

“The Family Meal”
Matthew 26:26–30
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Matthew 26:26-30 says [26] *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”* [27] *And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, [28] for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. [29] I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”*

[30] *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*
This is God's Word. Its true. It stands forever.

Growing up, my favorite family meal occurred on Sunday. My mom made us roast beef, green beans, mashed potatoes with brown gravy and plain white bread to sop it all up and clean the plate. It was delicious. I'm sure my brother is saying ‘amen’ in his heart. We have before us in this passage a most remarkable meal, the family meal and it belongs to all those who belong to Jesus Christ, all who have been adopted into His family by His grace and have the great and highest privilege of calling God their Father. This is what we have to celebrate today.

My brother, Bobby, told me he was reading J.I. Packer's book again, Knowing God. Every Christian should read that. If you have not, you need to get it and read it. He told me he was on chapter 19, which is titled The Sons of God. I said “that's my favorite chapter.” He said, ‘Mine too.’ In it, Packer talks about adoption and being adopted into God's family. He has incredible insights in the whole chapter. I just want to share a few things that he brings out in that chapter. First of all, he says “Adoption is a family idea, i.e. the family meal. All of our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. The entire life of a Christian has to be understood in terms of our sonship, our adoption.” Then Packer links another theological word that he discussed in another chapter together with adoption, and that's propitiation which is the idea that Jesus Christ suffered the wrath of God for us. Packer says “If I were asked to focus the New Testament message in three words, my proposal would be ‘adoption through propitiation.’ I can't think of anything grander than that for we're adopted into God's family.”

Think about the hatred and the malice the men had for Christ when they nailed Him on the cross for that does not even compare to the wrath of God poured out on His only begotten Son who would save us from our sins as a result. That is why John in I John 3:1 screams out, [1] *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.* Such we are so great.

Charles Wesley wrote in the hymn *Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin*;
*O how shall I the goodness tell,
Father, which Thou to me hast showed?
That I, a child of wrath and hell,
I should be called a child of God,
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
Blessed with this antepast of heaven!*

Packer also says this about our adoption; “God receives us as sons and loves us with the same steadfast affection with which He eternally loves His beloved and only begotten Son. There are no distinctions of affection in the Divine family. We are all loved just as fully as Jesus is loved.” Can you imagine that? None of you today have any difficulty whatsoever of knowing that the Father perfectly and eternally delights in and loves His Son, Jesus Christ. But many of us do not realize that He has that same love for us. As Packer says, ‘we are all loved just as fully as Jesus is loved.’

Matthew 26 is a fascinating passage. It's one of the longest in Matthew, longest by verses and I would encourage all of you to go read the whole chapter today. Discuss it with your spouse, your family, or your friends, because it is so powerful. As we get into this the context of this section that we're looking at is the Passover, and it's the time when the Jews would celebrate their deliverance by God from Egypt. For this study, I want to consider three points – two commands and one reminder and it's all in one statement. The statement is this; Eat, drink and be ready.

Let's start with eating. I've cleared this with my wife, Brenda. She is affectionately known to me by many things and she is the most wonderful wife in the whole wide world. She gets that award from me every year for the past 36 years. There's no wife better. She is awesome. We have a lot of little names that we like to know each other by. One of my favorite designations for my lovely wife Brenda is food snob. Yes, food snob. She owns it. We laugh about it. Those of you who know us, we're opposites so we discuss differences. We always have disagreements about our differences when it comes to food. We have differences about the places we're going to go eat for food. It happened last night. I came home and I was going to go pick something up and she said, ‘What do you want? You're preaching tomorrow. What would you like?’ So I told her what I would like and the place I would like to go and get the food from. She said, ‘Really? That's what you want?’ I said, “Where would you like me to go, Brenda?”

I did what she wanted and it reminds me of my early years here when Tom Cheely was the mission's pastor here. One night after church I had to go and get some gas at the Shell station near the church and it was when the Crystal Burger place was still there right next to the Shell station. I love the little hamburgers you can get there. My brother and I met there every Tuesday for breakfast. We hated to see it be closed down but as I was going to get gas, I stopped and saw Tom and Cathy Cheely in Crystal's. I said, “Hey, Brenda, look over at the Crystal Burgers.” She saw the Cheely's and then I said, “When we grow old together, you won't go over to the Crystal and sit in the there with me and have those little hamburgers, will you?” She said “No way. It's terrible. Those horrible hamburgers. They are unhealthy. No! And that's been the story of our life.

