dreams are going to come true in the next 20 minutes. For others of you, your eyes are going to glaze over. I would say just stay awake while you're resting, but I think this is going to be helpful. I really do

think this is going to be helpful for all of us and it's going to make Communion even more special.

Three thousand years before this moment in Mark 14, God made a promise. He made a promise to Abraham and Sarah that a nation of people would rise up from their marriage, which would require a miracle, because they were way beyond the years of bearing children. God said that nation would become his chosen people of promise, and from them would come a King who would not only bless their nation but bless all nations and all peoples of all time, but that would not happen without much suffering.

The Pharaoh of Egypt eventually saw what was happening and worried that the Hebrew descendants of Abraham were multiplying so fast that they would soon become a threat to Egypt's sovereignty, so he began, after many centuries of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all their descendants beginning to multiply, what would be a four-century campaign of brutality and slavery of the Jewish people.

He looked around and said, "I don't know who all these people are, but they're starting to surround us. I know what I'll do! We'll capture them all. We'll enslave them and we'll make them work for us so they can't organize and overthrow us." That's kind of what happened right then.

In the midst of this, in God's sovereignty, this yet-to-be-established nation even continued to grow in numbers while they were being enslaved. At just the right time...keep going forward with me...God calls Moses. "Moses," he says, "I want you to rescue my people from Pharaoh and lead them to the Promised Land."

One problem though: Pharaoh refused to let them go. Are you tracking with me now? You've already now switched to your DreamWorks movies and you're with me, right? Big problem. Pharaoh doesn't want to let them go. Several Pharaohs later, Egypt is still worried that these people are too many and they could take over, so God empowers Moses with nine different horrible plagues to convince Pharaoh that God wasn't kidding.

Instead of Pharaoh humbling himself, he grows more stubborn and hard-hearted. The book of Exodus records that on the appointed night, God told Moses to tell the people to get ready to leave. "We're leaving Egypt tomorrow." He would show the Hebrew people a display of his power and mercy they would never, ever forget.

God instructs every household of Hebrew slaves in Egypt that night to kill and prepare a lamb, making sure they do not break any of the lamb's bones. Are you starting to see what this is pointing to? He then said, "I want you to apply some of the lamb's blood to the top and sides of the wooden doorposts of your dwelling, your homes." You can see now what that is beginning to point to.

That night, God said he was going to send his angel to kill every firstborn male in every household in Egypt. This would be the tenth and final plague against the ruthless Pharaoh and the Egyptian oppression. The only way for God's chosen people to be saved from this horrible

death was to put all of their trust and faith in that innocent lamb's blood on the doorposts of their homes.

When that death angel of God swept in through Egypt to carry out God's final plague, when he saw the lamb's blood, he would pass over that home and allow them to live, rescuing them from certain death.

As a sidenote, as part of the instruction for that last night, God also instructed them to bake some unleavened bread to keep them alive during the Exodus out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land. There wasn't enough time to let the dough rise, so the Hebrew people had to make sure there was no yeast, no leaven, in the bread. We'll talk more about what that points to in a minute.

Now, you know the rest of the story. They leave Egypt. They get to the Red Sea. God does a miracle. He parts the Red Sea. His people go all the way through the waters of the Red Sea, I believe, as a beautiful symbol of baptism. They go through the Red Sea. The Red Sea collapses on those enemies who are chasing them. They go into the Promised Land.

When it was all said and done, from that point forward, God commanded his people to remember their salvation from slavery and death in Egypt. He commanded, as soon as they got over there, an annual week-long Jewish celebration called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They were to take a week of days to remove all the yeast and leaven from their home, remembering the leaven they left behind in Egypt, which became a symbol of their old life of slavery and the Egyptians' godless world system.

This was their holiday, their celebration. Unleavened bread symbolized, in this feast, their putting off of their old life as they came out of Egypt and the beginning of a new life of fellowship with God, who saved them.

Now, the day before this week-long feast was to begin, they were to kick off the celebration with a Passover meal, hence verse 12. They were to kill a lamb, memorializing their deliverance from death. For 2,000 years, maybe 2,500 years, this annual feast and celebration had taken place amongst the Jewish people. The Hebrew people celebrated the Passover Feast, looking back at what God had done. For 2,500 years, God never abandoned his people in their sin.

In fact, every year, there was another celebration called the Day of Atonement. The high priest would sacrifice a lamb once again, and he would sacrifice the lamb on behalf of all the Jewish people. He would take some of the blood from that lamb into the temple, behind the curtain, into the Holy of Holies, where the people were forbidden to go, separated from God, because no sinful person was allowed into the presence of God except the high priest appointed by God himself.

