

- *Welcome everyone. Before we move into our time of worship, to things I want to share.*
  
- *First, I want to express my deep and heartfelt gratitude for the great love and generosity so many of you have shared with our church this year (and for many years). As of last Sunday, our giving has met (and just surpassed), our 2021 missions and church operating expenses. Your encouragement and support is deeply humbling, especially in such uncertain and unsettled times. Personally, and on behalf of our church staff and leadership, you have our sincerest gratitude.*
  
- *To slightly paraphrase Paul from his letter to Philemon:*
  
- *We always thank our God as we remember you in our prayers, because we have experienced your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. We pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening our understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love and generosity has given us great joy and encouragement, because you, fellow brothers and sisters, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people!*
  
- *Second, today we will celebrate communion. I encourage you to prepare the bread and cup for you and your family, and have that ready when I lead us through Communion near the end of our worship together.*
  
- *Lastly, as I always say in my weekly videos, go get your Bible, and follow along with us in the scripture!*
- *I've also provided a link below for all the scripture we will see today, as well as a PDF of my message outline if you would like to print that out as a resource.*
  
- *Having said that, please join with me as my dear friend Kent Osteen leads us in a time of prayer.*
  
- *In 1787 an English pastor named John Rippon published what would become a very influential collection of hymns- Christian songs of worship sung in the churches of his day.*
- *This was well before the day of short titles, because the name of his collection was "A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors, Intended to be an Appendix to Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns."*
  
- *The "Dr. Watts" named here was Isaac Watts, a musician and prolific hymn writer. Watts is credited with over 750 Christian Hymns, including "When I survey the wondrous Cross", and "Joy to the world."*
  
- *In Rippon's collection was a song credited only to the initial "K."... There is some speculation who this song writer was, but we're really not sure, which is too bad because this hymn went on to become one of the best known and dearly loved hymns of the English language.*
  
- *In most hymns, the 'voice' of the lyrics is from the perspective of the singer- either describing something about God, or expressing worship to God.*
  
- *But this hymn is very unique. In the first verse the author is making a statement to the singers, pointing them to the value of God's Word.*

- ***BUT in the remaining verses the voice is GOD'S, encouraging the singers by describing the value of HIS PRESENCE.***
- ***The song is HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION... here are 1,2 & last verses, with old English updated a bit...***

*How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word  
What more can He say than to you He has said  
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

*Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed  
For I am your God, and will still give you aid  
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand*

*The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose  
I will not, I will not desert to His foes  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake*

- ***Today we will remember the FIRM FOUNDATION that is ours in Christ, through the celebration of COMMUNION, as we remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.***
- ***As we begin a New Year, I can't think of a more appropriate theme than the absolute reality that our FOUNDATION of LIFE, of HOPE, is Jesus Christ.***
- ***There's many things we look to for security- for our sense of a foundation. Many of these are very important, and very good... but ultimately, they are temporary and can change, at times suddenly.***
  - ***Our finances. Job, financial peace...***
  - ***Our country, political stability***
  - ***Family, friends, stability of social lives***
- ***Again, these are important, good- scripture actually speaks with wisdom into all these areas of life. THEY ARE FOUNDATIONAL to life, but they are not the FOUNDATION OF OUR LIFE.***
- ***OUR FOUNDATION is Christ, and the GRACE OF GOD which we have received THROUGH CHRIST, in which we stand by faith.***
- ***In the opening of Romans 5, Paul puts it this way- This is being read by Nikki Kohrmann, Trinity's Pastor of Discipleship and church life***

**Romans 5:1-2** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

- ***For the believer, this is a statement of reality. Think through this in reverse...***

- *We stand- we live, healthy, prevailing- not in our own strength, but in the GRACE OF GOD*
- *We gained (past tense, completed action) access to God's grace through our FAITH in Christ- faith that itself comes from God*
- *Through our faith in Christ we are at PEACE WITH GOD*
- *God has given us this peace because, also through faith in Christ, we have been JUSTIFIED before God. (What does this mean....)*
- *IN THE CASE OF OUR SIN, our brokenness, our debt, our separation from God, JUSTICE HAS BEEN DONE, enabling us to come before God, to be in relationship with him with NO BARRIER WHATSOEVER.... And this justice was accomplished BY CHRIST, through the CROSS. Through his death, burial, and resurrection.*
- *THIS is the foundation of our faith- even more, it is the foundation of life itself.*
  
