

Growing up in a southern Baptist Church most of what I heard about communion was that communion is just a symbol. Communion is just a symbol, and it's only a moment where we remember and think about Jesus is atoning death for us on the cross. And whenever we would talk about communion, it was almost always in terms of what communion was not. I would hear things like well. We don't think the communion saves you. We don't believe transubstantiation. And of course, the never-ending refrain of well we don't want to do it too often, and it become an empty ritual.

The question that I always had was, why do we do it at all? I never had a great understanding of what communion meant. What is the significance of communion? Why did Jesus asked us to do this? What does it mean?

I don't know your background. I don't know what you have been taught or grown up believing about communion. Maybe you have never thought about it at all.

This morning in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 22 we are going to be in the Last Supper where Jesus institutes communion. So I want to spend some time talking about what communion means. We're gonna have five points this morning. I wanted to have 20 or a whole sermon series, but I decided to pair it down. But my hope is that after today we will all have a better understanding of what communion means.

## **I. Communion reinterprets Passover (22:1-13)**

The backdrop of this entire passage is Passover. And the author is going at great length to make sure that you and I understand that this is taking place at not just Passover time but in the Passover meal.

Because Passover is one of the most significant days in Jewish life. It is their July 4th, Christmas, and Easter all in one.

Because on this day they remember How God took and delivered them out of slavery in Egypt.

They eat this meal and retell the story of Passover.

But Jesus is going to do is he wants them now to tell a different story.

Jesus wants them now to eat a different kind of meal.

Jesus is going to retell and reinterpret Passover.

Verse 1, **"Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover."**

We are in the final days of Jesus' life.

This is the week of his death.

It is coming very soon.

And it is going to come on Passover.

Everyone is getting ready and making preparations.

But some are not preparing rightly.

Verse 2, **"And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people."**

The religious leaders are preparing to kill Christ.

They are actively planning and figuring it out.

There are no longer just talking it or grumbling.

Now they are plotting to kill Jesus as soon as they can.

Verse 3, **"Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve."**

Judas is going to be a part of this plan as well.

Judas is making preparations for the Passover.

And he is planning on betraying the lamb of God.

There is something strange here.

It tells us that Satan is entering into Judas.

We don't have a full picture of what that means.

We don't get a complete explanation of how that worked.

This doesn't seem to be that Judas is completely possessed by a demon. But it does seem that Satan himself is filling Judas. This is kind of the opposite of how Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit. Something else seems to be going on here. I don't think there's any need for us to have any kind of anxiety about this. I don't think that we need to be worried or the average person needs to be worried about being filled or having Satan enter into them. The point of this passage isn't trying to teach us about demonic possession. The point of it is trying to show that we're heading to the story's climax. As the whole Jewish calendar has been building towards Passover, all of Jesus's life has been building towards his death and resurrection. And now Satan himself is coming to conspire to help and to kill Jesus.

If this was a movie and you were falling asleep, this should wake you up.

Verse 4, **"He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. 6 So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd."**

But Judas is happy to help for a fee.

Judas is willing to betray God.

Judas is willing to betray the God who is given everything to him.

Judas is willing to betray the God who loves him for money.

So God's enemies are happy.

They are looking for a chance to catch Jesus.

And they want to kill him when there's not a lot of people around.

Judas is going to be on the lookout for a good chance when they can catch Jesus alone.

Their Passover plans are not to remember God's deliverance, but to try and kill God.

Verse 7, **"Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed."**

It is the day that the Passover lamb has to be sacrificed.

And it tells us this not just because it is trying to make us aware of the exact day that this dinner takes place.

It wants us to know that, Jesus is the Passover lamb.

Jesus is the sinless and spotless lamb who will be sacrificed for us.

Verse 8, **"So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it."**

Jesus calls two of His most trusted disciples to make the preparations.

Someone has to get in line at the temple to sacrifice the lamb.

Someone has to find a place they can observe the meal together.

Jesus wants them to prepare the Passover lamb.

And He is preparing Himself as the sacrificial lamb.

Then Jesus gives some weird instructions.

**"They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" 10 He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters 11 and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12 And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."**

They want to know where to eat the meal.

So Jesus tells them to follow a man carrying water and that will be the place.

Verse 13, **"And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover."**

So the disciples do it, and it's ready.

Why does this happen?

One because Jesus needs to hide from the religious leaders.

He doesn't send Judas.

Also to show that He is in control. He will not die until He is ready.

