

The Lord's Supper

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[0 : 00] Can we turn back to Luke's Gospel chapter 22 and look in account of the institution of the Lord Supper.

And when I was reading this I was reminded of Rudyard Kipling and his great poem, If Which Begins If You Keep Your Head When All About You Are Losing There's And Blaming It On You. And in this account that seems to be very much what's happening is that Jesus in a much broader sense obviously is absolutely keeping his head in the most trying and difficult and problematic situation.

And I think what marks Jesus here, and this is what I want to focus on just for a few minutes and then compare him with ourselves, is the tremendous certainty that he has going into these events. Amazing certainty in Jesus and it's in complete contra distinction to ourselves and the frailty of our human condition which is so often paralysed by a lack of certainty, by a lack of knowledge, by a lack of assurance in our lives.

[1 : 38] We live for the day in a sense and while this morning was a wonderful reminder to us and a great and significant reminder to us, very often we forget it don't we, we forget the future that we have and that Jesus assures us and we lack that certainty and that knowledge in our lives we don't know what tomorrow will bring.

The James Griffiths could not possibly have imagined what was coming in the next few days with the birth of their grandchild. We don't have that certainty, we don't have that security, we don't know if our jobs will be secure or our relationships, whether we will be healthy, whether we will have a future, whether we will have children or grandchildren or husband or a wife or whatever it might be there's this constant sense of insecurity and uncertainty in our lives and that is where Jesus becomes so significant to us in our faith and also as he's revealed himself here in the story shortly before his own crucifixion.

And it's very important for us to consider that because Jesus Christ not only shares truth with us but Jesus Christ is truth and he holds as we unfold this story this certainty of truth.

And so when we sing about Jesus being the rock on whom we base our lives there's a very real reason why we will do that, it's not just graphic illustrative terminology, it is based on this great assurance that Jesus is truth and Jesus is absolutely certain and therefore we can have absolute certainty and trust in him.

And interestingly what I hope to bring out is that the more we trust and look to Jesus the more certain we can be of our own situation and our own character and know ourselves as good as we possibly can and that gives us a certainty and security because in a sense it's speaking about our identity and our identity in him.

[3 : 49] So often we lack trust don't we in Jesus because we don't believe that he knows and he is certain about everything.

So let's for a few minutes before we celebrate the Lord's Supper and before I hope you'll just sit at the Lord's table and think about these things for a moment in the quietness of the hour about your relationship with Christ.

There's certainty that is unfolded in this passage and it's very simple and very clear to us. We see right from the beginning of this story of the Passover meal that he wants to celebrate with the disciples that he has foreknowledge, he knows what's happening, he knows who the host is going to be, he knows that the disciples have to go to the gate of the city and meet this host who will know about the Supper that has to be prepared and there is this almost instant sense of knowledge that Jesus has of this future event that is going to happen, that it is planned and purposed and the disciples begin to see that that is the case or maybe they don't.

And then as we come to the table itself, the Lord's Supper as he is celebrating this Passover meal with him, there is this tremendous purposed dovetailing of the Old Testament Passover meal and this new Lord's Supper that he's instituting and it fits in very beautifully with all we've been talking about the mission of God and Cody this morning we speak about Isaiah and Ezekiel that is quoted by John in Revelation how it all blends together and all fits together and so we have Jesus doing that in a very powerful way where he is reminding them that this Lord's Supper that is being instituted in celebration of his death is what the Passover was shadowing and which fits in so beautifully to many of the details of the Passover.

The significant, the main difference which they probably didn't grasp at that point was that he was the lamb, he was the Passover lamb, he was the one whose blood would be shed, there would be at this Passover meal no Passover lamb because Jesus Christ was the one who would shed his blood as he was to shortly go to the cross.

[6 : 21] But this tremendous purpose and certainty of what Jesus was going to do, the leaven of Passover, speaking about the self-examination in the Lord's Supper where we root out and look for the sins that might separate us from our Savior each time we participate.

The remembrance of rescue in the Passover reminding us of spiritual rescue in Christ, the stages we celebrate using, the cup that Jesus speaks about in the Passover, there was the four cups and each of them symbolised a different part of the Passover and the work of God, the sanctification, judgment, redemption and restoration and they were all taken at different times in the meal and they were associated with different kind of food.

It was the bitterness of the bitter herbs which reminded them of their slavery and there was the honey that reminded them of their freedom and of their forgiveness and it was a very sense stimulating meal for them the Passover and Jesus also instituting the Lord's Supper was instituting a sense stimulating meal, one that we participate and we taste and we drink and we recall and we remember and it is to speak also of all the different realities that the four cups of the Passover spoke of and we have that dovetail beautifully in this institution here, the hope, the redemption, the future.

Remember we don't just look back to what Jesus has done but we do so until he returns with that great future element that all reminds us of the certainty of what Jesus was instituting here gloriously outworking the shadowy truths of the Passover but his certainty goes beyond the spiritual facts of Passover and his own impending sacrifice.

