

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Lord's Supper: The Place of Grace

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks for joining...**heavy** but **hopeful** sermon today, so I asked some friends to join and help me preach it. To clear up a few things before you send some emails: 1) Yes, we're all properly socially distant. 2) As you can see we're gonna take the LS together. I assure you each family here **has their own bread** and **I promise this is grape juice**. All that cleared up? Okay, good.

Growing up you could call me a "cultural Christian." I was in church every Sunday morning. I believed that God loved me and Jesus died for me. I believed the Bible was God's Word. I believed in a God who heard me when I prayed and would forgive my sins when I asked him to.

The way my religious beliefs played itself out was that every Monday through Saturday I spent the week accumulating a list of sins against God (drinking, partying, pride, sleeping around, w/e). Each night I'd ask God to forgive me for those sins and I knew **we were good until the next day** when I started filling up my proverbial white board again.

And that was good and fine for **day-to-day spiritual maintenance**, but I firmly believed **Sunday I needed to go to church so that I'd remain on God's good list**. I believed religion was something you were **supposed to do in order to remain on God's good side**...because, you know, the "good people" go to church, and those are the people God loves.

So I had my **nightly forgiveness chat** with God, my **weekly attendance check** at church, and then I had an occasional event at church that **made me feel really good** about my standing with God--and that was taking communion.

Now the church I grew up in, we didn't take communion with dinky little wafers, nah, we had a couple Mrs. So-and-so's who thought it **their spiritual gift** to cook loaves of bread for the entire church...and that junk was delicious. I remember multiple times joking with my parents about **going back for seconds**. I'd be on my way out looking for the **pop up stand selling communion bread**.

Fast forward to 2008 and I, for the first time in my life, fully understood what it meant for **me to be a sinner** and **to be truly in need of Jesus as Savior**.

- Now instead of coming to God each night with my **head held low in shame** I began meeting him in the morning with my **head held high in gratitude**.
- Instead of attending church out of obligation I **became part of the church out of delight and desire** to be connected to the people of God.
- And then communion...instead of communion being **some rote religious ceremony** with tasty bread, **communion became my regular reminder that Jesus loved me enough to die for me**.

- That *my sin* put Jesus on the cross--that he was pierced for *my transgressions*, crushed for *my iniquities*.
- Communion became my reminder that his body was broken *for me*, his blood was shed *for me*--upon him was the punishment that brought *me peace*, and by his wounds *I was healed*. It became my reminder that while I was still a sinner, Christ died *for me*.

You see what makes a church is not a budget or a building...it's the **people of God** united under the **Son of God** who come together to hear and sing the **Word of God**, and have the **sacraments administered** as a reminder of the **love of God**.

So the **people of God** are here, right? You may not see everyone, but there are hundreds, most the time thousands, of other people watching along with you right now.

And here at TSC are certainly **united under the Son of God**. If you hear nothing else in the next 20 mins you'll hear this name: JESUS. Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus. It's all about him!

We've **sung praises to our God**, now we're **opening the Word of God**, and in a bit we're gonna take the **Lord's Supper as a reminder of the love of God**.

So **welcome to church!** Look at someone right now and say "welcome to church!"

If you **have a Bible handy** then flip on over to the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. If you're a kid make sure you have your **kids notes** 'cuz we're about to get rolling. Y'all ready?

The title of my message today is **The Place of Grace**. See before we take it together, we're actually going to spend our time looking at the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, and we're gonna see how **grace is what the LS is all about**. It's all about the **grace we've been given**, the **grace we continue to have access to**, and the **future grace that we'll experience one day in eternity**.

The Place of Grace...Here's how I'm gonna break it down today: The LS...

1. **Displays grace from the past.**
2. **Gives grace in the present.**
3. **Prepares us for grace in the future.**

Then we're actually going to take the LS together. Hopefully you have a **loaf of bread** and some **juice** or something close to those things!

CONTEXT

In 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul is writing to a church he planted back in Acts 18. Paul has been gone from Corinth for some time, but he's started hearing rumors that the church is acting crazy...as only churches can do. So Paul writes a letter to rebuke and correct them.