Verse 14, **"And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."**

It is time to celebrate and Jesus is excited.

Jesus could not wait to get to this day because of what it means.

The way Jesus is talking should tell His disciples something significant is happening.

There is a change that is taking place.

What is happening at this meal is not about Passover anymore.

What is happening here is about what Jesus is getting ready to do.

So then, when Jesus begins the meal, he does not do what they expect.

You see part of what they would do at Passover time is there would be this elaborate meal.

As they eat they retell the story of God saving them from slavery.

You can read about the institution of Passover and Exodus 12.

They would eat unleavened bread.

They would eat bitter herbs.

There was a specific way to eat the meal.

Then they also were to put the blood of the lamb on the door posts.

And as they take each step, they are to tell the story.

Explain what each part symbolizes and means.

But Jesus is not doing any of that.

Jesus is not talking about what God has done in the past.

Jesus is talking about what He will do in the future.

Jesus begins the meal talking about the kingdom of God.

We need to see that he is reinterpreting Passover.

Normally there's a lot of things that they're eating at this meal.

But Luke doesn't talk about any of them.

Luke doesn't talk about the lamb that they need to be sacrifice and eat.

Because the lamb is leading the service.  
The only two things that are mentioned is the bread and cup.  
The bread to remind them of Jesus's broken body.  
And the cup that is to remind them of Jesus' spilled blood.

Jesus says, this is about my body and my blood.  
Jesus does not say this is about the sheep.  
This is about about Exodus and Moses.

God created the Passover to lead them to this moment.  
It was training wheels to prepare them for the day when they would sit  
with Jesus.  
Jesus takes Passover and shows them what it was always meant to be.

Christians don't celebrate Passover anymore.  
We don't celebrate passover once a year anymore.  
Christians began to celebrate communion every week.  
Because what God did in Egypt and 12 was awesome but what Jesus did  
at Calvary is the greatest moment in human history.

What God did in Exodus he did only for the Jewish people.  
Jesus died for the whole world.  
Passover happened through the blood of some sheep.  
But Jesus shed God's own blood.

Communion is a reinterpretation of Passover.  
Communion is something new but it is also something old.  
Communion is a mystery revealed.

## **Point 2: Communion remembers Christ death (22:19).**

Passover remembered the death of the lamb and the death of the first  
born in Egypt and how God delivered them from that.  
In communion we remember Christ's death on the cross for us.

Verse 19, **"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."**

He broke the bread.

And He told us to do this.

And that as we do it, we remember his broken body.

And His body was **"Given for you."**

Jesus gave himself up for us.

Jesus willingly and gladly endured a painful awful death on the cross for you.

Nobody forced him to do it.

No one made him.

He did it as a gift for us.

And as we regularly observe communion we are to do so **"in remembrance of me."**

Every time we observe communion, we need to remember His death.

It is the most important part.

There's a lot of different things that we can think on.

There's a lot of different stuff that we can reflect on.

Every time that we observe communion I try to give you different parts of Jesus's ministry and parts of communion to think about, and spend time reflecting on,

But ultimately it's got to be about Jesus death for us.

First, we need to think about his physical body that really suffered.

How it was broken for sinners.

And next in the cup we need to think of His blood spilled.

Verse 20, **"And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."**

The cup is a representation of the blood that spilled and leaked from the broken body of Jesus.

I don't know if we always realize the significance of the idea that our God willingly bled for us.

There is the old fashioned idea that bleeding shows weakness.

You only bleed when you're hurt.

To be bloodied by someone is to be beaten by them.

And on the cross, the God of the universe was bloodied.

Jesus was willing to bleed for you and for me.

And His broken body and His spilled blood was for our salvation.

The angel of death passed over Egypt and killed many.

But some were spared by the blood of sheep.

In our day death passes over everyone.

But if we are covered by the blood of Jesus, we will be resurrected.

Because the blood of Jesus offers forgiveness for all our sins.

The blood of Christ offers salvation after death.

The blood of Jesus offers eternal life.

The blood and body of Christ is our hope.

This is what we need to remember.

The gospel is not something that we have to proclaim to unbelievers.

The gospel is also something that we also need to hear proclaimed to ourselves.

Christians cannot forget how we earned our salvation.

Christians cannot forget the means of our salvation.

It does not come through our own works, but through the death of Christ.

So every time that we partake and eat and drink of communion together, we are remembering the death of our savior.

