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## Passion

### Part 4 – The Last Supper

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today is a special day. We are taking the whole morning, looking at The Last Supper. At the end of the service, we are going to take the elements of the Lord's Supper together. To Start, we would love for you to be prepared for that. So, if you came in and you did not receive the elements, go ahead and raise your hand. We have ushers on each side; they'll just bring one to you. Hold onto that until the end of the service because this morning we're going to actually step into the scene of the Last Supper and then we are going to come back and explain the how, the why, the who. We'll even talk about the when of the Lord's Supper. We will then have a special time to examine our hearts and be prepared together, individually but also as a church family to take of the elements.

Here's what I love about looking up here and seeing the table. We want you to know everyone is invited to the table. Everyone is invited to place faith in Jesus. Faith alone in Christ alone, confessing with your mouth Jesus is Lord, the name above every name, and believing in your heart that he has been raised from the dead. We want to invite you to life in Jesus and then, ultimately, as a believer in Christ, today what we're talking about is moving into the Lord's table and the time of reflection as we remember and proclaim the Lord's death and as we look forward to the second coming of Christ.

If you have your Bible's you can turn to Luke 22, where we are going to be spending some time. We're also going to be looking at 1 Corinthians 11. We're just going to kind of set it up and walk into the scene, continue to worship together, prepare our hearts, and then take the elements together.

We read in Luke 22: 7 – **7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread...** This was the feast that celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. ...**on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.** Passover... We know this is what recalls the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. At the end of all of the plaques, the last one was the first born would die. The death angel would take out the first born, but the Israelites were called to sacrifice a lamb, place the blood over the door post, and the death angel would pass over that home and over that family. That is what Passover commemorates.

Today, as we talk about the blood of lambs saving Hebrews from the destruction in Egypt, we're really talking about the blood of Jesus saving each one of us from sin, death, the grave, and, ultimately, hell. I have a friend in here right now. Her name is Zoe. She sent me a letter a couple of months ago. Her family joined the church on Wednesday night. She came up to me and said, "Hey, I need to talk to you for a minute." I said, "Sure." So, Zoe pulls me aside and goes, "I know Easter is your day. I know it's a big day, I do," "It is. Thank you. I appreciate you recognizing that is a big day." She goes, "And I know you probably already have everything prepared that you're going to say."

She was the woman that wrote me a letter a couple of months ago that said, "Thank you for the way you encourage our church and paint a beautiful picture of heaven for the congregation." I thought this was one of the best notes I had ever received. She said, "Don't forget to remind people how miserable hell will be." And I said, "Yes, ma'am, I will do that." She told me Wednesday night, "And Easter is a great time to remind people about how miserable hell will be." So, if you are prepared for a hell, fire, and brimstone message on Easter Sunday... I said, "Zoe, it can't be the whole message, but I will touch on it."

Today, as we talk about The Last Supper, as we think about what it meant to be passed over for the Israelites – the blood of the lamb saved them from destruction in Egypt, but the blood of Jesus saves us from our sin and death and from hell. ***8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover***

***9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.***

***10 He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'"*** You see, in New Testament times, Passover became a pilgrimage, and Jewish pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem to participate in Passover. So, it wasn't uncommon. It was normal for Jewish pilgrims to be invited to these rooms, to these upper rooms, to these guest rooms to partake of this meal. They were made available to Jewish pilgrims. It had couches and was a place for them to recline. ***12 He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."***

***13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.***

***14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.***

[Reenactment of the scene at The Last Supper.]

The thing I wasn't prepared for this morning when we had this scene practiced and ready to go, was just that end scene of them walking out, knowing what Jesus is stepping into in the next few hours and the next couple of days. If you are new to our church, we've been going through the Passion week, taking a day each Sunday leading up to Easter. Instead of just taking the week before easter, we wanted to unpack it for a good month and a half before Easter.

Next week, as we look at the death of Jesus on Palm Sunday, to see them walking out and knowing what lies ahead. And then also just to see the table up here and to know that has always been the heartbeat of our church, which has always been to invite people to the table. You are invited today. If you've been here for a while and you've heard the gospel preached, but you've never placed faith in Jesus, you've never repented of your sin and turned from the ways that you think lead to life but ultimately lead to destruction and turn toward Christ, placing your faith in him, that today would be the day and that you would join us in a few moments when we take the elements together.

