**We Gather Around the Table to Remember: The Lord’s Supper**

**Luke 22:1, 15-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-29**

 Good morning to you all. This day is a very important day for the church all over the world. Today we are celebrating World Communion Sunday. What we will be doing today is participating in Communion as a church family and joining in with millions of Christians all over the world who will be doing the same. Since this is such an important occasion, I thought it would be appropriate to do a message with you today that explains the reasons for the Lord’s Supper as well as how we should approach the table when we take it as a church. In today’s message will be using two passages for study. The first passage comes from the Gospel of Luke chapter 22 verses 1 as well as verses 15-20 which is Luke’s account of the Last Supper. Our second passage of study comes from the Apostle Paul’s first epistle to the church in Corinth chapter 11 verses 23-29. In that passage Paul repeats the words of institution for communion and then provides warnings to his readers regarding the attitude they need to have when taking communion.

 Before we read these passages, I would like to clarify that in the message today I will be using the terms communion and the Lord’s Supper interchangeably. Both terms refer to the same event and therefore you will hear them both. When I was growing up my church always referred to this as the Lord’s Supper because this was instituted at the Last Supper that Christ had with His disciples. Many churches refer to this as communion because it is the sacrament that unites all followers of Christ together or in other words communes the church together. I just wanted to make this clear as we begin.

 Let’s read together from the Gospel of Luke his account of the Last Supper, especially the institution of the Lord’s Supper. **“Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. When the hour came, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ 17 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.’ 19 And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant in My blood.’”** This passage provides for us an account of what took place on that final night Jesus was together with His disciples. It also provides us with three important aspects of communion that we will discuss today: 1. We learn that the Lord’s Supper has a connection with the Old Testament festival of unleavened bread. 2. We learn what this meal represents regarding the salvation we have in Christ. And 3. We learn how this meal plays a significant role in our personal lives as followers of Christ.

 The first verse of chapter 22 tells us that when Jesus and the disciples met on that evening, they were gathering to celebrate as part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God established this festival in the Old Testament on the evening when He sent the Angel of Death to Egypt to strike dead all of the first born of Egypt. In Exodus chapter 12 we have outlined for us what the feast entailed and what it was created to celebrate. **“Now this day shall be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance” (12:14).** So, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated in the following manner:

* It was a to remind the people of the great deeds of God in Egypt. It was the day that God brought them out of slavery to the Promised Land (12:17).
* This festival lasted for a week (the 14th through the 21st day of the first month).
* To be saved from the plague the people had to put lamb’s blood on their doors.
* While they waited for the Angel of Death to pass over their homes, they ate the Passover meal together.

This tells us that when the disciples gather together with Jesus on that evening, they knew the meal had a historical importance. What they would eventually come to understand is that they would be starting a new feast of remembrance on that night which would be something that all followers of Christ would practice in the future.

 Just like God had used the Feast of Unleavened Bread to commemorate His saving work in Egypt, Jesus was using this new feast to memorialize His sacrifice that would bring salvation to all who would place their faith in Him as their Savior.

 In addition to God showing His saving work in history, the Lord’s Supper also shows us that God has reached out to His creation and has offered salvation through the name of Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist was in the middle of his ministry, he testified to those who heard him that Jesus was the Messiah. In the Gospel of **John 1:29 John the Baptist said “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** The acknowledgement of Jesus being the Messiah and Savior made all aware that He had come to this earth to fulfill what the lamb sacrificed at Passover could never accomplish, the forgiveness of sins. The Passover lamb, since the time of Moses in Egypt, was used to foreshadow the work of salvation that Jesus would accomplish on the cross.

 Earlier in the gospel of Luke Jesus said **“the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost” (19:10).** When we gather around the Lord’s table the bread and the fruit of the vine remind us of how His broken body and His shed blood have paid the penalty of sin. He took our place and paid the price for our salvation that we are unable to pay ourselves. It is at the table we are welcomed as joint heirs with Jesus. He shares with us the forgiveness He purchased with His life.

 Our third reminder in the passage from Luke comes in verses 19-20 when Jesus tells the disciples that He was giving His body and His blood for them. This is a personal invitation to the table because Christ wants each of us to remember that He has paid the ultimate sacrifice for each one of us. When Jesus died on that cross on Calvary He died for all of those who would place their trust in Him alone for salvation. We are able to gather as His people and approach His throne because Jesus Christ has made that possible. Nothing we can do can ever make us right with God. It is only through the Son that any of us can be made righteous in the eyes of God. As we receive the elements let us do so to remember that Jesus Christ has died for each and every one of us who trust Him as our Savior.

