

United Members, Luke 22:14-20

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Introduction

Good morning, my name is Brad and I'm one of the pastors here. Our tradition here at Antioch is to kick off the new year by focusing on covenant membership. Really, this is simply a reminder of who we are as a church and what binds us together. Another way you might think of covenant membership is like a family meal where you have a place at the table; a place where you belong to others, and others belong to you. Jesus Christ is the one who graciously gives us a place at his family table, and that's what makes us *unlikely* members. This is what Patrick talked about last week. But then it's up to us to continue coming to that table, to enjoy the full benefits of the feast and the fellowship—and that makes us *united* members. This is what we're going to talk about today. Today and next week we'll be considering the two gospel ordinances given to the local church: the Lord's Supper (or communion—I'll use those interchangeably today) and baptism.

So I invite you to turn in your Bibles with me to Luke 22:14-20. You can find that on page 882 if you're using one of the Bibles in the chairs. The title of today's sermon is "United Members," and the main idea is this: Communion is the table where we look back and look forward to God's salvation—together. That will then break the passage down into two big application points:

- 1) Look Back to God's Salvation—Together - vv. 14-15, 19-20
- 2) Look Forward to God's Salvation—Together - vv. 16-18

With that said, if you are able, please stand with me to honor the reading of God's word. Again, today's passage is Luke 22:14-20. Church, hear the word of the Lord:

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 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.”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. Luke 22:14-20

The Lord has spoken to us. [Congregation] *Thanks be to God!* You may be seated.

Exposition

The transition between one year and the next is always an interesting time for me. It's like you're in between the end of something significant and the beginning of something significant. This year I did something new to help me process this time instead of it just passing by. I stretched out a long roll of paper across my dining table, drew a timeline down the middle, and began marking everything I could remember. Good things I put in green that extended up from the timeline. Hard things I marked in red that extended down from the timeline. By the end, I was overwhelmed. So much had happened in a year. A rollercoaster of valleys and mountaintops and everything in between. A lot of red, a lot of personal deconstruction.

And yet my ultimate and lasting conclusion from it all was this: “God, no doubt about it, *you kept me.*” I could see little islands of green throughout the sea of red where God showed up—not to change the circumstances, but to be near, through a friend, through a timely word, through *his* word. I was looking back on nothing less than God's salvation played out in 2019. And it was the beginning of the courage I needed to look forward with hope to God's salvation in 2020.

If we are to truly enter the scene of today's passage, I think we will find it, too, in between the end of something significant and the beginning of something significant. The setting is the Passover meal, the very last one Jesus would share with his disciples before he died; which means this was the climactic moment of Jesus' farewell before everything changed forever.¹

In order to walk away changed by this text, we have to understand the meaning of the Passover. It goes back to the time when God's Old Testament people were enslaved in Egypt and crying out for God to save them. The first Passover meal was eaten the night before the exodus from Egypt. “Each family was told to kill a flawless lamb and [to smear] its blood around their door. Then they roasted the lamb and ate it with unleavened bread. That night the Lord passed over the houses [smeared] with blood, but he killed the firstborn in every Egyptian home, so that Pharaoh finally allowed [God's

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), Loc 33671-33672

people] to go free. [As God’s wrath was poured out] the Passover lamb [not only] rescued God’s people from slavery, it rescued them from death by dying in their place.”²

This became the defining moment of God’s salvation for the people of Israel. “[And] it’s this event that’s embodied in the Passover meal. Each year the nation of Israel would [remember] and reenact God’s [salvation] through a meal. The Passover became the identity-defining practice of Israel. It was their theological education...[It was] theology served up on the meal table.”³

So when the disciples gathered to celebrate it with Jesus, they were looking back to God’s salvation together. They were remembering the day in which God took them from a valley to a mountaintop, where he made a covenant with them in blood. And if they were going about it in the right mindset, they were also looking forward to God’s greater salvation through the Messiah. The amazing thing is, their host for this meal was none other than that very Messiah, Jesus Christ. Prior to the meal we read this:

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” ⁹ 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.” ¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. Luke 22:7-13