As often as we do, we proclaim the Lord's death.

Each time we eat and drink, we proclaim the gospel.

Every time we celebrate it, we hear it proclaimed to us.

One of the essential features of communion is that we are remembering Christ death for us.



**Point 3: communion recognizes Christ's presence.**

What I mean by this is that when we observe communion, Jesus is with us.

We know, Jesus is uniquely with us when Christians gather together to worship him.

God's word says that two or three are gathered together there I am.

That doesn't just mean if two group Christians bump into each other at Walmart suddenly Jesus shows up.

It really has this idea of gathering together as a church.

And when we do that God is uniquely present.

But Christ is even more uniquely present not just when we gather together on Sunday to worship and proclaim his gospel.

But he is uniquely present when we observe communion.

He mysteriously and miraculously here now.

The problem comes when we try to figure out and explain how.

Because Jesus says, **"This is my body"** and **"the cup in my blood."**

So what does He mean?

And this is where Christians have had significant disagreements.

The reformation couldn't be unified because they disagreed primarily on how Christ was present in communion.

They felt they couldn't unify unless they agreed here.

Now on one side of the spectrum you have the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation.

It is the belief that during the service the cup and bread changes literally into Christ's body.

The elements might not seem or taste different, but they are.

Now that is one extreme.

And it can sound weird and it can sound bizarre to us.

I think that it's wrong but I do think that we have to acknowledge they're trying to take God's word seriously.  
Because Jesus says this is my body.  
That's how they're trying to understand it.

The other extreme is more of the memorial view.  
This is a more typical Baptist or Bible church view.  
Even though Jesus says that this is my body, he doesn't mean that.  
It interprets it a little more spiritually.  
He means that it's like his body or it represents his body.  
This view runs so far from the Roman Catholic one that it hits the other ditch.  
My problem with it is that it can make it seem like Christ isn't present at all.  
And there's nothing uniquely significant that we are doing here.

My concern is that we can ignore Jesus's words because we don't understand them because they make us uncomfortable.

A better way I think, and what we need to reckon with is, the Jesus is spiritually present in the elements and with us when we observed communion.

I think it's dangerous to try to explain the exact method by which this happens because Jesus and God doesn't tell us.  
And I think it's equally dangerous to deny that it happens because we don't understand it.  
I think that we need to acknowledge the mystery.

This is where I have been really influenced by the reformer, John Calvin.  
and his view of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist.  
And what I really love about his view is that he is willing to sit in the mystery.  
He's willing to say I know that it's not transubstantiation I know that Jesus isn't totally absent from it.

If that seems too much confusing, I want you to view it this way.  
Maybe will help you to recognize that every time you gather with God's people, and we eat the bread and we drink of the cup.  
Jesus is sitting at the table with us in a very real way.  
And he may or may not be present in the elements themselves, but I know for a fact he is at the table with us.

And Jesus at the table with us that's why we need to take it seriously.  
It is an opportunity to sit to eat with our savior.  
It is a chance to participate with him as we eat, as we drink it about communion.

I want you to think about, and I want you to recognize that Christ is present with us at the table with us.  
We are eating his body and we are drinking of his blood symbolically, but more than as symbol.  
Something is happening.  
Somehow, Jesus is really with us when we do it.  
We don't have to understand it we can just be happy he's there.

I went home early to surprise my parents when I was in college.  
I left a day earlier than I told him I was going to and I drove all night for 24 hours nonstop so that I could be there in the morning when they woke up.  
I knocked on the door and rang the doorbell and my mom answered.  
She was shocked, confused, and just wanted to know how.  
I told her don't worry about how just be happy I'm here.

Maybe we need to treat communion like that too.  
Jesus is here.  
Enjoy his presence.  
Don't overthink it.  
Embrace it and recognize that He is with us.  
Whether the Holy Spirit spiritually takes us up, or He comes down to us.  
We are eating at the same table.

**Point 4: In communion we receive sanctifying grace.**

Sanctification is a word that we use and I don't always explain it.

Sanctification is the process by which the holy spirit and God, working in us slowly makes us more holy.

He slowly changes us, and makes us more like Jesus.

We slowly become less sinful and more righteous.

God can use a lot of different things to sanctify.

One of the regular things that he uses is the Bible God's word.

The reason we are encouraged to read it and to meditate on daily is because doing so and engaging with it sanctifies us.

Praying by ourselves and together sanctifies us.