He would go behind that curtain on behalf of all the Jewish people for 2,500 years and he would sprinkle the blood of that lamb on the mercy seat. God would allow the lamb's blood to cover over the people's sin until next year. He would not give them the punishment their sins deserved, but the priest had to keep doing that every year, year after year, for the people so God would not

bring his judgment and punishment upon the Jewish people for their sin. That blood covered over their sin. The whole system was to be a reminder of how deadly serious God takes sin.

See, because of Adam and Eve, sin entered humanity and we all inherited our original parents' spiritual DNA. We all are born with the sinful spirit of Adam and Eve, the spiritual yeast of sin, helpless and hopeless, as it is impossible to clean out of our hearts for good. It's impossible. Just like it's impossible to get the yeast out of the dough once it's in, it's impossible to get the sin out of the human once it's in.

Unfortunately, because of Adam and Eve, we're all born with a sinful spirit, and there isn't a thing we can do to get that sin out of us. We need someone who is perfectly sinless to give us a new heart. Enter Mark 14. Jesus says, in verse 24, **"This is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many."** In those words, everything changes.

No longer just an animal's blood poured out for God's chosen Jewish people, now it would be the blood of God's Son, a descendant of Abraham, fulfilling that promise perfectly. Born of the Jewish people, his blood would be poured out for many, for any, and for all who would by faith apply his saving, sinless blood to the doorposts of their hearts. Everything is about to change.

Jesus is saying, "From now on, instead of the Jewish high priest sprinkling the blood of a spotless, innocent, dead animal on a mercy seat of God behind the curtain in the man-made temple, Jesus, as our High Priest, has taken his sinless blood into the throne room of heaven, the temple made by God, and he remains there now alive, with no more sacrifices necessary.

Here's how the writer of Hebrews describes it in the book of Hebrews. He writes, **"For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."** He can because he's perfectly sinless.

"Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then [Jesus] would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away [our] sin by the sacrifice of himself."

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." Think about it. In Mark 14, in the Last Supper, Jesus is, in essence, saying what hundreds of thousands of sacrificed lambs, goats, and bulls, over 2,500 years could not do. Just one drop of his blood could.

Jesus is saying that 2,500-3,000 years of rivers of blood of sacrificed animals flowing from the altars of the temple could only temporarily achieve, only until the following year... Jesus is saying, "One drop of my blood removes your sin forever. The sacrifice of my body and blood is the final sacrifice." Jesus is saying in Mark 14, "It is finished, once and for all."

So, now, we celebrate Communion all these years later, publicly and personally declaring that we not only acknowledge the sacrifice and the sacred sign known as the Lord's Supper that points to our blessed hope; we acknowledge our faith and trust in him as our Savior, who has rescued us from the plague of slavery to sin and certain death by his own substitutionary death on our behalf. He has brought us out of slavery to sin alive, making peace with God on our behalf, giving us eternal life with God through his resurrection. In just a moment, we're going to participate in Communion.

Here's what I know, because there are probably about 1,000 people in here, there are some of you in here who have never taken Communion before. Maybe it's your first day in church. Maybe you've never been at church when they've done this. Some of you have never taken Communion before because you're not a Christian.

Some of you have been taking Communion and you know in your heart, although you're participating in the sign of what Jesus has done, there's no reality of it in your heart. There's no surrender of your daily life to trusting in Jesus and following him as your Savior and Lord, obeying his commands as he has taught. There's nothing of the reality going on in your life. You may take of the bread and the cup but it means nothing to you in an inward sense.

So, before we take Communion, I want to give those of you who believe you're ready right now, once and for all... If you're not sure or you know you're not a Christian, I want to give you an opportunity to accept Christ right now. Right where you're seated, in just a minute, I'm going to lead you in a prayer. I'm going to give you an opportunity, between you and God, to express that prayer to him. There's nothing mystical or magical about the prayer or me.

It's simply, if you're ready to say, "God, I give up. I want to put all of my faith and trust in you. I want Jesus to save me and forgive me," you can do that right now. There's no need to wait. If you're sincere and you want to trust in Jesus, I'm going to ask all of us to bow our heads right now together. Those of you who need to, those of you who sincerely believe, "Okay, I'm ready, Pastor, to give up. I'm ready to turn my life and heart over to Jesus Christ," I want you just to say these words, just silently between you and God.