When our kids were growing up, I would take them to healthy places. Every Saturday I took them to Shipley Donuts to get donuts. For some reason, early in the time of Shipley's, and when we go there, they put a snowbiz machine in there so they had donuts and snow cones. I would get the kids, both of them, and Brenda would just go crazy. She would say “Would you please just get them one or the other? Neither are healthy, but just get them one or the other, not both.” I said, ‘Well, they're both in there and I think we should support the Shipley's and snowbiz.’ I realized that man does not live by donuts alone and I have gotten better. Brenda has worn off on me. I'm trying to eat my vegetables and stuff. When I go eat with friends I'll say, ‘Hey, tell Brenda that I had a vegetable plate today and that I had fruit for dessert.’ They look at me and say “Benny, you've got fried green tomatoes, fried okra, green bean casserole, and a banana split.” That's how we work.

Matthew 26 is speaking about the Lord's Supper, and it's all about spiritual health. It's all about eating and drinking spiritually, in a healthy manner. It's important for us to realize the grace that is involved here. Jesus is really and truly spiritually present as we partake of the Lord's Supper and He wants to strengthen us, nourish us, and wants us to claim all the promises that He has given for us and to us. Therefore, the table should not be despised. We shouldn't look at it like, 'Oh, this is just a ritual that we do sometimes. It shouldn't be disregarded or neglected or looked at in a magical way. We should look at this table with great expectation and faith that God in Christ wants to bless us tremendously. It's for all of us who belong to Him, who've been adopted into His family. Cornelius Plantinga in his book, Not the Way it's Supposed to Be said this; "If we try to fill our hearts with anything besides the God of the universe, we will find ourselves overfed and undernourished." That is what happens when I eat unhealthily, but in a spiritual way, we can find ourselves overfed by going to this conference, that Bible study, listening to this music. We can easily be overfed and undernourished because Jesus is the One we feed on and we feed on Him through His Word.

Matthew 26:26-30 says [26] *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."* Jesus is saying that little wafer that we're about to take, for Him it was taking a piece of bread and giving it to the disciples represents His body. The value of the Lord's Supper is not in how much we take, but it's in God's desire and promise to bless all those who, by faith partake because it's a great spiritual work and we do it in remembrance of Him.

As we take the Lord's Supper, we remember all of the Person of Christ who He is and all of His glory. We remember His work. He came here and lived a perfect life to fulfill all righteousness so that He could be the only perfect sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, when He died on the cross, He paid the penalty for our sin. He satisfied God's justice. There's nothing else He has to do to secure our salvation but then He promises to continue to nourish us and strengthen us as we feed upon Him by faith in the Lord's Supper. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus also said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness today? Are you hungering and thirsting after Jesus? He wants to bless us as we feed upon Him.

Now let's think about the command to drink. Matthew 26:27 says [27] *And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, [28] for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out **for many** (not all) for the forgiveness of sins.* It's poured out for many, His people, those who by grace He calls to Himself and who respond with repentance and faith. Jesus is pointing to something very important in this section. He says, 'It's the blood of My covenant.' It means that the blood that He sheds is ratifying the New Covenant and confers all of the blessings that are secured by Him, for us.

So no longer will the blood represent the Passover, no longer will it represent the deliverance of God's people from Egypt. It now represents something much more profound. It represents the deliverance of His people from their sins. Jesus came to save His people from their sins. Because He has forgiven and cleansed us by His blood, then we have a well of living water within us so that we are constantly being renewed, refreshed and restored spiritually.

Perhaps you noticed I switched metaphors by going from drinking the blood to a well of living water. John 6 tells us we are to drink His blood, not water. This is true but remember, both the blood and living water are included in the covenant and in Christ's work. They're both metaphors. They point to something – Jesus' shed blood shows His work is finished, but the

Holy Spirit and Christ are within us to fill us with a well of living water. Jesus said in John 7:38, [38] *Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'* Think of that picture that Jesus is renewing us. He's restoring us. He is refreshing us as we drink from the well that will not run dry because of His blood. You could think of it in this way. We could say His living water in us flows from His shed blood for us. That's what we have in Christ – a continual flow of living, water and strength.

Finally, we look at one reminder. It's an implied reminder, but it's to be ready. Get ready for the coming Kingdom. Matthew 26:29-30 says [29] *I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.* [30] *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* This last section reminds us that we're not only to look backwards at what Christ has done, but we look forwards, at the resurrected Christ and His eventual return for us.

