

# - REFORMATION -

## Small group questions

*Matthew 26:26-30 – A communion in need of clarifying*

Leaders – if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer – please contact the preacher!

1. Why is it important to stop on 11/11 and remember the war? Or on 25<sup>th</sup> April and remember the Anzacs? Why are anniversaries in general, important and significant?
2. Recall (or research!) some of the ways in which the church in the early 1500s had seriously lost its way when it came to the communion service?

### What happened at the supper?

3. What was the point of the Passover meal?
4. How and why did Jesus change the focus of the meal? What was the significant take home points for the disciples present there that day? See also Luke 22:19-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

### What is happening at the supper?

Mark said it was about R\_\_\_\_\_, R\_\_\_\_\_ and R\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why is it important that we continue to regularly r\_\_\_\_\_ what Jesus did for us at the cross? What's at risk if we forget?
6. Have a look from the sermon, at what Mark said were the blessings in which we r\_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord's Supper. How might we give better expression to this aspect of sharing the supper?
7. In what sense is the Lord's Supper an anticipation of the end-time feast of eternity?
8. What does (or what has) sharing in the Lord's Supper meant for you? Do you think your understanding of the Lord's Supper matches the Bible's teaching on the supper?
9. How often do you think we ought to share the Lord's Supper?

### What is not happening in the supper?

10. **No change** – how do people justify a view of the Lord's Supper which claims that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ? How would this view change the whole nature of the communion?
11. **No sacrifice** – Read Hebrews 7:27 and 10:12-14. How do you think people ever came to think of that the communion equates to offering bread and wine (which becomes Jesus) as a sacrifice for sin? To what other errors about our salvation would such a view lead?

*Note: the differences between Anglicans (along with most other Protestant churches) and the Roman Catholic church stem from a difference in authority. Anglicans claim the Bible alone is our only authority. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the church itself is the authority, along with church tradition handed down. The Bible sits under the church, and can only be rightly interpreted by the Church. More on that next week.*

12. **No benefit** – see Mark's final point and discuss... and then share whether there be any new insights have you come to understand about the Lord's Supper as a result of the message.

**Leaders please note:** next week is the final in the Reformation series, and will be the last time small group questions are produced for the year. Thank you so much for your faithful leadership throughout the year.

**Date:** 12 November 2017  
**Services:** 730, 930 (both sites)  
**Series:** Reformation  
**Passage:** Matthew 26:26-30  
**Title:** A communion in need of clarifying  
**Outline:** What happened at the supper?  
What *is* happening at the supper?  
What *is not* happening at the supper

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*They shall not grow old as we who are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them*

*Lest we forget.*

**Remembering** is important.

We stopped to remember yesterday, that we might never forget!! The 11<sup>th</sup> of 11<sup>th</sup>... defines us a nation. /

**Every** race, **every** culture, **every** generation, has national moments of history, they never **ever** want to **forget**. //

To **forget**, is to risk losing all that was **fought** for.

To **forget**, is to pour contempt on those who lost their lives.

To **forget**, is to step arrogantly into the future, with no appreciation or understanding of the battles fought on your behalf in the **past**. //

I'm sure there are defining moments in your life which if you neglected or ignored or forgot, there would be a significant **loss** in your concept of **self** and your **outlook** on **life**. //

We remember all sorts of things and take pains to do that – birthdays, anniversaries – anniversaries of **lovely** things such as our wedding day; anniversaries of **sad** things like a tragic loss or the death of a family member.

We **remember**, so we might never **forget**... so that we might take stock; so we remember the cost; so that we might be grateful... //

And I want to be particularly clear this morning... that what we are doing when we share the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion... is that we are **remembering**....! ///

We're spending just 4 weeks looking at the Reformation.

On 31 Oct, It was 500 years since Martin Luther, priest and monk in Germany, nailed 95 statements of complaint to the church on the door of the university church in Wittenberg.

Why would we do spend 4 weeks on this on this history?

Because it's good to understand our past, so we understand our present!

In week 1 – we saw Martin Luther's broken spirit as he tried so hard to get right with God by his own sheer hard work... and then his **joy** – his **freedom** when he realised that getting right with God was actually a gift *from* God! //

Then last week we saw just how corrupt the church in the 1500s had become, ... and the church control of people was based on **rituals** and **superstitions** and **magic** and paying off to either **buy** your way **into** heaven or **out** of purgatory.

...and we saw the contrast with Romans 5... those simple words: that *Christ died for the ungodly* – that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*... //

now today – we come to the very significant area for the Reformation – that of the Lord's Supper or Mass.

the church was particularly in error around this ritual

It had become like a **show** you went to **see**... it held a certain **power** over people.... the lay people weren't

given the elements or certainly not the wine in case the literal blood of Jesus (as they understood the communion wine had become) was spilled and couldn't be properly cleaned up... the elements were stolen and taken home to put in the garden to help your plants grow...