**Application**

 Now that we know these important facts regarding communion, how should this impact our lives and the way that we approach the Lord’s Supper? As we discuss this question let us use the teaching of the Apostle Paul in the First Epistle to the Church in Corinth chapter 11 verses 23-29. The Apostle Paul was writing this letter to the church in Corinth because they were struggling as a young church to understand everything Christ taught. They were going through some growing pains, especially because the city of Corinth was a pagan city and these Christians were surrounded with a lot of pagan things that were beginning to infiltrate the church. We see this happening in our culture today as well. What Paul is doing in his letter is encouraging this church to stick to the truth of the gospel and not to be distracted by what was happening around them. In chapter 11 of the epistle Paul is addressing the behavior of the people in the church as they were observing the Lord’s Supper. In verses 17-22 of the chapter Paul is reprimanding the people because they were showing favoritism during the Lord’s Supper by allowing some to partake and forbidding others from partaking. The reason why some people were being favored was because of their wealth or status in the church. In verse 22 he says that some people leave the table drunk while others are still hungry. This behavior while observing communion is inappropriate and it was making a mockery of the institution. Therefore, in verses 23-29 Paul gives the words of institution for the Lord’s Supper and then shares with his readers why those who partake of it must do so in a worthy manner. Please read with me verses 23-29 of chapter 11 **“23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread; 24 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.’ 25 In the same way He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘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 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a person must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For the one who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not properly recognize the body.”**

For the remainder of our time together today I would like to focus on two specific things mentioned in this passage. The first point I would like to discuss is to help us understand what Paul means when he discusses people taking the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner.” As we begin to analyze this let us begin by sharing the first important point which is that when the Lord’s Supper is observed it should only be taken by those who are baptized followers of Christ. The reason that we here at Nankin Community Church teach this is because for someone to come to the Lord’s Table and observe it in a worthy manner they first must understand what the elements mean and they must also actually believe in Jesus Christ as being their Lord and Savior. If we were to just tell all to take communion regardless of their relationship with Christ, then this would make the Lord’s Supper just something we did in a worship service that did not have any special meaning. Therefore, those who take communion must be followers of Christ who have been baptized into the faith and have professed Christ as being their Lord and Savior.

 A second important aspect of taking communion in a worthy manner is that if we have any unconfessed sins or if we are in an active state of sin, we need to confess those sins to Christ so that He may forgive us. We do this when we examine ourselves before receiving the elements. Before receiving communion Paul instructs us to look deep into our hearts and confess anything that might be causing a disruption in our relationship with God. When we approach the Lord’s table with the appropriate attitude, we will be able to receive the grace He offers with a clear conscience.

 The second part of this passage I would like to discuss with you is found in verse 29 where Paul states that those who do not take the Supper worthily will eat and drink judgment upon themselves. What does Paul mean by this statement? God will judge those who approach the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. Those who do not take the Lord’s Supper seriously and just take it because it is a ritual or those who use it as a way to divide people in the church are taking it in an unworthy manner. Paul says later in the chapter that because of God’s judgment people were facing illnesses and some had even faced death because of it. God does not hold back from disciplining those who take advantage of the grace that is shown to us through Christ at the table. To take communion and not approach it with the seriousness it requires can result in God’s anger because this is not showing the proper respect for the sacrifice paid by Christ on the cross. When we gather around the table let us approach this with the proper attitude showing God that we appreciate the price He paid to forgive us of our sins. May we give the Lord Jesus the honor and glory He so rightly deserves by acting in a way around His table to shows Him the proper respect.

 As we conclude our time together let us take a few moments to review what we have discussed today. Firstly, communion has a connection with the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament. God instituted that feast for the people to remember the night of terror in Egypt when the Angel of Death passed over their homes. The blood of the lamb protected them, and they feasted on unleavened bread together. The Lord’s Supper also helps God’s people to remember the sacrifice the Lamb of God paid for the salvation of His people. In the Lord’s Supper we remember that sacrifice and understand that Christ died for all who place their trust in Him. When we approach the table may we approach with the proper attitude taking it seriously and remembering that what God has done for us allows us to approach Him in this manner. Thank the Lord He has given us this way to commemorate His love for us. Amen.