- **Kids**, have you ever had to **bring home a note from school** telling your parents something you did wrong? Not fun, right? This is what's happening. Paul is the teacher and he's sent a note home to Corinth. Let's pick up in v17...

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

¹⁷But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine

among you may be recognized. (The one good thing that *does* come out of this is that it shows who the true believers are.)²⁰**When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.** (You think what you're doing is pleasing to God, but I assure you what you're doing isn't even close to what Jesus had in mind.)²¹**For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.** (Y'all are getting DUI's on your way home from church! And then v22 is quite possibly my favorite response from Paul...he just says:) ²²**What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.**

We always say things like, *"If we could just get back to being 'the NT church!' everything would be fine."* I know what you mean by that, but don't be fooled thinking early churches were perfect. There are **no perfect churches** or **perfect people**, only a **perfect Savior** named Jesus that **imperfect churches** and **imperfect people** worship!

Paul is writing to church ppl, and they were a *divided* people.

Divided by:

- ...**preferences** on what they were **allowed to do/eat..**
- ...whether or not you can **drink** or **smoke**...or what you're allowed to **watch** or **listen** to.
- ...**interpretations** of Jesus's teachings...proper **applications** of OT law.
- ...understanding of **race relations** and **politics** and **governmental structures**.
- ...levels of **intelligence** and **education** and **income**.

They're supposed to be coming together for the LS as the **ultimate show of unity**--this wasn't just a **quick bread and cup meal**; this was an **entire dinner** that **rich/poor, conservative/liberal, tax**

collectors/zealots were supposed to share **together** that *culminated* in the bread and the cup **as the ultimate show of unity**.

- But instead what's happening is that **the rich folks show up early**, they **eat** all the **good food**...**end up getting drunk**... and by the time the **poor ppl** show up the only thing left is the **off-brand White Claws in disgusting flavors** and the **gross store bought dip that nobody wants**.

Therefore the very thing **that is supposed to be the very symbol of unity under Jesus--the Lord's Supper**--has become the occasion for which **division is actually produced!**

Now call me crazy, but it sure sounds like this 2000 year old Book still has some **wisdom** and **practical application** for us today, doesn't it?

Because Paul is about to show us that there *is* a basis for a **real, authentic, peaceful, loving** community. But **the basis of that community is not that we are all the same in ourselves**--same **race**, **vote** the same, make relatively the same **amount of money**--but rather the basis is in the fact that we are in the **same body of Christ** worshiping the **same risen Savior** who have all received the **same Spirit**. That's why one chapter earlier Paul says **"there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."** (10:17) Another way of saying that is that "We're **all jacked up** and we **all need a Savior**...and **Communion is supposed to be our physical demonstration of our unity that is altogether different than anything else this world can offer, because** It's the people of God united under the banner of the gospel declaring, "We are equally sinful and equally loved." That is what the Lord's supper proclaims--**it's the place where we all find grace!**¹

¹ PJD, *Authentic Christianity: Getting Behind the Mask*, 1 Cor. 11:17-34

Now grace is simply getting something we don't deserve. What we don't deserve is Jesus. But for God so loved the world that he sent his only Son...that's grace.

And Paul is about to **hit the off ramp** for the first stop of our journey and show us the first way the **LS becomes our place of grace** is that it...

Displays grace from the past. (vv23-26)

²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for (who?) you. Do this in remembrance of (who?) me." ²⁵In 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." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

How was grace displayed in the past? 2000 years ago **grace took the name of Jesus** and died for our sins. Grace was given at the cross and grace is received when you **confess with your mouth** and **believe in your heart** that Jesus--Grace Incarnate--died *for* you and *instead of* you.

Through the physical **taste, sight, smell,** and **touch** of the bread and the wine it's a *reminder* of the grace displayed for us on the cross. Jesus's body broken for you. Jesus's blood shed for you.

Every time you take the LS you are **proclaiming a reenactment of the gospel** and you should hear the words of Jesus saying:

- "Remember me... I'm forever with you."