So you went to **watch** the bread become Jesus as the priest held it up for everyone to adore... and if you were really keen you'd nick around to as many churches as possible so you could see the bread... and so - gaze on Jesus!

Friends, all this was so far removed from the Scriptures!!

So here's what I want to look at with you this morning:

1. What *happened* at the supper? (ie, at the first Lord's Supper)
2. What *is* happening at the supper? (when we share the supper)
3. What is *not* happening at the supper

## 1. WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SUPPER?

You know the story and the setting well, I'm sure.

Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover - that great annual meal which recalled God's great rescue of Israel from the cruel slavery of the Egyptians.

The point of that meal - that they may never forget what God had done for them... that it was all **his** work and none of **theirs** - all of his **grace**, all of his **power**; so that **free** from bondage, they were free to serve and worship him. //

Jesus took what was a significant **memorial** of that most profound and powerful redemption of Israel from Egypt, and turned it into a memorial of an even more **wonderful** redemption.

Have a look with me - Matthew 26:26 - *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*

*<sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

The bread which *was* a symbol in the Passover of the bread they had to make without leaven as they left Egypt in haste, was *now* to be a **symbol** of his body which would be broken and given to them.

The **wine** of the Passover, was transformed by Jesus to become a **symbol** of his blood poured out for many - poured out as a sign and seal of the **new** covenant for the **forgiveness** of **sins**... note that **that** is how Jesus understood his impending death - it was going to be the giving of his body and the shedding of his blood - for the forgiveness of sins!

**Old** symbols... for the purpose of **remembering** - transformed into **new** symbols for the purpose of **remembering** - remembering God's amazing **rescue** from **slavery to sin and death** through the **sacrifice** of the **Lord Jesus**.

...made crystal clear by Luke and Paul (1 Cor 11), when they quote Jesus as saying at the supper: "**Do this in remembrance of me**". ///

So then:

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE SUPPER?

...as we share it today?

It's about three things... Remembering, revelling, and realising... (RPT)

**Remembering** – as we share the bread... *Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.*

*Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful*

It's about **remembering**. **Remembering** Jesus' sacrifice for your sin – the ONLY means by which you are you **forgiven**, declared **righteous** (to be in right-standing with God) and have the **free gift** of **eternal life**.  
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Because to **forget** – would be to pour **contempt** on Jesus' death!

To **forget** would mean **ignoring** our former **plight**; it would mean taking **God** lightly; it would mean taking **sin** lightly...

To **forget** would be to shift the emphasis back to **ourselves!**

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It's all about remembering //

But it's not a **simple** memorial.

Because we '**feed on Christ in our hearts**'... that is – the remembering **feeds us spiritually**... it **nurtures our souls, stirs our hearts, deepens our loves, draws us closer**... we are **spiritually nurtured and fed**...

It's not even the **physical** bread and wine that nurtures our souls... it is the **remembering**...

Prayer book very clear – if someone is sick in hospital and 'nil by mouth' – their participation and spiritual benefit of the Lord's Supper is **precisely** the same as if they had taken the elements! <sup>1</sup> //

So we remember and we give thanks... humble, heartfelt, genuine thanks...

**We revel** – we revel in what God has done for us in Christ – as we take bread and wine – we are so thankful that we're **loved**, we're **free**, we're **forgiven**, we're **reconciled**, we're **adopted**, we **heirs**, we are **made clean**, we're **holy**, we have **eternal life**... that we will appear without **spot and blemish** on the last **day**...

and it's a revelling we do **together** as the body of Christ... it's a shame that it has become something so **individual**... (don't look at me, don't smile at me...)...

ha... we share in this **together**... it's a **family** meal – as was the Passover... we're meant to revel **together**.

Would be strange wouldn't it if we gathered for someone's birthday – and then went off into separate spaces to eat it all in **private**... not wanting to engage with anyone else...?

No friends – this is a **together-meal**... for through what Jesus has done for us all, we are deeply connected to another... we're the body of Christ we recall... we are co-heirs... //

We **remember**, we **revel** and:

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<sup>1</sup> If for good reason it is not possible for the sick person to receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, the minister shall counsel him that if he truly repents of his sins, and steadfastly believes that Jesus Christ has died on the cross for him and shed his blood this, and giving heartfelt thanks to the Lord Jesus for it, he eats his soul's health, even though he does not receive the sacrament with his mouth. AAPB p579. Also in the BCP.

**We realise...**

...we realise that this meal is a **foretaste** of all that is to come...

it's a foretaste of the banqueting we'll enjoy in the end time feast of eternity...

so the meal also points us to all that is yet to come for us as the people of God... points us forward to that **final** redemption at the end – when we'll be free from **sin** and **evil**... from **death** and **sickness** and **pain**... and we will be with the Lord **forever**... //

We **remember**, we **revel**, and we **realise**...