It also extends to his personal knowledge of the disciples beside him doesn't it? Verse 22 he speaks about the betrayal of one who is with them and then in verse 34 he speaks about the denial of Peter that would come shortly but also prophesies and speaks of his restoration and his being held, that tremendous certainty of knowledge of those who were at the table, future knowledge, heart knowledge, God knowledge, certainty and of course of the use of the animal world and all of this when the Kotle would grow three times he knew that and he spoke with certainty, wasn't two and a half times, wasn't five times, wasn't just that he would grow at some point before the Kotle grows three times you will deny and there's that great certainty but also within that, within that there is a couple of other sure and certain realities about our Saviour Jesus Christ, one being the certainty with which he speaks of the future, verse 18 he says that I will not drink the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes and then in verse 30 he speaks of the amazing assignment he makes to the disciples reminding them that they may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

[10 : 18] It's astonishing assurance that what he was doing had a tremendous future element in which he would be resurrected and which he would be enthroned, ascended and enthroned and he was able to assign places to those who would be there with him.

It's a tremendous outworking of the character of Jesus and of his divine nature and of his great, the certainty of the truth of his being in himself and that I think is, as it were the icing on the cake of that certainty is his clear and loving determination to go through what he is going to go through for his people.

He's not unclear about what he's doing and he took the bread and when he had broken he said this is my body which is for you.

Then the cup poured out, new covenant in my blood, this is for you and then in verse 30 he speaks again and says that the kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table because I assign it to you.

You see there's this great certainty that what Jesus is doing is for his people and this certain preparation for the Lord's Supper institution in the shadow of Calvary is for his people.

[12:00] It has a great purpose and a great certainty and a great clarity behind it. I hope that as you sit at the Lord's table this evening and as the bread and the wine are passed that you will take time to meditate on that great truth of Jesus and of his certainty.

We speak about hope and you know, you know, don't you, that the hope of the Bible is not a vain or ethereal kind of hope, wishful thinking, it would be great if when we die we go to be Jesus.

Wouldn't that be lovely? Wouldn't it be great if we could live after we die? But it's what Hebrews calls a sure and certain hope and it is based on the certainty of the rock of ages, the character of Jesus Christ in whom we trust and that you will go from here determined to set your face anew and afresh in Jesus Christ and on his salvation.

You recognise that in him there is no darkness at all. While we often stumble in the darkness in our Christian lives that our salvation in him is certain and sure.

He sees our place, he knows who we are and he is provided for us a living hope for the future. In our death, as we think of Jesus' death, our death will never be like his.

[13:30] He will never, we will never know the forsakenness in his death that he knew because we trust in him and because he will take us in his character through that great unknown for us.

The passage speaks, remember where we are here, before he goes to the cross of this tremendous purpose and settled plan and confidence and certainty of Jesus Christ and in our lack of knowledge and in our battles and struggles, that's a tremendous reality to be going into the presence of one in prayer.

Because in the same passage that we are reading we find the great contrast with his disciples, so different from Jesus, obviously that's going to be the case and his discipleship revealed here is very fragile and so often is our own discipleship.

The Lord's Supper is always meant to be a time of self-examination, repentance and new faith.

That's what's great about the Lord's table, it's kind of like spiritual MOT that we come back and we look at ourselves in the mirror of Scripture, we remind ourselves of who Jesus is and it is intended to be for us a means of coming to self-knowledge, to know ourselves.

[15:05] Jesus had this absolute knowledge of who he is and who he was and what he had come to do and in Christ the more we are in his shadow, the more that we are focused on Christ, the more we know who we are, the more certain we are about our relationship because our relationship and our identity is in Jesus Christ.

So we see the disciples here in several lights and also by what Jesus says to them in the institution itself, he is giving them and giving us this great sacrament which he tells us to participate in and to remember him by.

We are to remember him, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me. This again what 1 Corinthians 11 casts back to in this institution also, remember.

He says remember me, I'm giving you this tactile sacrament, this sacrament that appeals to our senses because it helps us to remember and because we are so prone in our day to day living to forget, we are so prone to weakness and complacency and along with forgetfulness is a lack of thanksgiving in our hearts and lives.

But as we peel back our own hearts and our own souls, we begin to know who we are and as we know who we are, it drives us to Jesus Christ and enables us to remember him and what he has done and serve him.

[16:51] It also I believe helps us to remember others. The centrality of the cross in our lives, the remembrance that the Lord supper brings keeps us from being self-absorbed, interestingly, although we self-examine.

It keeps us from that self-righteousness and enables us to not only remember Jesus but remember others and offer a life of sacrifice and service to Jesus Christ and to his people.

Remember he says, remember the core reality of the Lord's supper. But as he does so, we find some of the disciples arguing among themselves about who is the greatest, dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

It is kind of astonishing, isn't it, at this moment, the tension, the dynamic, the relationship, the spiritual tension of the moment, that they are so misunderstanding of what is happening in the tenderness of this moment when Jesus is revealing himself and explaining what is about to happen

and reminding them of the seriousness of what is happening, that they are arguing possibly because Judas is at the right hand of Jesus.

