

Let's Talk About The Lord's Supper

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Typically, we have 2 sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Having said this, some groups such as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy can have up to 7. And although there is much disagreement in the church about the sacraments, they are at the same time, vital to the Christian's life.

Of the 2 generally recognized sacraments, the Lord's Supper, also known as "communion" or "Eucharist" or "the Lord's Table" is the only repeatable sacrament. Baptism is a once-off, meaning that one is either baptised or one is not. But we can talk about baptism on another occasion. For now, let's explore with one another, the Lord's Supper.

As with my teachings, I present my view through the lens of being a Reformed, Conservative and Evangelical theologian. I respect that there are other views as well, including from those denominations that prefer to use the term "sacrament" where other denominations prefer to use the term "ordinance" and *vice versa*.

I pray that this message causes you to reflect deeply as you grow closer to Him.

Scripture Reading (NIV) 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

²³ *"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

²⁶ *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

²⁷ *So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.*

²⁸ *Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.*

29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.”

You can also read Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24 and Luke 22:19.

Introduction

Let's start with the basics: understanding what a sacrament is. A sacrament is a visible holy sign and seal, a means of God's grace to us. An ordinance, on the other hand, is a practice that has been commanded by God, such as marriage. As I mentioned, some denominations may recognize many sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, confession, marriage, holy orders (ordination), last rights, and the anointing of the sick.

Having said that, the Lord's Supper is a visible sign of something internal and invisible, how God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. At the Lord's Supper, Christ himself is present, and His life passes into us and is made ours; the Lord's Supper is a means by which Christ continually nourishes, strengthens, and comforts us.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus at the last supper with His disciples. He told His disciples that the elements of bread and wine were His body and blood. Jesus also told them to repeat this ceremony in remembrance of Him.

The Disagreements

There are no shortages of disagreements, some – but not all – include:

- Was He speaking of His blood and body – literally or figuratively?
- Were His words a combination of literal and figurative?
- How often must the church partake of the Lord's Supper?
- Is the Lord's Supper a means of grace or something through which we remember Jesus?
- What was in the cup? Wine, grape juice or water?
- Who may partake of the Lord's Supper? Those of a certain age or only those who are baptized?

- Who may administer the Lord's Supper? Anyone or only a minister?
- Is the Lord's Supper required for salvation?
- Do we dip the bread into the wine?
- Do we drink from a common (shared) cup?

Mine is not to answer these questions in this message, instead, I will focus on the meaning of the Lord's Supper and encourage you to engage your minister and find peace with your church's position in these things, or if you are not in a church, you are welcome to contact me.

What We Do Know

- During the Passover meal, Jesus blessed, broke, and offered bread to His disciples, saying, "*Take eat, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*"
- Then, He passed around a cup, telling them to divide it among them: "*This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins.*" He also instructed all of them to drink it.
- During this meal, He mentioned that one of the disciples would betray Him.
- He said that He will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until He drinks it anew with His followers in the Father's kingdom.
- Jesus is the host and invites us to His table.
- We partake by following what Jesus did: He broke bread and drank wine.

And this forms the foundation on which Reformed Theology partakes and celebrates the Lord's Supper.

1. The Lord's Supper Brings Us to Remembrance

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He said, "*...do this in remembrance of me.*" When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we ponder over and proclaim the death of Christ. When we view the bread and wine, we remember the suffering of Christ:

He gave His life, His death, and His suffering. We remember His isolation on the cross when He cried out “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” and so we know that God will never, ever leave us or turn away from us. Jesus has paid the price, in full.

2. The Lord’s Supper is a Guarantee

Jesus said, “*This is my body*” and “*This is my blood.*” As sure as we witness the bread being broken before us and the cup being handed to us; and as we eat and drink of it, so sure are we of our share in Christ, in His death and resurrection. Because of His atonement for us. The certainty that this guarantee gives us is not based on our feelings or moods, but on the signs from the hand of the Lord; it is established in the Lord Himself.

3. The Lord’s Supper is a Celebration of Communion with God

The Lord's Supper is the celebration of communion with God and with one another. The Lord's Supper not only connects us to His death but helps us to live in fellowship with Him and through Him. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is present with us in communion. Furthermore, by the same Spirit, we are bound together as members of one body, in brotherly love, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:17, “*Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.*”

4. The Lord’s Supper is a Proclamation of our Future Expectation

The Lord’s Supper is a proclamation of our future expectation. In the Lord’s Supper, we have the assurance that the Lord is one with us. At the same time, the congregation also looks forward to his return, and so we proclaim His death until He comes again. Through the Lord's Supper we extend to the day when Jesus will appear in glory and bring all things to fullness; the day when He will make heaven and earth new so that righteousness may dwell in them. At the Lord’s Supper, the bride of Christ longs for the wedding meal of the Lamb.

5. The Lord’s Supper is a Joyful Feast

The Lord’s Supper is a joyful feast. Although the signs of the suffering and death of Jesus speak of His cross, His blood shed and His body broken, the celebration of the

Lord's Supper is not a sign of mourning and sorrow. Although we celebrate the Lord's Supper with holy seriousness, it is nevertheless a feast of joy, where Jesus in a special way distributes the fruits of his suffering, death, and resurrection. At the Lord's Supper, we may now taste the joy that awaits us at the Lamb's wedding meal.

Gratitude

The Lord's Supper is ultimately a feast of gratitude. The Holy Spirit assures us through the signs of bread and wine of salvation that we are partakers of Christ. We thank Him with our whole being and we again dedicate our lives to Him in gratitude. In gratitude, we always rejoice with the triumphant church of all places and over all time.

The Lord's Supper is an invitation to celebrate our part in the full redemption in Christ and to be assured of this; It is an opportunity to deepen our communion with the living Lord and with one another and to be strengthened in our faith, in our testimony and in our future expectation.

Self-Investigation

1 Corinthians 11:28 reads, "*Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.*" What do you expect to find when you examine yourself? How do you think about your sins, words, deeds, disobedience etc.?

Are you at peace with God, your neighbour and yourself? Is there something you need to talk to God about?

Humble yourself before God and believe that your sins have been forgiven because of the Lord Jesus Christ. Strive to show gratitude to the Lord with your whole life by living in true love for Him and your fellow man.

Conclusion

We close this message off by prayerfully reciting the Nicene Creed.

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth,

of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,

begotten, not made,

of one being with the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven:

was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,

and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Sources Used and Recommended for Additional Reading

The Reformed Church in America: Communion FAQ and Liturgies & The Sacraments in Reformed Worship.

NG Kerk: Handleiding by Die Erediens.

Got Questions: What is the Meaning and Importance of the Last Supper? & What is the Difference Between Ordinances and Sacraments?

Ligonier Ministries: Two Sacraments, The Purpose of Sacraments and The Focus of the Sacraments.
An Anglican Prayer Book 1989.