**That's** what we are doing whenever we share the supper... and as we do, our **souls** are **nurtured**, our **trust** in **Jesus** is **strengthened**, and our love grows **deeper**.

So that leads me to our third and final point...

### **3. WHAT IS NOT HAPPENING IN THE SUPPER**

No **change** – there is no change to the substance of the elements...

...they **remain** bread and wine... they are **symbols** of Jesus body broken and given and his blood poured out...

there is no indication from the Bible either in the Gospels or when Paul talks about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians, that the early church was **ever** of the view they were eating and drinking Jesus' literal body...

you might say – 'does it matter Mark?'

Yes it does.

When it is argued that you eat the actual body and drink the blood of Jesus, then the whole nature of the communion changes.

Then you are seen to benefit not from remembering Jesus' sacrifice for you... but from physically consuming him... it's an entirely different thing!

Did you know people were burnt at the stake at the time of the Reformation – either for holding this view – or NOT holding this view? – depending on whether there was a catholic or protestant king or queen on the throne!!?

If you argue that the bread and wine **become** Jesus – then the church holds power over the people – because you're making something available that they can never get anywhere else and simply must have!!

And the state of your **heart** won't matter – as long as you get the stuff!!

So the church becomes a dispenser of grace.. the priest becomes **indispensable** because he has the power alone to **transform** the elements.... And therefore the whole system is open to corruption and twisting and distorting... to superstition... and loading people up with a burden of guilt..

There are still churches which teach this today <sup>2</sup>

Brothers and sisters... please understand, **there is no change to the elements...** we eat real bread and drink real wine (or grape juice) and we feed on Christ in our hearts.

(and the sign is not important – doesn't matter at all what bread or wine or grape juice is used... it's not the sign which is important, but the thing signified!)

But the second thing I want to make clear that is NOT happening in the Lord's Supper is that it is:

No **sacrifice** – the letter to the Hebrews makes it absolutely clear that there is only one true sacrifice for sin – that which Jesus made on the cross 2,000 years ago!

Hebrews 7:27 – talking about Jesus as our High Priest - *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*

There is no other sacrifice. And to claim that what we offer in the communion is a sacrifice for sin, is to take away from the significance of what Jesus did on the cross.

It's to suggest that somehow his sacrifice was **deficient** and we have to **continue** to make sacrifice in the communion for our sin.

Again – this was fought for in the Reformation and **people lost their lives because of it!**

But it is still there in modern liturgies... in the Roman Mass, the priest says:

*Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.* <sup>34</sup>

In Anglican services, the only sacrifice mentioned is our *sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving*...<sup>5</sup> picking up the language from the letter to the Hebrews 13 - *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.*

We are not making sacrifice here this morning/when we share communion!

And thirdly, there is **no benefit** from merely taking (or gazing upon) the elements...

No **benefit**

We need to put aside any superstitions about communion.

Let's take things to their logical conclusion... if there was benefit it taking the elements alone...

...then wouldn't I just sit here all day, making communion?

... wouldn't we make up take-home packs – kind of like Webster packs – one for each day of the week?

Wouldn't I offer a drive-through service... you could pop by and get take away?

Friends – church services where there is **no** communion are **no less significant** and just as **moving, meaningful** and **wonderful**... /// and God is just as **present** as when we **have** communion...

He's **present** because when two or three gather in his name he is **there**

He's **present** because he dwells in each one of us by his **holy Spirit**

He's **present** because corporately, we are his **temple**...

And no you don't need a priest as if they hold some sort of **magical power** by virtue of their ordination... **you** can celebrate the Lord's supper in your home – in your small groups – with the bread and wine you

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<sup>2</sup> From the Roman Mass: *Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge, and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.*

<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholic Mass

<sup>4</sup> The full order of the Mass can be seen here: <http://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Order-of-Mass.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> From the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in the post-communion prayer: O LORD and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our *sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving* – emphasis mine

have at the table... when you pause to remember the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, then you have done this in remembrance of him.

There's **no benefit** to be had from **gazing** on the elements... at a service of **benediction**... or at the communion - some Anglican ministers hold up the bread and wine at the end... because you're meant to be adoring Jesus...!

There's no benefit from stealing some of the bread after communion and taking it to put in the garden or give to your sick animal (which is why by the way, in some circumstances, those at the front will finish the leftovers... so as to **prevent** any of those kind of superstitions!)

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let's wrap up....

There's so much more history I could have raised today - time prevents me.

In the Passover, they paused to remember God's amazing rescue from Egypt - all by his power, his grace, because of his love.

In the Lord's Supper, **we** now pause to remember God's amazing rescue of us from sin and death - all by his power, his grace and because of his love.

We **remember** what Jesus did, we **revel** in all that it means, we **realise** this is but a glimpse of the meal we will one day share with Jesus....

And by so doing, we **feed on Christ** in our **hearts**, by **faith**, with **thanksgiving!**