I was struck this week by what Pastor Bob Shank said. He said, “*There are times when it’s appropriate to take communion contemplatively with a deep sense of quiet reverence and awe. Other times, it’s appropriate for the family to be together around the table with a sense of release and joy, recognizing what communion looks forward to and what it has done to paint our present differently.*

The one thing the Bible does say is we are never to do it frivolously. This is a simple act, yes, but it is a serious act.

So, why do we take the Lord’s Supper? A few things this morning before we enter into a time together of communion. The Lord’s Supper reminds us of Jesus and his sacrifice for our salvation. If you grew up in a church that the Communion table had these words on it, we get from Luke 22: 19 - ***And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”***

Yes, this reminds us of the death of the Jesus, but today we are also going to see that’s not all the Lord’s Supper does, it’s not all that it proclaims. It also leads us to a place where we anticipate the Second Coming of Christ. We’ve been saying this so often as a church, especially during the pandemic. We are longing for the Second Coming of Jesus. We take the Lord’s Supper until the Lord returns and until we take it with him, face to face.

Jesus never asked his disciples to remember his birth. I love Christmas. Raise your hand if you love Christmas. We all love Christmas, right? But nowhere does Jesus tells us to remember his birth. He tells us to remember his death. That doesn’t mean we can’t celebrate his birth, but the Lord’s Supper we do celebrate as an ordinance of the church, ordained by God, just as with baptism. We want to be very clear this morning. We do not believe that the Lord’s Supper saves you. This is something saved people do, but it’s not what we do to be saved. Just like baptism. Baptism is not something that saves you, baptism is something that a believer does when he steps into the water, when she steps into the water, she is proclaiming her faith, his faith in Jesus. It is an outward expression of an inward decision. So, we do not believe that the elements we are about to enter into today are salvific. They don’t lead to salvation, but it’s something believers do to be reminded. It’s not just being reminded of the death of Jesus; when we take the Lord’s Supper, we’re also proclaiming the death of Jesus and our faith in him.

In 1 Corinthians 11, we read, ***26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*** So, that brings up a lot of questions when we take the Lord’s Supper. The first one clearly is **who can take it?** Here’s what we say at Woodland Hills. The who is believers. We believe that believers can take the Lord’s Supper, but we do not require church membership. I want to stress the word *not*. We do not require it. Some of you grew up in a church that required it. I am not putting down a church or denomination that require church membership. I know for many of my Presbyterian brothers and sisters, it was required. I love how Tim Keller talks about it. He say, “It’s because we didn’t want anyone coming to the table self-accredited or self-appointed.” It’s why we take this in community. It’s because we are to take the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner, and when you take it in community, people are allowed to look at your life and reflect on your life and it’s not just you saying, “I’m worthy to take that.”

So, I know denominations don't require membership to stiff-arm people and say we don't want you part of this family, we don't want you coming to the table. There was really another motive behind that.

But to just be clear, at Woodland Hills Family Church, if you have placed faith in Jesus and you are visiting from out of town, we invite you to the table with us today. We want you to take of the elements if you have placed faith alone in Christ alone. If you have not, today, before we take of the elements, this is a moment for you to become a believer in Christ Jesus. We want to do that right now. The Baptists are like, "That is out of order. You do that at the end of the service. You bring them to the altar, you never interrupt a message."

Today, the thing I think I enjoyed most about taking the Lord's supper in the first service was... I think that maybe one thing about church these days that can wear me out is we're on such a tight schedule. "God, we need you to do your work in 60 minutes because we have to clear out the parking lot, bring new people into the parking lot..." Today, the joy in taking the Lord's Supper for me has been how slow it's been and how we haven't been rushed in any of it. We've been talking as a team as church leadership that we need to plan more of the time at the table that's slow. So, instead of, "Hey, you get 30 seconds to examine your heart," today, we want you take time to examine your heart.