- *In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul is chastising the church for engaging in a little bit of hero worship- with the hero's being the leaders of the church- specifically, a leader named Apollos, and himself. VERY EMPHATICALLY Paul tells them- LISTEN! Apollos and I are servants, and that is all. Don't confuse us with the true foundation of our faith, which is CHRIST!*

**1 Corinthians 3:11** *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

- *This is a good reminder to the church today, in a time when media allows us to have superstar pastors in a way Paul wouldn't even have imagined. While many of these teachers are wonderful... our foundation is the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
- *AND SO, as today we move into a new year, we are going to remind ourselves of this through the most sacred observance God has given us as his disciples. This is the celebration of communion.*
- *Through communion we purposefully remember the cross- the sacrifice Christ made so that we may live. AND when I say "we may live", this isn't just about the future of heaven, but God's gift of FULLNESS and goodness in LIFE right now- through his presence with us, the new Identity we share with him.*
- *Let's push just a little deeper into this observance we call communion.*

† *The great gift of communion*

- *Note that I used word "observance"- another word sometimes used is 'ordinance'. In many protestant traditions there are two great ordinances of the church, being communion and baptism.*
- *In Contrast, to Catholics, other more liturgical traditions, communion, or the Eucharist, is not just an observance, it is a SACRAMENT.*
- *A sacrament is sacred ceremony, administered by holy men, with the belief that through the ceremony the Grace of God- or forgiveness- is transmitted to the receiver.*
- *In this understanding, the sacrament of the Eucharist becomes a channel for the divine grace of Christ, and many believe that in some form, the bread and wine literally become the blood and body of Christ (transubstantiation).*

- **While this belief varies, the core doctrinal belief is that in the Eucharist, Christ is literally present, and through receiving the elements, his presence, his grace, is transferred to those who receive it.**
- **KEY- when viewed as a sacramental act, communion is not just a celebration of a greater truth, but the necessary means by which the Grace of God is received.**
- **CONTRASTED TO THIS, for many protestants, communion is NOT Biblically understood to be a channel to receive God's grace, for Scripture proclaims we have already FULLY received God's grace, and we are already fully indwelt by the spirit of Christ, we live in a continuous UNION with Christ, and so he is present to us ALWAYS, FULLY, not just in the ceremony.**
- **With all humility towards our sacramental brothers and sisters, BIBLICALLY, communion IS NOT a sacrament, but it IS a sacred act- a precious expression of our faith and obedience to Christ.**
- **So what really is going on with communion? Why do these distinctions matter?**

✠ Communion's origin story- the Passover

- **As you likely know, the first communion was when Jesus met with his disciples for the Passover meal, on the night of his arrest. So the foundation of communion is PASSOVER, the precious religious observance of the Jewish people.**
- **In time of Christ, PASSOVER was already a centuries old practice, and its roots are in what we call the EXODUS- God's deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, ultimately to the promised land.**
- **This is when God sent an angel who struck down all of the newborn males in Egypt, but passed over the homes of the Hebrews. For God had told them to sacrifice a lamb, and to put the blood over their doorways to their homes- and when the angle saw the blood evidence of the sacrificed lamb, it would pass over the home and the family would be unharmed.**
- **In exodus 12 and following, we see these events. But before the actual night the Hebrews left Egypt, God used Moses to teach them a ceremony, to be observed every year so that they would never forget what God had done...**
- **This is from Exodus 12:24-27, and is being read by Marc Wentworth**

**Exodus 12:24-27** "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'"

- **SO, the Passover involved the sacrifice of a lamb- the sacrificial lamb, it celebrated God's deliverance and salvation from the hands of the Egyptians, and at its core, is about teaching and REMEMBERING.**

