

Week 7 - Jesus' Last Meal

Key Verses/Passages: Mark 14:10-26

Lesson Takeaway: Communion celebrates the Gospel.

The “Last Supper” took place in Jerusalem. It was the last peaceful group teaching Jesus had with His disciples before His arrest. He gave His disciples a picture of what it means to live life on earth as a servant and what was to come.

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,” Luke 9:51

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” Psalm 122:6

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record that the Last Supper occurred on Passover. Jesus sent two of His disciples to prepare for the meal, and He met with all the disciples in the upper room. He told them that one of them would betray Him. After blessing bread and wine and giving it to them to eat and drink, Jesus told them that it was His body and His blood of the new Covenant.

Jesus instituted the ordinance that the church calls “the communion” (I Corinthians 10:16) or “the Lord’s Supper” (I Corinthians 11:20) which commemorates His death for the salvation of the world. The elements of communion, the juice and cracker (wine and bread) are symbols; they are not the physical body of Jesus. Jesus died one time on the cross. The elements used in communion simply represent the bodily sacrifice that Jesus made for us.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29

Communion is for people who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus. It is a serious act that should be approached in the right way. The Apostle Paul warns believers and urges them to avoid doing the act of communion in an “unworthy manner”.

“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.” I Corinthians 11:27

Communion is about remembering, reflecting, and responding to Jesus. Let’s look at the biblical support for communion.

1. **Communion is an act of obedience.** Jesus said in I Corinthians 11:24 *“Do this ...”*. Christians have been celebrating the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20), known also as the Lord’s Table or communion (1 Corinthians 10:16), for about two thousand years – ever since Jesus instructed His disciples to continue to do so until He returns. Because of His command to “do this,” it is not optional for the Christian.

2. **Communion is an act of remembrance.** Jesus also said in I Corinthians 11:24 *“Do this in remembrance of me.”* The focus of communion should not be on us, but on Jesus and remembering what He has done for us. Unlike baptism, which is a one-time event, communion is a practice meant to be observed over and over again throughout the life of a Christian. It is a holy time of worship when we come together as a body to remember and celebrate what Christ did for us. Ever since Jesus instituted this practice at the Last Supper, it has served as a beautiful reminder of the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf.

3. **Communion is an act of thanksgiving.** Believers in Jesus should approach communion with a spirit of thankfulness and deep gratitude to Jesus. Communion looks back to Calvary and the death of Jesus on our behalf. Jesus said, *“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”* In the bread we see a symbol of Christ’s body that was broken for us. In the cup we see a symbol of His blood that was shed. A backward glance instills gratitude to Jesus for the price He paid for our salvation. This should move us to greater obedience to Him.

“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
Galatians 2:20

4. **Communion is an act of unity and togetherness.** It appears that the Lord’s Supper is a celebration to be observed not privately, but publicly. Jesus gathered His disciples together for the Supper, and the church at Corinth was instructed collectively to eat the bread and drink the cup. Note that 1 Corinthians 11:26 refers in a plural sense to eating, drinking, and proclaiming, while verse 27 refers in a singular sense to self-examination. The gathered believers (plural) partake together, while each participant (singular) individually examines himself or herself. Paul stressed this in I Corinthians 10:16-17.

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread.” I Corinthians 10:16-17

5. Communion is an act of sharing. Paul emphasized in I Corinthians 10:16 that when we partake of communion, we are sharing in the body of Christ, not the sacrifice all over again. The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic reminder of Christ’s death, much as the memorials in the Old Testament caused Israel to remember God’s work on their behalf (Joshua 22:9-16). Indeed, Jesus spoke these words within the context of the Passover, which was also given as a memorial to help people remember God’s work (Exodus 12:14). Christ is our Passover Who was sacrificed for our sins (1 Corinthians 5:7). There is but one sacrifice for sins for all time (Hebrews 10:12), and as the bread is broken, we must recognize the finality of this sacrifice. Christ’s body is not continually being broken for sin.

6. Communion is an act of reflection. When a believer or follower of Jesus partakes of communion, there should not be any arrogance, pride, boastfulness, smugness, or judgment of others. Before communion, every believer should reflect on the condition of their heart and life and if there is any sin that needs to be confessed. If there is any unconfessed sin, repent and ask Jesus to forgive you before you take communion.

“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. ²⁸Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup.” I Corinthians 11:27-29

7. Communion is an act of response. Communion is a time to reflect on the amazing love that Jesus gave to us and to respond to what He may be asking us to do. It is a time to think about what next steps we need to take on our journey with Him.

“Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.” Isaiah 53:5-6

Daily Scripture Readings (Prophecies of Jesus)

Monday: Matthew 26:26-30

Tuesday: Luke 22:14-23

Wednesday: John 6:22-59

Thursday: I Corinthians 11:17-34

Friday: Romans 5

Saturday: Hebrews 10

Sunday: Attend a City United Church and listen to the next message.

Deep Dive Discussion Questions

1. How can a follower of Jesus prepare for communion?
2. Jesus experienced betrayal. Read Psalm 55:12-14. How do these verses apply to us?
3. Read I Corinthians 11:27-32. Why is self-examination before communion so important?

Next Steps for the Journey

4. On the "Your Next Steps" Map on Page 10, where are you at and where do you need to go?

Outreach Opportunities

Determine to invest in and invite one person to a gathering at City United Church this weekend. As we reflect on Jesus' last meal, it reminds us that we need to examine our hearts and lives to see if there is any unconfessed sin. If so, we need to make that right as soon as possible. Spend some time in prayer and reflection before God. Ask Him to show you what steps you need to take to get right with Him. Then take action. Is there anyone that you need to ask for forgiveness or are there any relationships that need to be mended? Do everything that you can to try and make them right again.

Prayer & Reflection

God, what needs to change in me and my life to make me more like You? Thank you for dying on the cross for me and taking my sin and shame. Please forgiving me of _____. Help me to live a life that honors and reflects you. Please show me areas that I need to grow in and give me the strength to make the changes that I need to make. In Jesus' name, Amen.