Singing songs of praise to God sanctifies.

Giving in church and to the needy sanctifies.

Practicing the spiritual disciplines sanctifies.

They are all like exercises that strengthen our spiritual muscles.

And I think the communion does something similar.

As we observe communion.

As we do something that Jesus has commanded us to do, that makes us more like Jesus.

As we read God's word, giving us instructions over what communion means that sanctifies us.

As we meditate and think on the death of Jesus that sanctifies us.

And as we proclaimed the Lord's death, it sanctifies us.

As we eat of the bread, and as we drink of the cup together as the body of Jesus, it sanctify us.

And as we do all of that together mysteriously,

I believe the Holy Spirit uses that to help us be more like Jesus.

Ultimately, communion is spiritual food.

It strengthens and recharges our souls.

Not because it is so delicious.

But because God uses it.

This is what Jesus said in John 6 in our call to worship this morning.

He is the living bread and living water 6:35

Communion is the true bread and true blood that we need to live 6:55

As we eat of them we abide in Jesus 6:56

Communion is one way that God provides our souls with what we need.

He gives feeds us what our hearts desire.

And it sanctifies us.

As we eat it, we become more like Jesus.

**Point 5: Communion reenacts the new covenant.**

Sort of the last things that Jesus says about communion in verse 20, **"And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."**

Jesus says this is the new covenant.

To understand the new covenant we need to remember the old covenant.

The old covenant was the covenant that God made with Moses.

It is the Mosaic covenant.

The old covenant had rules.

It was based on the law of Moses.

It had very explicit, complicated, and long rules on everything they did.

Not just moral actions that they are to take.

But what they can eat.

What they can wear.

What holidays to celebrate and how to honor them.

And there is a complex system of sacrifices.

Because sin makes us unclean.

It makes us unworthy to stand before God.

And something has to deal with that sin.

Something has to make us clean again.

And as part of the old covenant, they would sacrifice animals over and over and over again for the forgiveness of their sins.

That is the old covenant.

But then Jesus came to bring the new covenant.

Jesus poured out his blood on the tabernacle to do away with the old covenant.

And the blood of Christ is better than the blood of sheep.

The reason that we drink wine or we drink grape juice instead of drinking real blood is the only blood we needed has been spilled.

We no longer have to kill anything.

We no longer observe Passover and kill sheep, because the spotless lamb was crucified for us.

During Passover they would reenact and act out the old covenant.

They would remember and meditate about the law and the slain lamb.

We do not do that.

But we are acting out and remembering that Jesus died in our place.

Remembering that now our sins can be forgiven by the body and blood of Jesus.

Remembering that now there is forgiveness for all sinners.

That the new covenant tells us that there is new life available to all who come to Jesus.

The new covenant tells us that is not just Jews, who are welcome.

The new covenant tells us that is people from every tribe every people are welcome to be a Jesus.

The new covenant tells us that we can be made righteous not by following of rules not getting enough things right but through Jesus, and what he did.

In the new covenant Jesus died that we may never die.

His death defeats death.

The new covenant is a better covenant, and every single way.

Because Jesus died once and for all.

When we partake of communion we are not just remembering.

Ultimately, we are reenacting the story.

We are telling the story of Jesus death on the cross.

And we acted out and just with our words, but with our bodies.  
I think that there is something powerful and something meaningful how  
God uses all of our senses at communion.  
It is not just something that we speak and hear.  
It is not just something that we see.  
It is something that we can touch.  
It is something that we can smell.  
It is something that we can taste.  
It is something we act out with our souls and with our whole bodies.  
And communion this new covenant.

Communion reinterprets Passover.  
Communion remembers Christ's death.  
Communion recognizes Christ's presence.  
In communion we receive sanctifying grace.  
and Communion reenacts the new covenant.

And I don't have to agree with everything I'm saying about communion.  
Study word for yourself.  
Study this passage.  
Study for Corinthians 11.  
Search scriptures and see if what I'm saying is true.  
My hope is that all of us see that communion is deeply meaningful.  
I do hope that we can see the communion is incredibly meaningful.  
It is a sacred act.  
It is a sacrament.  
It is a gift.

That's a lot to cover about communion this morning.  
We are going to transition to a time of practicing communion.  
Because it seems like it would be silly to talk all about the significance of  
Communion, and to read about it and how we should think about it  
and how we should treat it and then not practice doing it.  
I invite you to meditate on these things as we approach the table.