Ok, I know Peter and John were sent to “prepare the Passover,” but who *really* prepared the meal? It was Jesus, the One who had actually always prepared it; the same One who would soon go and prepare a place at the table for them in his Father’s house.⁴

1) Look Back to God’s Salvation—Together - vv. 14-15, 19-20

This brings us to our first application, that just like the disciples we are to look back to God’s salvation—together. Read with me in v. 14:

² Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission Around the Table* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 102-103; Exodus 11-12

³ Chester, 106-107

⁴ John 14:1-7

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. Luke 22:14

This may seem like something we can just skip over, but even their posture is part of their looking back to God's salvation. On the night of the original Passover the people had been instructed to eat it "with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet...your staff in your hand...[and] in haste."⁵ So instead, reclining is the posture of people who have been set free, who can chill instead freaking out.⁶ Likewise for today's followers of Jesus, to come to the Lord's table is to come and rest, remembering that he spread the table, and provided your place there among family.

And not just that, but we read in v. 15,

¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Luke 22:15

Once again, this might seem like a verse to skip over quickly, but it *could* be the most impactful of the whole passage. Think about this with me: not only has Jesus provided a place at the table for each of his disciples, but he earnestly desires to be there with them. He has longed for this moment, to feast with those he loves. If this still feels wooden to you, then consider how John describes it in his Gospel:

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. John 13:1

Seeing this as the last Passover he would celebrate with his friends before he died, Jesus really did want to be with them. Just as the disciples looked back on God's salvation with Jesus in their midst, knowing that he genuinely wanted to be with them, when we come to the table it's supposed to work the same way. Now, we don't look back on the Passover in Egypt, but we look back on the day when God's wrath was poured out on his Son so that it could *pass over* those who repent and believe. And if we're going about it rightly, every time we come to the table it's a sacred reminder of this: *Jesus really does want to be with us.*

You know, I would be willing to bet that many of us fail to see it that way; that in our tendency to religion-ize everything, coming to the table often falls into the same

⁵ Exodus 12:11

⁶ Bock, Loc 33653-33656

sentiment as doing our quiet time or attending church—it’s another thing we need to do to feel like we deserve to belong. What if, instead, we saw it as the love that it is? As though Jesus were at the head of the table and motioning for believers to come—*because he is*.

But you know what the Lord’s Supper often looks and feels like instead? A funeral procession. We shuffle forward, past the bread and cup, like we’re looking into a casket. Our demeanor almost says, ‘There’s Jesus, may he rest in peace.’ No way! Jesus has taught us to come to the table full of desire, with our hearts lit up like we’re approaching our favorite meal prepared by someone who really loves us.

Because there’s something here to nourish the soul. We read in v. 19,

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.” 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. Luke 22:19-20

Now there would have been nothing abnormal about Jesus handing out the bread and cup. But everything changes when he says the bread is his body.⁷ Whoa, whoa, whoa, this isn’t in the Passover script, Jesus. What we have to remember is that the entire Passover meal is wrapped up in looking back on God’s salvation, salvation that meant death for the Passover lamb and life for those who trusted in the blood of that lamb. Jesus is saying to his disciples, ‘Just as that lamb was broken and given for God’s people, this Lamb is going to be broken and given for you. Just as the blood of that lamb was poured out as a promise to save God’s people, the blood of this Lamb is going to be poured out as a promise to save you. When I’m no longer physically present with you, eat and drink this, and remember. Remember that “God shows his love for [you] in that while [you] were still sinners, [I] died for [you]”’.⁸

The question is, however, what exactly is this bread and wine? When we break the bread and pour the cup, is it a re-sacrifice of Christ? When we offer the bread and the cup, does it transform into the actual body of Christ? When we take the bread and the cup, are we then forgiven of our sins? Well, if it were simple, there wouldn’t have been hundreds of years of debate over it! Let me just share our understanding of the Lord’s Supper as a church.