I Corinthians 11:26 says [26] *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.* Remembering His death also includes living in light of His resurrected life. Jesus says in this Matthew 26 passage, "I will not drink this again until I drink it new with you." What a great promise! We're going to be there with Him in His eternal kingdom drinking it with Him as He's pointing to the marriage feast of the Lamb, this incredible celebration. Why? Because He died and now He's alive for ever more and that's His promise. He is pointing us to think about heaven, to have our minds and our heart set on the things of above and not on the things of this earth.

It reminds me of Jonathan Edwards, who calls heaven in his book, Charity and its Fruits, "Heaven is a world of love." That's what God wants us to think about now. Years ago, when Pastor Reeder was doing a series on the Eternal State and he was talking about heaven, I was always writing something down because I loved this section by Jonathan Edwards on heaven. So I was getting quotes for the next time when I was going to talk on it. Pastor Reeder said this; "Heaven, it's not going to be sitting in a multi-billion year worship service. We are going to be working, playing and having relationships." This was the part that our choir director doesn't like. He wants his ten-minute choir to become a multi billion year worship service choir. I told him we're going to be singing he will have a great choir, but we're going to do other things – work, play and experience relationships.

Jonathan Edwards in his section on heaven went on to say "The problem here is the things that we build on this earth, the things that we buy, the things that we create, the things that we experience, the relationships that we have, all of those gifts by the Giver of all good things, tend to move our hearts away from the Giver of all good things because of the sin that's so deeply within us, because of covetousness, but in heaven, there is no sin, there is no covetousness. Everything that we build, everything that we create, every relationship that we have will be perfect and will continually, forever and eternally draw our hearts to the Giver of all good things, not away from Him."

It's a great blessing we have, and we will do it together, with Him. Everyone that has put their trust in Jesus Christ will be celebrating forever at the marriage feast of the Lamb with you, myriads and myriads of others to celebrate our love for Christ because He first loved us. It is a shame if we don't start and preserve that fellowship with one another while we're here. It's a shame when Christians allow divisions to creep in and strain our unity. We need to be together and do everything we can to preserve the good relationships of the family. That's what the family meal helps us to do.

One of my very best friends, a man who brought me to church here, is my mentor and leader who was my boss for many years now, good friend Tom Carradine, in his sermon on I Corinthians 11, he said this; “The Lord's Supper is a family meal and God desires that His children love one another and care for one another. It is impossible for a Christian to get closer to God while at the same time be separated from his fellow believers.” Christians do whatever it takes to make things right with those members of your family of God. Don't let a strained relationship be there. Get to know them, love them, forgive them, and trust God to give you a heart of love and compassion, because that is our common unity around this table.

What if you've never put your faith in Jesus Christ? Maybe you haven't trusted Him. You have not become united to Him in faith. Then you should not take communion if you've not put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. You might respond, “Oh, what's the problem with your communion table? Am I not good enough to take communion with you?” It has nothing to do with not being good enough. None of us are good enough. God's grace is lavished upon us. It's unmerited. It's not a matter of not being good enough. It's a matter of not being needy enough. The table is for needy people. It's for people who have become convinced that without Christ they have no hope, they have no help. It's that we know that we're forever going to be forsaken and apart from Him, and our only hope is to trust in Jesus Christ alone, to save us.

It's being needy enough to say, “I need you, Christ, to be my King” because if you've never come to Christ to this point, then you are saying ‘I don't need Christ. I can run my own life. I can be the king of my own life.’ But Jesus says, “I want to be your King, your Savior. I want to be the lover of your soul.” So today, if you don't know Christ, see your need for Him in what He has done for you. God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us to completely remove the separation if we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone.

To you believers, those of you who have put your faith in Christ and you're growing in Him, I just have one last thing to say to you, and that is eat, drink and be ready. Be ready for the greatest celebration of joy in heaven. You can't even imagine all that God has prepared for us in that Day and now live in light of those glorious truths. Let's pray.

Prayer:

If you are reading this today and you've never put your faith in Jesus Christ, you've never owned Him as your King, you've tried to do it on your own, you have not seen your need for Him, then if today you see your need for Christ, just pray in your heart; “Jesus, I have lived my life on my own. I've been separated from You. I may have been in church many times, and yet I've never surrendered my life to You and put my trust in You. So I ask that You would forgive me for my sins, that You would come into my life and make me the person that You would have me to be.” Father, I pray for Your children that know You, that even as we move to this time to come to the table, that we would feast again upon You, that we would know Your love for us in a special way, and that we would be strengthened as we come in faith. We pray these things in Jesus' Name, Amen.