

## Palm Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026



1 Corinthians 11:26; 16:22

Four days after Palm Sunday, 2,000 years ago, our Lord gathered the 12 apostles to observe the very last Passover Meal together in an upper room. That meal culminated with the very first observance of what we call Communion or The Lord's Supper.

A few hours later Jesus was arrested, faced false accusations, was condemned to death, flogged, paraded through the streets of Jerusalem carrying his own crossbar while the crowds jeered at him, then nailed to a cross in a public execution where he died 6 hours later.

The disciples sitting at that last supper together had no clue what was about to happen in those few hours after they had that last intimate time with their Master.

The Apostle Paul here in 1 Corinthians 11 records in brief fashion the central focus of what Jesus said and led his disciples to do his last night with them.

READ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

In a few minutes we will be observing our own last supper commemoration on this Palm Sunday. We have the blessing of being on this side of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus and the perspective of seeing the whole picture of what Christ did, unlike the apostles that last night in the upper room.

To observe communion correctly we have to put into proper focus the purpose of the two elements of the Lord's Supper and what they represent: the body and the blood of Jesus.

Jesus' crucified body and the blood He shed on the cross are the fulfillment of all the old covenant promises and the entire sacrificial system that the Jews had been practicing for well over a thousand years.

God had instructed His people to sacrifice animals and shed their blood as payment for the people's sins. This speaks both to the extreme holiness of God on one side, and the extreme egregious nature that our sin is to Him on the other side.

The death of the animals and their shed blood stood in the middle, in the gap between sinful man and holy God. The Bible is clear that we are all sinners. And our sin requires that that a life be given, that blood be shed, in payment for our sin.

God's people were forced to sacrifice the life and the blood of sheep, goats, cattle and pigeons as payment. But because those are imperfect substitutes, those sacrifices had to be made over and over and over again.

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***“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”***

**Hebrews 10:4**

Because Jesus was the perfect and sinless Son of God, His death and His blood were the perfect sacrifice and the only sacrifice acceptable to holy God as a permanent payment for the sins of the world – yours and mine.

It’s difficult for us to imagine today what it was like before Christ died and rose again for our sins, when the sacrificial system was in full operation in Israel.

Have you ever smelled blood? That smell of blood, the sound of dying animals, the sight of slain lambs and pigeons and bulls was a prolific and a constant part of life for the Jewish people.

Here’s how C.H. Spurgeon, the great English preacher in the late 1800’s described it...

**“In the tabernacle in the wilderness, almost everything was sanctified by blood. By God’s command, the blood was to be seen everywhere. As soon as you entered the outer court, you saw the great bronze altar; and at the base of it, bowls of blood were constantly being poured out. When you passed the first veil and entered the holy place, if you saw a priest, he was spattered from head to toe with blood, his snow-white robes bringing the crimson spots most vividly before your eyes. If you looked around, you saw the horns of the golden altar of incense smeared with blood, and the gorgeous veil that hid the innermost sanctuary was splattered with the same.**

Most of the time the priests would kill the animal sacrifice but sometimes it was the person bringing the animal for sacrifice that would do that dirty job.

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***“Then he [the worshiper] shall kill the bull before the Lord... Then he [the worshiper] shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.”***

**Leviticus 1:5-6**

Now just think about that...Most people today – unless you’re an avid hunter – don’t know what it’s like to slit an animal’s throat and cut it into pieces, but this was a regular routine for Gods’ people. Again, sin requires death and a substitute.

Those animals and their shed blood were the substitute for the people. Otherwise, they would be held by God responsible for paying for their sin with their own lives, by their own death.

This all sounds barbaric and gruesome and disgusting, and it was, and what it speaks to is the horrific nature of our sin to the holy character of God.

God mandated these practices as part of their worship of Him to awaken in His people the great disgust that sin is to Him and that it could only be put away by suffering and death.

God used blood as a key part of the process of redemption for sin because our sin is so offensive to Him, and unless our sin has been covered and forgiven, there is no way anyone can be at peace with God.

