

We gather today as a church family to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. **The New Testament church expressed only two ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.** The ordinance of baptism was instituted at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper at the close of Jesus' ministry. Together they define the crucial and important bedrocks of the New Testament – the death, burial, and resurrection of the Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper symbolically portrays the broken body and shed blood of our Lord. Baptism visualizes the burial of Jesus in the borrowed tomb and his bodily resurrection on the third day.

As Baptists, we celebrate these same two church ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances are not sacraments. A sacrament conveys a visible sign of conferred grace, and becomes a practice essential for salvation. Such a notion is completely foreign to the New Testament. That's why as Baptists we don't use the term sacrament, because we reject the belief that any religious practice is essential for salvation. We believe exactly as the Apostle Paul expressed in Ephesians 2: 8-9: *“For by grace (God's grace) you are saved, through your faith (personal faith), and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift, not from works, so that no one can boast.”* We use the term *ordinance* for Baptism and the Lord's Supper, to indicate that they are sacred and symbolic acts, divinely instituted and commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, the Apostle Paul shared the most informative instructions in the New Testament concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Let's examine it carefully.

23) For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, 24) and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, *“This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* 25) In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, *“This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.* 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27) So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

What must we remember about the Lord's Supper?

1. The Lord's Supper is not just another meal – it is A **Memorial Meal**

“Do this in remembrance of Me.” When believers observe the Lord's Supper, they remember Jesus' sacrifice for sin. Notice the preceding words: *“This is my body which is for you.”* Jesus accomplished on our behalf that which we could never do for ourselves – “He gave His life, what more could he give, Oh how He loves you and me.”

The Lord's Supper is a continual reminder that Jesus' death secured atonement for our sin. When we come to the Lord's table, we remember that Jesus died for us. As the Passover in the Old Testament served as a remembrance of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, the Lord's Supper for the Christian is a reminder of Jesus' deliverance of each one of us from the bondage of sin . It is a memorial meal.

2. A **Thanksgiving Meal**. *“The Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks....”*

The Lord's Supper is a celebration of gratitude. The word *thanks* is “*eucharisteo*” from which we get our word *Eucharist*. The Lord's Supper is a joyous time to celebrate the awesome fact that we have been redeemed, saved, and forgiven of our sins. The instructions say, *“As often as you do it.”* How often is often enough? Perhaps at every worship service is too often, if it becomes a ritual – a sacrament. A common practice in many Baptist churches is to celebrate the Supper several times a year. Perhaps somewhere between every week and several times a year would satisfy *“as often as you do it.”* My observation is that we Baptists do not observe the Lord's Supper often enough, and therefore, we can so easily forget our gratitude for our salvation.

3. A **Fellowship Meal**. In the previous chapter – I Corinthians 10 – Paul declared a warning against idolatry, and he used the Lord's Supper as an illustration. *“The cup of blessing that we bless, it is not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?”* ***Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all of us share that one bread.*** (1 Cor. 10:16-17) The word *sharing* is *koinonia* – fellowship. The Lord's Supper is meant to be a time of fellowship -- which is the church's unity. Unity in the church should exist because of the sharing together of the bread and the cup. 1 Corinthians 11 was written as an indictment on the Corinthians church regarding divisiveness. In fact, Paul's judgment was that the Corinthians really could not observe the Lord's Supper until a spirit of unity existed in the church.

Listen to the words of W.A. Criswell, long time pastor of FBC Dallas, TX: *“It would revolutionize our churches if we could restore the fellowship aspect of the Lord's Supper. When a church came to the Lord's table and there existed a spirit of*

ill will among some of the members, suppose the pastor would say: 'There is a spirit of divisiveness in the church. We cannot observe the Lord's Supper. To do so is hypocrisy. Let us pray together. We must be right with one another before we sit together at the Lord's table.' Imagine what would happen in our churches if the Lord's Supper were always a genuine fellowship meal." (The Doctrine of the Church, Nashville: Convention Press, 1980, p. 101)

4. **A Covenant Meal.** *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood."* (1 Cor. 11:25) Jesus designated the juice of the Lord's Supper as being symbolic of the new covenant – equivalent to the Mosaic blood covenant in Exodus 24. When the burnt offerings and the peace offerings were sacrificed on the Jewish altars, half of the blood was sprinkled upon the altar. Moses flung the other half of the sacrificial blood upon the people and exclaimed, *"This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you."* (Exodus 24:8) **This new covenant of the Lord's Supper was validated with blood, the precious blood of the Jesus Christ.** The blood of Jesus Christ guarantees the believer's salvation for all eternity. As a covenant meal, the Lord's Supper is a continual reminder of that guarantee. *"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that blood, lose all their guilty stains."*

5. **A Proclamation Meal.** Paul made an amazing statement about the Lord's Supper in verse 26: *"You proclaim the Lord's death until He comes"*. The word *proclaim* means *to preach*. When the local church comes together to observe the Lord's Supper, we are literally preaching a sermon on the atoning death of Jesus. **The purpose of the Lord's Supper is BOTH a backward look, forcing us to visualize the cross of Christ, and a forward look, anticipating Jesus' Second Coming.** The Scriptures clearly teach the second coming of Jesus. When the Lord returns to gather his people into the new heaven and the new earth, He has reserved a seat for every believer at the great heavenly banquet Revelation 19:9 calls *"the marriage supper of the Lamb."* While we are here on earth, the church will continue to regularly observe the Lord's Supper. But the day will come when the Lord's Supper will be superseded by the marriage supper of the Lamb. Today we share the Lord's Supper in anticipation of Jesus' Second Coming.

6. **An Examination Meal.** The words of verse 27-29 are up close and personal: *"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. So a man should examine himself; in this way he should eat of the bread and drinks of the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself."*

The Lord's Supper is a time for both personal and congregational examination. This is the warning of impending judgment to anyone who would partake of the Lord's Supper for any other reason than to remember the atoning death of Jesus and the grace of God. To come to the table while at odds with other brothers and sisters in Christ before seeking reconciliation is to partake in an unworthy manner. *"To be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord"* – what does that mean? I agree with John Bisagno: *"I'm not sure I know all that means, but I am sure I don't want to find out."* (Pastor's Handbook, p. 221) Paul is not saying that a person must be worthy to take the Lord's Supper – he saying that the way in which it is done must not be unworthy. If it were a matter of being worthy, we would all be excluded. However, the warning is clear. We must allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and ask the Lord to cleanse everything sinful and unacceptable. I'm convinced that if this kind of examination were to occur before and during the Lord's Supper, then it would lead to a time of confession and rededication within the church.

The Lord's Supper is all about Jesus! The great painter — Leonardo daVinci, was commissioned by the Duke of Milan to paint *"The Last Supper."* It has become one of the most familiar paintings in the history of the world. For years, daVinci labored over the painting, paying careful attention to every detail of the disciples' faces, the grouping around the Lord's table, the chalice, and, of course, the face of Jesus. Finally, the masterpiece was finished, but before showing it to the public, he called in a trusted friend for his review. daVinci's friend stared at the painting for several minutes — awestruck. When he spoke, he said, *"Oh what a beautiful chalice — I can't take my eyes off it."* Immediately, the great painter took his brush and in one swipe, painted over the chalice. "What are you doing?" the friend cried out frantically. Leonardo daVinci's response: *"Nothing should take precedence over the face of Jesus."*

So it should be with us. That's why we gather this morning to remember. We gather here for this memorial, thanksgiving, fellowship, covenant, proclamation, and examination meal focused on the face of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is all about HIM!