Today, if you are not a believer in Christ Jesus... I'm going to ask everyone right now to bow your heads and I am going to pray, right where you are, here, out in the courtyard, over at The Gathering Place, over at the Chapel, I just want you to pray. You can put this in your own words, but this is you turning from your sins and turning to Jesus. Turning from the way that you think is right but, in the end, leads to destruction, and turning to Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me." I'm going to pray. You can pray right where you are to receive Jesus. We want you to come to the table with us today.

Simply pray this: Father, in the name of Jesus, I confess my sins. I turn from the ways that seem right in my own eyes. I'm no longer counting on adding good deeds or taking away bad deeds. I turn to Jesus. I confess Jesus is Lord. He is the name above all names. I believe he has been raised from the dead. He died for my sins, and he rose again, which means my faith now has purpose, my life has purpose, my life has meaning. Thank you for being my Lord, my savior. I receive Jesus. It is in the name and the authority of that name, Jesus, that we pray. Amen.

**When and how often should we take the Lord's supper?** This is where angels dare to tread in the denominations right here. Some of you had a tradition in your church of every week. For some of you, it was once a month. For some, it was quarterly. Let's be very clear with what that is. That is a tradition, and it is okay. And all different traditions are represented in here today. We at Woodland Hills Family Church take the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month. Sometimes that changes, based on holidays or weekends we want to make it a special time, but you can pretty much count on it being the first Sunday of every month.

**Where should you take the Lord's Supper?** In Acts 2, we read that the first century church gathered together to take it. They also took it in one another's homes. They ate together with glad and sincere hearts, breaking bread in their homes. During the pandemic, many of us, as we were doing church at home, were taking the Lord's Supper with our families.

So, that's the who, the where, the when, but now we get into the part where we really, believer in Christ Jesus, take a moment to examine our hearts because that's what the Lord's Supper requires that we do.

In 1 Corinthians 11: 27-28, we read, ***27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.*** Here's what that means. Confess sins, reconcile relationships, recenter your life on Jesus.

You read earlier in 1 Corinthians 11 that Paul comes to the church at Corinth and says, "Listen, you guys are divided. When we take the Lord's Supper it brings unity. How does it bring unity? It brings unity because we get recentered and refocused on Jesus, as we've already sung today – We turn our eyes upon Jesus. Some of you are coming to this table and you're mocking the table, he says to them. Some of you are coming and you're gorging yourself on food, while others go hungry. When we come here, this table is about Jesus, he's very clear. That's why we are examining our hearts.

What needs to be done? What is the Holy Spirit calling you by name with right now? As we continue to worship, we're going to take a few moments for this. Years ago, we were doing the Lord's Supper and I saw a guy get up and with a half sprint, jog out. Afterwards, I went to him and I go, "Is everything okay?" He said, "I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready to take the Lord's Supper. I had to go out and make a phone call."

When the church was starting almost 20 years ago. A guy got up during the Lord's Supper and he actually went across town to another church to make things right with someone. You've got to honor that. Someone taking the Lord's Supper that seriously before they come to the table taking. To confess sins and to reconcile relationships. For some, it might mean just leaning over right now to that person you were not reconciled with on the way to church today. And it might be a gentle touch. It might be a soft-spoken word of just simply, "I'm sorry." It's going to be different for everyone. Let's take this time to examine our hearts.

On Friday, I drove to Yankton, South Dakota, and back last night. That's eight hours through Missouri, Iowa, South Dakota, and it is open fields. I had 16 hours to think and reflect on this message. I always try to practice the message the best I can. When it came to examining hearts and as I'm praying what is it, Lord? Call me by name on things I need to confess. I'm telling you, the verse that keeps coming back to me since the Good Example series, is 2 Timothy 2: 24, ***the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome.*** In the last couple of days and weeks, examining my heart has led me to this place where I know I can be very quarrelsome. I can stir it up. I just see it all over social media. We see the Lord's servant is not supposed to be quarrelsome, but many of us are quarreling in the name of Jesus. And thinking we need to get our point of view, get someone won over to our side... The quarrelsome just has to stop, and it starts with me.