- "Remember me...shedding my blood for you so that you might live because I died."
- "Remember me...suffering to obtain for you all the blessings of the New Covenant."
- "Remember me...breaking the bread just as I willingly gave my own body to be broken for you."²

When we "remember," church, we're not simply **recalling historical facts**...we're **participating in spiritual realities**. For in eating the bread and drinking the wine you are taking **Jesus's death and subsequent resurrection** into your own body and saying, "*I am one with my Savior.*"

But why bread and wine? (or grape juice for us Southern Baptists). Seriously, have you ever thought about **why bread and wine**?

Think about it: **bread must be broken in order to be received**. What better symbol of suffering can you have than that? Bread, from the beginning of its life until consumption, appears to be a **mass of suffering**.

As a seed it's first **thrown** into the ground, **cut** up, and **buried** in cold clay. It rises and endures **freezing cold** and **scorching heat**.

It ripens and is then **cut down, gathered, thrown** onto the barn floor, and grain is **threshed** out by **severe beating**.

Grain is then taken and **crushed** between stones until it's been **bruised** into fine flour. Then it's **kneaded** into dough and **baked in a fiery oven**.

² John Piper, [Why We Eat the Lord's Supper, Part 1](#), August 3, 2003

Then, just when the ‘suffering’ seems over, it’s laid out on the table, only to be **broken** into pieces to eat...and then **broken** again by teeth.

And then **wine**, not much different, is **pruned** and **cut** and **labored** over and **gathered** and **thrown into a winepress** and **crushed** beneath trampling feet, where then the **juices flow freely**...all a picture of Christ’s body and blood as he is being **beaten** and **squeezed** and **pressed** and **broken** as his precious blood would flow for our salvation.³

You see, aren’t bread and wine the **perfect emblems of the intense suffering** Jesus would endure? And he sets them before us and says “*Take, eat, this is my body, which is for you.*”

See, there was a covenant that cursed us — the covenant of works. But Jesus came to establish a **new covenant — the covenant of grace**. And that covenant was signed, sealed, and delivered by the blood of Jesus himself.

I mean, come on, **what a display of grace!**-- the Son of God willingly enduring all of this to save you and me. What **wonderful** grace! What **glorious** grace! What **incredible** grace! What **amazing** grace!

So when we take communion we should always **remember the display of grace in the past**.

But grace wasn’t just a one time event whereby we were **given a certain amount of grace** that we must **budget until we die** lest we run out. No, no, no. The next reason the LS is the place of grace is because it...

Gives grace in the present. (vv27-32)

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. (sheesh, just let that sink in...we’d probably approach it differently if we truly believed that) ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Man, we could unpack this for the next 4 weeks, because **this might be one of the biggest indictments on the church today** (honestly this has been **convicting for me** just to study through this week)...to think about the often *unworthy manner* in which we take Communion.

Now, to be clear, Paul did not say that **we had to be worthy** to partake of the Supper (**there is no one who does good...all fall short of the glory of God**)...he only said that **we should partake in a worthy manner**.

- “Unworthily” is an **adverb** not an **adjective**. We are *always* unworthy (adjective)...but we *can* eat “unworthily” when our lives do not align with the Jesus we claim to follow.

³ Spurgeon, *What the Lord’s Supper Sees and Says*

Tim Keller says it this way: Obviously, the Lord's Supper is not for perfect people, but for repentant people—but that is just the point. The Lord's Supper forces us to keep our inner experience linked with our outward behavior. It demands that we ask, "Am I truly living a life of gratitude and obeying God, as I would be if I really believed he saved me at the infinite cost of his only Son? Am I loving others sacrificially, as I would be if I really believed I was saved by sacrificial love?"⁴

Examining ourselves means we should truly ask the question, "Do what I say I believe and the way I'm actually living line up?" If not, we should repent. That's why Paul says in v31 that if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. If you "judge yourself truly" then you'll come to figure out pretty quickly you're a hypocritical sinner (which we all are!) but, because of Jesus, that assessment should lead us to a place of repentance where we find GRACE, not condemnation!

- In fact, write this down: Where sin is confessed fully, grace is received abundantly.

To take the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner means we examine our hearts, judge ourselves accordingly, and confess our sins to the Lord before taking it.

Self-examination is not a door meant to shut you out from taking Communion...but rather a door at which you pause and see whether you're in the right condition to enter. If you're not, then you stop, get right, then enter.