⁷ Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1974), 324-325

⁸ Romans 5:8; Bock, Loc 33796-33800

We don't see it as a re-sacrifice, or that the elements transubstantiate into Christ, or that it provides salvation. But we also don't just see it as a symbol or metaphor that's empty of any spiritual significance or presence. You don't set a feast at home and then just look at it, right? No, you take it into yourself; it becomes part of you. We come to the table and in the most physical way we can, we look back upon God's salvation through Jesus Christ, and we take it into ourselves; we wholly identify with it. Just think about how sin and death first came into the world—the first man and woman took into themselves forbidden food in rebellion against God. That was the mess that led God to save a people in the first place, and then save them again and again, and eventually say to them,

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:31-34

Church, every time we come to this table, we are celebrating that this new covenant has begun. Every time we come to this table, we are remembering that sin and death have been defeated. How do we tangibly do that? By taking into ourselves—not forbidden food in rebellion against God—but fellowship food in submission to God.⁹

See the significance there? See the communion? It's a renewal of God's covenant and relationship. At the table, together we are taking into ourselves the body of Christ. No wonder then the Bible refers to us constantly as the "body of Christ"! We are united together on the basis of our common dependence on this great salvation and this great Savior.¹⁰ It's what and who we identify with most. There really should be nothing more practically unifying on a weekly basis for us as a church than coming to the table together.

Hence, the first point of application: look back to God's salvation—together.

⁹ Chester, 103

¹⁰ Bock, Loc 33796-33800

2) Look Forward to God's Salvation—Together - vv. 16-18

But that's only half of what we do when we come as united members to the table. We not only look back to God's salvation together, but we also look forward to God's salvation together. Move back up to v. 16 with me, something we skipped over earlier. After Jesus told his disciples that he had earnestly desired to eat the Passover with them before he suffered, he went on to say this:

¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Luke 22:16

Ok hold up, so Jesus is really eager to eat this Passover meal with his disciples, but he's not going to eat it again until the kingdom of God has fully come. What does that mean? Well, that should clue us into a couple things:

One, it means that Jesus isn't just going to suffer and die. He's also going to rise. This table doesn't just point to death, but to resurrection.¹¹

Two, it means that part of why Jesus is so excited about this meal is because it points to another meal. It's actually a pledge to feast even bigger.¹²

What meal is he talking about? Well, one of Jesus' disciples would later describe it in a vision like this:

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself

with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

¹¹ Bock, Loc 33760-33762

¹² Bock, Loc 33670-33671

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."
Revelation 19:6-9

What's being described here is Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb of God, risen from the grave, ascended to heaven, and then returned to earth to make all things new; he has prepared a feast for his bride, the church. This is why Jesus is saying he will not eat again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. He's not talking about the Lord's Supper as if the Lord's Supper is an end in itself. The Lord's Supper only points to the ultimate Passover. Then and only then will Jesus feast again.

And this seems to be a point he wants to drive deep in us because he repeats it. Look at v. 17:

¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:17-18

During Christmas break I finally got around to watching this amazing documentary, Free Solo. It's about a mountain climber named Alex Honnold who free solos the world's most intimidating mountains. That is, he climbs them without ropes or protection; one slip and he falls to his death. After becoming the first person to ever free solo El Capitan, a 3,000 foot sheer granite cliff in Yosemite National Park, you know what he did to celebrate? He just became the greatest climber in the world! He went back to his van parked at the base of the mountain, and practiced hanging from finger grips.¹³ Crazy, right?

In a sense, after Jesus accomplished our salvation, he did the same thing. Jesus, you just became the Savior of the world—it's time for feasting! 'No—' Jesus says, '—it's time for *fasting*. I will not celebrate the Passover again until it's fulfilled.' What? Why? Once again, there are a couple of reasons I want to point out.