I think that's what examining does. I don't think we take enough time as a church, as individuals to have parts of our worship service be that of repentance, where we truly repent and we're able to say, "I was wrong. Please forgive me." We want to come to the table prepared, and that's why it requires us to examine the heart.

I'm going to ask that you prepare your elements. I would ask that you prepare both the cup and the bread. In 1 Corinthians 11, we read, ***23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed...*** Sometimes we race through that part to get to the elements in a service that is on a time crunch, but today we don't have to.

And to stick on that part for just a second, "***on the night he was betrayed,***" Adam Donyes and I were talking this week and going back and forth and made an observation that we heard as we head from the Last Supper to the death of Jesus on Friday. We'll be talking about that next Sunday. We said, "Isn't it something that on the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter was willing to kill for Jesus, but he was not willing to die for Jesus." I said, "Is that not where we are at today in the Christian church? So many people, passionate and standing for our faith that we are willing to kill anyone who comes against it." Are you willing to lay down your life for Jesus? Willing to kill but not willing to die.

***...took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks...*** And that's what we want to do before we take the bread and the cup today. Would you pray with me? Father, it is the name of Jesus that we gather today saying thank you for sending your one and only son to die on a cross for our sins. And we know there are none righteous, no, not one. It's by grace we're saved through faith. It's not of works so that no one can boast about it. We know that the wage of sin is death, but with the gift of God, we have eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord, and we are grateful for that. Today, we not only remember the death of Jesus, but we also *proclaim* the death of Jesus with hearts that we know and we pray are prepared to take of it. We pray this in the name of Jesus.

And after they had given thanks, ***...he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."*** ***25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup...*** I'm going to encourage you after we take of the cup to hold onto it. Don't set it down on the floor or in the cup holder yet, but please hold it until the very end as we do something new at Woodland Hills today. ***...saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*** We were reminded of his death today, we proclaim it and look at what Verse 26 says. ***26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

We live in anticipation and the Lord's Supper looks forward to the Second Coming of Christ. *Today in the Word* shared this story about 30 years ago of a small country church in Wisconsin that had a special tradition that they used at the close of their communion services for a number of years. It's adapted from the ancient Jewish closing of the Passover meal. Since it is the hope of every devout Jew to celebrate Passover at least once in David City, the Jewish custom is to end the meal with a toast.

Here's where all the Baptists are like, "Ain't doing it." Yeah, you're doing it. get that cup up.

Passover participants would raise the cup and say, "Next year in Jerusalem." The cup in the Lord's Supper serves as two reminders. We are to look back at the shed blood of Jesus and forward to the Second Coming. In other words, for all Christians, there will be a last sharing of the bread and the cup on this side of eternity. When they meet once again, they will be in the presence of Jesus. At the close of communion, the members of this church raise their cups in anticipation and say, "Next time, with Christ." And that is our proclamation today. Next time, with Christ.

We celebrate Easter in two weeks, and last week, my friend Alex Himaya shared that within your circle of influence, friends, family, co-workers, 90% of people would take your invitation to church seriously and would attend if invited by you. When I heard that, I invited a friend. As soon as I heard that, I texted a buddy and said, "Hey, I know it's been a while. I'd love to see you back." He said, "I'll be there."

Someone needs the invitation from you. I just want to encourage you. The 10:00 is our busiest service time and if you want to move to 8:30 or 11:30 on Easter, that would be fantastic. You can park at Steak and Shake or Silver Dollar City, wherever you think is going to be... No. In all seriousness, we are going to encourage you to park in express parking. Get here early. We've just now hit that 2,000 mark on weekends here in all three services. We think on Easter, there will be 3,100 to 3,200 people, so we want to encourage you to invite people, yes. And then we are ready to welcome people at that time.

Today, I hope this goes with you. We often invite people to the altar to pray, but today, if you made the decision to place faith in Jesus, faith alone in Christ alone, we're going to invite you to the table. Our prayer team is going to be gathered around the table. If you've never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can step out right now and make your way forward. We would love to share the good news of the gospel with you. Thank you for being a part of this special service. Next time, with Christ.