Jesus in his longing to turn Judas from his betrayal gives him that place of honour and they may be thinking, what is Judas doing there at Jesus' right hand?

[18 : 39] Surely I am greater than Judas. We don't move decency and dignity of the Gospel writers, doesn't tell us in this account who it is.

But it is such a misunderstanding of the situation and Christ responds most graciously and most tenderly and most informatively and he says, look, if you want to be the greatest, you will need to be like me, you will need to be like the youngest, you will need to be like the servant.

And there is that great paradox and the great pattern of Christian leadership, elders, deacons, big note of spiritual leadership in the church is to be a leadership of service and a leadership of humility like the youngest among us and yet he speaks of future enthronement also for them.

Tremendous response from Jesus Christ in their misunderstanding. They are arguing about their place, they are arguing about who is the most important.

There was a spiritual battle ahead and Jesus was pointing to that but they just simply didn't understand at this point that the battle or what the battle was and isn't that often the case with ourselves in our Christian lives that we are arguing about the wrong things, that we are considering the matters and our energies are focused on the wrong battles, on the wrong issues that we are not focusing on the spiritual realities of an enemy defeated but not destroyed who would want to draw us away from Jesus Christ and very often we focus on the presenting issues in our lives or the pride issues in our lives, the issues about our position, our greatness in the kingdom or whatever it might be, just a misunderstanding the fragility of the disciples so often reflecting our own fragility and that is focused finally in the person of Peter himself who makes a great declaration that he will go with Jesus both to prison and to death so he understood something of what lay ahead and yet in his spiritual pride he made these rather cheap and easy promises yet as he left the upper room he forgot these promises, he forgot the bravado of his position and the fear and ignorance of his sinful heart prevailed and brought him to that place where he denied knowing his saviour in the self-confidence of his own understanding in the upper room.

[21 : 55] Now we will all rise from the table this evening and we will feel bold and emboldened by sitting with the Lord's people and we will worship together, we will sing and we will read His word but as we rise from the table and tomorrow as you will have an opportunity to stand up for Christ, take it.

Don't allow the fear and ignorance and uncertainty of people's responses or our inability to say the right thing stop you from standing up for Jesus Christ.

I am sure Peter went out fully intending to stand up for Jesus Christ but fear and ignorance of the situation in his own heart led to an overconfidence in himself so that he was afraid of saying anything for Jesus.

Now you will and I will have opportunities to stand up and be counted for Jesus Christ tomorrow and may it be that we learn and take from the fragility of the disciples encouragement not to be like them in this situation but to so know yourself as you rise from the table as you thought about that, that you know your own weakness, that you know your own fragility, you know fear and pride and you know the ease with which we focus on the wrong things and ignore Jesus.

How often we forget him, forget to be prepared and knowing that may that bring us to dependence on him and reliance on him because I finish with this is the amazing comfort that we have in verse 32 where despite all of the disciples ignorance and fear and misunderstanding Jesus speaks to Peter and reflects his passion for them all and says but Peter I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

[24 : 17] That is an ultimate prayer. It is not that he did not let his Savior down but there is that amazing comfort that Jesus Christ in the midst of the focus of what he had to do in the certainty which must have been horrific actually of what lies sometimes ignorance is bliss but Jesus knew exactly what was lying ahead or maybe even did not understand to the point of asking the question on the cross the dreadfulness of forsakenness but amidst all of that he was able to say but I have prayed for you.

Jesus is our great high priest and it is tremendous to know that the Holy Spirit interprets our groans and Jesus as the risen ascended Savior is our intercessor and is praying for us and maybe as you sit at the Lord's table as you participate that you rejoice in this great divine personal loving God who

knows us in all our frailty who understands us who wants us to find our certainty in him and our security in him and to know that he is praying for us as we live our lives and think of him as you have an opportunity to witness to share the God I do not mean in a spectacular kind of way or a mind blowing way but just you will have an opportunity to say this way Jesus is your best friend. You will have an opportunity to say why Jesus is so significant. Not that you have been to church or that you read your Bible but that you are a sinner saved by grace however you would explain that to someone who does not know anything about the Gospel but please as we live our lives recognize that this great redeemer is our interceder and knows about the situations you will find yourself in and knows about the people that you are praying for.

When I reiterate again I say this often probably to your boredom but you may be the only people that are ever praying for some of your friends.

No one else may be praying for them. Their names may never be being brought before the King of Kings and you are in that great privilege position where God wants you to be where you witness and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 53] So may we find our peace and our identity and our hope and our salvation and our future firmly grounded in Jesus and may we the more we know Him the more certain our lives will become and the uncertainty of your faith.

When was it that you last dealt with Jesus Christ? When was it that you last opened up your heart and soul and allowed Him His cleansing work and because that is where the certainty will come from and may it be that you remember and know restoration this evening.

Amen.