First is simply this again: *he wants to be with you*. Now that may come across as childish, or that I just ran out of steam in writing this sermon. But sometimes it's the simplest truths that are the most profound, and the hardest to believe. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."¹⁴ If you have let him in, then

¹³ "Free Solo," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Solo; Free Solo, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7775622/>

¹⁴ Revelation 3:20

come to the table and know this: he wants to be with you. And if you haven't let him in, bro, girl, *let him in*—he laid down his life to convince you that he wants to be with you. He's waiting for you. When he passes around a common cup, it's a token of fellowship.¹⁵ It's a uniting of himself to you, us to one another. If you're not ashamed of him, he's not ashamed of you.¹⁶

The second reason Jesus fasts, I think, is that the body that's given and the blood that's poured out is meant to cover a body across all ages and all places. We read this earlier in John's revelation (and Jeremy preached about this at the end of our Advent series as the "song of Heaven"). It says of Jesus the Passover lamb,

*"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."* Revelation 5:9-10

This is the universal church that Patrick spoke of last week. And Jesus so identifies with this body, his body, that until they are all gathered, and until they are all conformed to his image, he refuses the wedding and the feast that goes with it. He wants all of his Bride. So that means when we come to the table, we come looking forward to the ultimate Passover feast, and longing for the ransomed of every tribe and language and people and nation to come to the table with us.¹⁷ This is what it means to look forward to God's salvation together.

Conclusion

Occasionally someone will ask me, "So why does Antioch take communion every week?" I know the tradition in many Protestant churches is to take it quarterly, so it must seem strange for a church to come to the table so often. Well, I hope today's passage has brought out how significant this meal is—why would we want to reserve its delights and benefits to every few months? But to get even more meaningful than that, look at what happens immediately following the first Lord's Supper:

¹⁵ Morris, 324

¹⁶ Luke 9:26

¹⁷ John Piper, "Until It is Fulfilled in the Kingdom of God,"

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/until-it-is-fulfilled-in-the-kingdom-of-god>

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Luke 22:24

If this were a text thread, I would totally use the face palm emoji. The disciples totally missed the point. But instead of storming off from the table, Jesus uses the table once again to correct and shape them. He says,

“The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. ²⁸ “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:25-30

So the table is meant to be one part valley and one part mountaintop. It’s meant to bring us low in humility as we look back upon God’s salvation, and to lift us up in anticipation as we look forward to God’s salvation. And these things work as a binding agent between us. No more jockeying for positions of honor around Jesus’ table.¹⁸ No more coming with bitterness and anger and jealousy toward a brother or sister without any conviction to resolve it. But also no more coming with the need to earn a place at the table. No more coming in despair that your life or your world will never change. I don’t know about you, but I need that every week.

That’s why we say communion is the climactic moment of our gathering, not the best part of the sermon or the most moving song. It may not *feel* like the climactic moment, but it’s the most tangible moment where we as a local church family abide together between the significance of what was before us and the significance of what is coming. It’s where we remember, “God, no doubt about it, you are keeping us.” It’s where we find the courage to hope and proclaim Jesus’ death until he comes.

That’s why we don’t call you to just sit and think about the table. It’s a physical, communal *movement* that is meant to prepare us for a much greater physical, communal movement, when Jesus returns and gathers his people to himself. The prophet Isaiah described it like this:

¹⁸ Chester, 117

⁶ *On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*

⁷ *And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.*

⁸ *He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.*

⁹ *It will be said on that day,
“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.
This is the Lord; we have waited for him;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”* Isaiah 25:6-8

Church, are you waiting for him? He is waiting for you.

Just as we've been talking about all morning, on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, he broke it and said to his disciples, "This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me." He also took a cup of wine, and after blessing it, gave it to his disciples and said, "This cup is the new covenant marked by the shedding of my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you announce the Lord's death until he returns." **Today we are announcing that Jesus Christ is our Passover lamb that has been sacrificed to make us one.**¹⁹

Our tradition here at Antioch is to come forward and break off a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. There will be stations here in the front; gluten-free bread will be available to your right. If you're a baptized believer, come and remember who you are and whose you are. If you're a believer but not yet baptized, before coming to the table, we would love to help you first come and declare your faith publicly through baptism. If you're not a Christian, this sacred symbol is not for you, but rather than taking communion, we encourage you to take Christ. He has made himself available to you this very moment. There will be pastors in the back to talk and pray with you about any need you have. Let's pray.

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 5:7

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