"Dear God, I admit I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for me. I repent of my sin. I turn from it completely and I put my faith and trust in Jesus to forgive me of all my sins and to make my heart new. Today, God, I accept Jesus as my Savior and my Lord and I commit to living for him alone from now on. Amen."

I'm going to ask the ushers now to come and begin passing out Communion. If you are a believer, we're going to ask that you take the bread and the cup and hold them, and then when we all have it, we'll participate together. In the meantime, we're just going to let it be quiet and I want to give you time to just celebrate, rejoice, and be thankful to Jesus for what he has done for us. Let's do that.

The apostle Paul writes for us, **"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 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.'" Let's take it.

"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.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Let's take it together.

Father in heaven, we give you great praise in the name of Jesus that what we just did represents the greatest and most life-changing act of your love ever known in human history. We celebrate the death of your Son, Jesus Christ, for all of the hope, forgiveness, and eternal life it represents for those who believe. God, may we never forget it. In Christ's name, amen.

[Song]

We were lost, separated by our sin so great
Still you sacrificed your Son to set us free
We were lost, separated by our sin so great
Still you sacrificed your Son to set us free

You're all for us, you will never change
Oh, your love, oh, your love won't fail us
For you are good and remain the same
Oh, your love, oh, your love won't fail us

Your breath, it fills up our lungs and
Your grace is always is always enough and
Our hope is found in your unfailing love, your unfailing love
Your love, your unfailing love
Your unfailing love, your unfailing love
Your unfailing love

Found in you, secured in your promises
Life renewed, your Spirit compels us to
Worship you, we raise our hands and sing

You're all for us, you will never change
Oh, your love, oh, your love won't fail us
For you are good and remain the same
Oh, your love, oh, your love won't fail us

Your breath, it fills up our lungs and
Your grace is always is always enough and

Our hope is found in your unfailing love, your unfailing love

Your breath, it fills up our lungs and
Your grace is always is always enough and
Our hope is found in your unfailing love, your unfailing love
Your love, your unfailing love
Your unfailing love, your unfailing love
Your unfailing love

[End of song]

[Song]

I cast my mind to Calvary
Where Jesus bled and died for me.
I see his wounds, his hands, his feet.
My Savior on that cursed tree

His body bound and drenched in tears
They laid him down in Joseph's tomb.
The entrance sealed by heavy stone
Messiah still and all alone

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise his name forevermore
For endless days we will sing your praise
Oh Lord, Oh Lord our God

Then on the third at break of dawn,
The Son of heaven rose again.
O trampled death where is your sting?
The angels roar for Christ the King

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise his name forevermore
For endless days we will sing your praise
Oh Lord, Oh Lord our God

He shall return in robes of white,
The blazing sun shall pierce the night.
And I will rise among the saints,
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise his name forevermore
For endless days we will sing your praise
Oh Lord, Oh Lord our God

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise his name forevermore
For endless days we will sing your praise
Oh Lord, Oh Lord our God

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise his name forevermore
For endless days we will sing your praise
Oh Lord, Oh Lord our God
Oh Lord, Oh Lord our God

[End of song]

Who knew? Who knew Communion could give you goosebumps, right? See, we just reminded ourselves that our Christian faith is not just a religion of the past. It's not even just a religion for right now. It's a religion, a faith forever. One day, this crucified, risen Jesus who died for us so we could be forgiven by God forever promises to come again.

Every time we take Communion, we remember the hope of the future that when he comes, if we're still alive, we're going to look up with incredible joy, happiness, and confidence that we belong to him. If we're not here, if we're already gone before he comes, we're going to be in heaven.

Scripture tells us that when he does come again, we're going to come back with him and welcome the saints who are still alive. The whole thing is going to be one gigantic, beautiful marriage supper celebration, and it's going to be just like we did here, only Jesus is going to be sitting with us. Wow! That's why we do Communion. That's why it's so beautiful and so powerful.

I want to say to some of you, if you prayed today and you sensed, "You know what? This is the day I'm finally stepping over the line. I'm surrendering my heart to Jesus Christ," and you prayed that prayer, there are going to be some people standing up here in just a minute. Before you leave, they want to give you something to go home with. They just want to help you get started.

Maybe it's getting started again. Maybe you did something like this a long time ago and you never really walked with Jesus. We want to give you some things that'll help you get started on

the right foot. I hope you'll do that. God bless you. Have a great rest of your weekend. We'll see you next Sunday.