✠ The first communion

- **WITH THAT AS BACKDROP, turn to LUKE 22... Jesus is with the disciples on the night he was to be arrested, and they are celebrating the Passover meal. Near the end of the ceremony, this is what happened- this is from Luke 22:19-20, and is being read by PATRICK WILLING**

**Luke 22:19-20** *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." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.*

- **Think about this for a moment- for the disciples that night, what was the religious context they had grown up with, and still lived?**
  - **God's presence still behind veil in temple**
  - **Forgiveness still through sacrifice**
  - **Religious system of the temple**
  - **Lived under Mosiac covenant of THE LAW.**
- **But in just days this ALL WOULD CHANGE, through death, burial, resurrection of Christ. And the history altering events of that weekend all began with Jesus' prophetic re-defining of the Passover meal.**

† The meaning of the bread- the gift of Christ's body

- **Jesus took the bread and said- THIS IS MY BODY, broken, for YOU**
  - **Through the sacrifice of his body, Jesus bore upon himself the totality of human sin. THIS is the ultimate and final evidence of God's Love for us.**
  - **Tami Anderson is going to read Romans 5:6-11 for us, where Paul describes the eternal significance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross...**

**Romans 5:6-11** *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

- **THIS is the message of the bread- Christ's willing sacrifice of his body. But the bread is only half of the ceremony, just as our forgiveness is the beginning of what Christ accomplished through the cross.**
- **Through his sacrifice Christ provided the means of forgiveness for sin. BUT the GREATER issue of the human condition is that apart from Christ we are SPIRITUALLY DEAD, bound to condemnation under a perfect law we could never keep.**
- **Through his death, burial, and resurrection, Christ overcame this as well. THIS IS THE MEANING OF THE CUP.**
- **Jesus continued, saying**  
*"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*
- **We talked about this at length back in Acts 15... but the NEW COVENANT is the NEW means by which we are in a relationship with God, where our standing is no longer based upon the LAW, but upon God's Grace, through which we are made ALIVE in Christ.**
- **Listen as RANDY reads Colossians 2:13-15**

**Colossians 2:13-15** When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code (the Old covenant), with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

- **NOW, Listen to how Hebrews describes what has happened because of the cross.. this is what CUP proclaims:**
- **THIS IS FROM HEBREWS 8:10-13, and is read by.. GARY**

**Hebrews 8:10-13** This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

- **THIS IS A RADICAL CONCEPT! This freaks some people out! I once heard a believer use the phrase the "Danger of grace"..... If we aren't measured by our moral performance, if we can't out sin God's forgiveness, then WHAT IS MOTIVATION to live holy life?**
- **THIS MISSES ENTIRE POINT! HEAR! If we are looking to rationalize our sin, our disobedience, that is NOT living by faith. That's NOT surrender. That is SELF JUSTIFICATION- EMPTY LIFE!**
- **But even more, regardless of how smart and moral we think we may be, our attempts at self-justification ALWAYS FAIL. THIS IS WHY MESSAGE OF COMMUNION IS SO ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.**
- **COMMUNION shouts out the eternal miracle that IN CHRIST we have been set free from our shame and guilt, we have BEEN RELEASED from bondage to sin and flesh, we have BEEN DELIVERED out of the trap of legalistic performance, AND WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED into a LIFE where our motivation is NOT law, religious rules, guilt, or even reward....**
- **RATHER, our motivation is nothing less than the LOVE AND PRESENCE of JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF who now dwells in YOU, with YOU... and one step at a time transforming how we THINK, FEEL, AND ACT into his character, his nature.**
- **TO sum up communion in one statement...**

**2 Corinthians 5:17, 21** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- **And so... we remember.**
- **At this time please take the elements of communion you have prepared.**

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26** ...The Lord Jesus, on the night 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."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- *My friends, thank you so much for joining with us today.*
- *We will close with the paraphrase I've taught you of the priestly blessing found in Numbers chapter six.*
- *“Lord God, we thank you that IN CHRIST you HAVE BLESSED US and you do keep us;*
- *We thank you that you have made your face shine on us, and that In Christ we have received the fullness of your grace*
- *We thank you that you have placed your very countenance within us, through the holy spirit, and that IN YOU, we may know, YOUR PEACE*