So, did you bring your best, unblemished lamb, your sharpest knife, and your gloves today and did you dress ready to get blood all over you for this communion service this morning? Of course not! Why?

Because Jesus stepped into the gap between sinners and holy God and was the spotless lamb of God who was killed and whose blood was shed for all our sin.

Fellowship, our salvation is a bloody salvation – made possibly totally by the shed blood of Jesus. That was the price for our sin to be paid, to satisfy the righteousness and the holiness of Almighty God...

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***“For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.”***

**1 Peter 1:18-19**

Money can't buy salvation, indulgences can't buy new life in Christ, religious practices like baptism or holy communion can't buy forgiveness of sin. Only the shed blood of Christ can cleanse us from our sin.

I hope each of us this morning will approach our time of communion with the Lord with a grateful heart, expressing our thanks to the Lord for giving His life for us as our substitute, for shedding His blood so our sins could be completely covered and forgiven.

**Youtube Clip: "Son of God | Cross | 20th Century Fox" (4:12)**

**[www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9UN7IpxrNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9UN7IpxrNM)**

**(Begin at :07; Fade at 3:56)**

READ 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

Spiritual heart preparation for communion is not only essential, but also absolutely necessary. Some of the Corinthian believers weren't taking the celebration of communion with the right heart.

They went through the motions, but right motions without a right heart is offensive to holy God. So that's why Paul here is warning them about the need for proper spiritual preparation before participation.

Communion isn't meant to be a ritual; it's meant to be an experience. An heartfelt experience with Jesus in worship and gratitude to Him, for what He did for us, for what He's doing now for us, and for what He's going to do when He returns for us, as he promised He would.

It's meant to be a spiritual experience with people of like-minded hearts – the body of Christ – our local church.

Observing communion with prepared hearts together unifies us and links us together as sons and daughters of God seeking our best to follow Jesus and to become like Him in spiritual character.

If any of us participates in communion this morning without having a right relationship with the Lord and/or with strained or broken fellowship with fellow believers in the family of God...

Then we're doing what the Corinthians did, we're participating in an unworthy manner, and to God that's sin, and He's going to hold us accountable for the guilt of that sin, until we make things right with Him and with others.

And if we fail to do that and participate anyway, we're inviting His loving discipline on our lives and that judgment is tended to draw us back in close fellowship with Him.

Turn to 1 John. READ 1 John 1:5-10.

The presence of known sin in our heart and lives brings a cloud of darkness that negatively impacts our fellowship with the Lord. The Lord will not be near us when we harbor sin that we're unwilling to confess and repent of.

And as John says here, if we turn a blind eye to such sin, all we're doing is deceiving ourselves and refusing to respond to the truth of our where we are with God.

The Lord is inviting us this morning to do a self-examination of our where we are spiritually with Him and where we are in relationship and fellowship with others, and to welcome His loving rebuke if these relationships are not in good standing.

And if we have any sin that the Spirit is revealing to us, to confess it – that is, to agree with God that it is sin, and to turn from it in repentance, and ask the Lord to forgive us and renew our fellowship with Him.

And if it involves someone else, then we are to go to them, and confess any sin between us and them, and repent and ask for forgiveness and do our best to make the relationship right and do our best to renew our fellowship with that person.

The greatest thing you can offer to the Lord this morning here in this time of communion, is a heart, your heart, that is unencumbered with sin and is offered to the Lord as your sacrifice of love to Him.

Now, look at 1 Corinthians 11 again, and the last words of the communion observance that are given in verse 26... (READ – “UNTIL HE COMES” – Say that with me out loud...)

The lasting thought and proclamation that should be in our hearts and minds as we come out of our communion fellowship with God and each other is that Jesus is coming again.

Turn over to the last chapter of 1 Corinthians – 16 – where Paul in his last few thoughts and words in this letter to the Corinthians repeats this proclamation. READ 1 Corinthians 16:22 (“Our Lord Come” – Say that with me...)

That three-word phrase, translated into English, “Our Lord Come”, in the original language is a two-word Aramaic phrase that looks like this...