Think about it like this: When you get dressed for a fancy restaurant you check yourself out before leaving, don't you? Don't lie. You make

sure your hair is did...you iron the shirt...you make sure the shoes aren't creased...you do the eyebrow thing (Pastor Ricky)...and fix anything that's wrong, then you go!

That's exactly what we should do before we take this...so we're gonna stop and do just that. I'm gonna put some questions up that may help you in this.

Listen, judge yourself rightly. You're not hiding anything from God; so don't fool yourself. If your "inner experience of faith" is not linked with your "outward behavior," then repent. And know that what's waiting for you on the other side of repentance is not judgment, but GRACE.

Then we'll come back, I'll close us out, and we'll take Communion together.

Examine Yourself: (1 Corinthians 10:14-22; & 11:17-34)⁵

- Do you have any idols in your life?
- Are you doing anything to cause division in the church?
- Are you trusting in Christ alone for your salvation or trying to earn your way to God?
- Is there anyone you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness?
- Are you willing to repent of sin before taking communion?

I hope you're seeing how the LS was never meant for nourishment of the body, but rather grace for the soul. The place of grace

⁴ Tim Keller, *Changing the World through the Lord's Supper*

⁵ Tony Merida, [Examine Yourself: Preparing for the Lord's Supper](#), Feb. 8, 2009

1. **Displays** grace from the **past**.
2. **Gives** grace in the **present**.

and this last one is quick, but the LS...

Prepares us for grace in the future. (v26)

²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until he comes**.

We are to observe the LS--to approach the place of grace--*until he comes*.

The return of Jesus is the ultimate hope of every Christian. It's the glorious anticipation that just as Jesus may have died, **he didn't stay dead**. One day Jesus is coming back to **fix everything that's broken**. One day he will **wipe away every tear from every eye**. One day **every sad thing will come untrue**. One day **justice will roll down like waters**. One day **righteousness will flow like mighty streams**. One day your **pain will cease to exist and will be replaced with joy**.

The future grace the LS prepares us for is the **return of Jesus and the subsequent Marriage Supper of the Lamb**, where he will clothe us--the Church, his bride--in splendid white array without spot or blemish and we will dine with him, in the presence of grace, forever.

CONCLUSION

Where do you need grace applied today?

Are you in need of forgiveness?

*This meal is for you...*for it shows that Jesus died to forgive your sins.

Are you in need of deliverance?

*This meal is for you...*for it is rooted in redemption.

Are you in need of approval?

Say it: *This meal is for me...*for Jesus planned the meal himself and he personally invites you to the table.

Do you long for true community?...to be truly known?

Declare it!: *This meal is for me...*for it forms a new community under the identity of One Name.

Do you simply desire to know Jesus more?

*This meal is for you...*for it points to the greatest moment in human history when God took on flesh and dwelt among us.

The LS roots us, time after time, in the **nitty-gritty, blood-spattered, wrath-absorbing, sin-saturated** cross of Christ. Bread and Cup. Body and blood. Execution and death. All of it in order to extend to you and me **unmerited, unearned, undeserved** grace.

FENCE TABLE + ALTAR CALL

In just a moment we're gonna take the LS together. If you have repented of your sin and placed your faith in Jesus, then I welcome you to partake of this moment we remember Jesus's sacrifice.

If you're not a believer, then I'd simply ask for you to not take this. What you need is not bread and cup...you need what they represent.

- So I'd ask you: What's keeping you from coming to the place of grace today? What's keeping you from receiving Jesus as

Savior? Maybe today is the day! If so, you can pray something that sounds like this...

Lastly, if you're a kid or student and you have not repented of your sin and placed your faith in Jesus yet, then I want you to **wait and watch your parents**. Dad/Mom, after the service is over **it's your job** to talk through the Lord's Supper together. We have Kids and Student Directors at all of our campuses who would love to walk alongside you in this...but **I pray today is a day that faith becomes real for your entire household.**

In order to **give you time to collect some bread, juice, whatever you have**...we're gonna sing together. Then I'll come back and lead us in taking these together.

[Lamb of God]

LEAD LORD'S SUPPER

Hallelujah, what a Savior. Grace and peace, Summit family.