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**“Marana ("Lord") - tha (“come”)**

**Maranatha = “O Lord, Come”**

Some English translations like the King James and others actually have the word, “Maranatha” in it here in this verse, and this is the only time this phrase is used in the entire Bible.

Maranatha is a term of anticipation of Jesus coming again. It’s a heartfelt longing for Jesus to return. It’s the declaration of our sure hope and our faith that because Jesus said He would return that we believe He is going to keep that promise.

And when He does, EVERYTHING is going to change. He will justly judge the world, He will take care of us, His people. He will establish His rule and reign, He will abolish evil and evil doers, He will make right what needs to be made right.

Jesus’ sure return sparks urgency to our relationship with the Lord and to His mission to spread the gospel to every people, tribe and tongue. Jesus is coming again – we need to be faithful to share the gospel with others and get it to those who have never heard the name of Jesus.

It gives all of us, His followers boldness and hope and joy, knowing that this sinful world will not last, the day is coming when Jesus will return and what a day it's going to be.

It reminds me of the old gospel song...

**What a day that will be  
When my Jesus I shall see  
And I look upon his face  
The one who saved me by his grace  
When he takes me by the hand  
And leads me through the Promised Land  
What a day, glorious day that will be**

Fellowship, I say to you this morning, Maranatha! May the reality of Jesus' return fill our hearts with a longing to see Jesus, to be WITH the One who loves us so much and who shed his blood and died on the cross for our salvation.

Maranatha was the cry of the early church for centuries who used it as an expression of faith and hope. Maranatha stirred up and motivated the early believers to live faithfully for the Lord and to give their lives to follow and serve Him.

Maranatha was a prayer the early church prayed in anticipation of Christ's imminent return. Maranatha is a call to full devotion to the person and mission of our Master.

Maranatha points the attention of our hearts to Jesus, looking forward to seeing Him when He returns. Maranatha provokes us to be faithful to the Lord Jesus and His Word in a world spiraling downward in sin until He returns.

Maranatha causes us to have an eternal perspective on all of life, every day of our lives. It's easy to get distracted by the world and by life from what is most important – living for Him – but Maranatha grounds us toward a heavenly future and an eternal perspective.

For 2,000 years even when the persecution of God's people was and still is, so intense, Maranatha has been a rallying cry for the church: Jesus came, He lived, He died, He was buried, He rose again, and He ascended back into heaven with the promise, "I am coming again".

So we should watching, waiting, anticipating, being about the business of proclaiming the gospel and loving each other, so that when He comes He will find us faithful and ready for His return.

Maranatha is symbolic of the blessed hope that we have as followers of Jesus of his soon return...

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***"...while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us..."***

**Titus 2:13b-14a**

Do you have the blessed hope of Christ's return this morning?

The reality of Maranatha acts like a spiritual cleansing agent in our hearts and lives guiding us toward holy living and holy character...

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***“We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure.”***

**1 John 3:2b-3**

Are you allowing the return of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to purify the way you live so that your life is a holy testimony to Him and to the world?

The spirit and truth of Maranatha is found in Revelation chapter 1...

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***“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega’, says the God, ‘the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’”***

**Revelation 1:7-8**

We see the triumph of Maranatha in Revelation chapter 19...

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***“Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war with justice. His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He had a name written that no one knows except himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood,***

***and his name is called the Word of God. And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”***

**Revelation 19:11-13,16**

And Maranatha reminds us of the final promise in the Bible made by Jesus Himself at the end Revelation 22, His very last words recorded in the Scriptures...

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***“Yes, I am coming soon.”***

**Revelation 22:20b**

Maranatha is a cry of excitement, anticipation and expectation as well as a plea to the Lord, “Jesus, please come”. Let’s say that together, “Jesus, please come.” Maranatha Fellowship! Let’s stand and worship our Lord as we sing...

Maranatha Fellowship. Each and every day let’s remember that our Lord is coming. Let’s have a longing to see our Lord Jesus face to face and rejoice that He’s coming again. May that reality that brings peace to our souls. PRAY.