

## **Matthew 22-10-30a**

Good morning. This is the 30th day of October 2022. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church.

We're in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 26, looking at the preparation night meal in the upper room, specifically the bread and the cup. We have been focused for the last few weeks on Matthew 26, 26. Jesus took bread, blessed, and broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body.

Verse 27, he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, drink from it, all of you. This is one of the most central and important episodes for us as believers to be found in the Gospels. There is a lot of teaching that the Lord Jesus presents.

All of it is significant for us to include the Sermon on the Mount, which has been neglected in some quarters, but this as a bookend to the opening teaching of the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter five through seven, here on the night that he was betrayed, the night before he was crucified. This is a very important teaching moment and an anticipation of truths that pertain to us, you and me, directly. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our investigations in the word of God.

And we'll begin. Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to break spiritual bread together as we look for a better understanding and a more fulsome grasp of your plan and purpose for us through the study of your word under the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement and the presence of believers of like mind who share an enthusiasm and an understanding of the importance of this. We ask your blessing on us as we spend this time together.

We ask that your spirit will impress these truths on our hearts in a meaningful way so that we do not only understand them, but also see their pertinence and application in our circumstances, in our relationships, in our walk before you. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

There is a lot more than meets the eye when it comes to the bread and the cup. We looked at the cup in some detail last time, in particular as it connects the Old Testament foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus, specifically in the life of Joseph and the relationship he has with his brothers. He is betrayed into the hands of foreigners.

He is presented as dead to his father with his own blood being the evidence, and yet he becomes the source of life and salvation for them in forgiveness as they express repentance and a change of mind in their attitude toward him. There is life and there is a future for the people of God who will very soon become the nation of Israel. So as we look at this, we want to understand what it means.

We've seen the background. We know that bread and wine were shared with Abraham and Melchizedek, and the first coupling of these two elements together in worship takes things that were formerly separate and in some cases associated with problems. If you think back to the first mention of bread in Scripture, what is it? Where is the first place that bread specifically is mentioned in Scripture? Is this a blessing context or a cursing context? Adam, as you exit the garden stage left and are disallowed re-entrance, lest the man reach out his hand and partake of the tree of life, how is he going to get his food? You will earn your bread by the sweat of your brow.

Bread is mentioned in a negative context. How about the cup, the wine? What's the first time you see wine mentioned in Scripture? The vicinity of Genesis chapter 9, after Noah emerges from the ark, plants a vineyard. What happens? He gets inebriated.

There are bad things that take place in the family with the result that Canaan is cursed. Cursed be Canaan. He'll be a servant to his brethren and so on.

So bread mentioned in connection with the curse on the ground, sweat of your brow, wine mentioned in connection with failure. This is going to be repeated in the life of Lot, who is made drunk by his daughters, and you have two of the long-term traditional enemies of Israel, Moab and Ammon, come into being as a result. So what happens when the Lord Jesus takes these elements that started out problematically, and in connection with fallenness and cursing, and uses them to represent himself? How is it that Jesus bears our sin? What does Peter say? He bore our sins in his body on the tree.

The tree, by the way, also is associated with fallenness and separation. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil versus the tree of life. There are so many connections to the Old Testament, so many ways to illuminate and bring out the meaning of these elements.

It will be less than 24 hours from the time of this meal in Matthew 26 before Jesus will himself be hanging on a tree. Bore our sins in his body, and we have redemption and forgiveness according to Ephesians 1-7 through his blood. So the symbolism of the bread and the cup are of central importance for our understanding, and it's not just a historic looking back.

This do in remembrance of me, what is it that we are to remember? How is this observed? What do we remember? How do we view the occasions on which this remembrance is to take place? All of this is our subject for this morning, but understanding that the contents of the cup are the new covenant in Jesus' blood, this is our first manifest indication. It's more than a clue. It is an indication that these elements are symbolic, and we can put to rest the long-standing problems that have spanned the centuries with transubstantiation that somehow in the breaking of bread and drinking of cup in church fellowship administered by a Catholic priest, these things transubstantiate and actually become the flesh of the Lord Jesus and the blood of the Lord Jesus.

And believers who partake of these are essentially holy cannibals, but this was a widespread long-held dogmatic belief. Martin Luther, when he posted his 95 theses, you can read all 95 of them. None of them say we don't believe in transubstantiation.

Martin Luther still believed in that doctrine, even though he was against the Catholic Church. When you get to the days of Henry VIII and his daughter Mary, known to history as Bloody Mary, because she burned at the stake over 280 Protestants, Henry had separated from the Catholic Church. You remember this history.

He separated mainly because he wanted his first marriage annulled. His marriage annulled, but he wanted that marriage annulled so that he could marry Anne Boleyn and that her offspring would be legitimate. Anne Boleyn is the mother of Queen Elizabeth I, Mary's younger half-sister.

So you can read the entangled history and politics and who got locked in the tower for how long. But the upshot of it was that Henry separated from the Catholic Church so that he could declare his first marriage annulled. He went to a passage in Deuteronomy that talked about a man not uncovering the nakedness of his brother's wife or something, and annulled his first marriage on the basis that he shouldn't have done it because she had been his brother's wife, and declared his marriage to Anne Boleyn sacrosanct, and therefore Elizabeth was not the bastard child that the Catholics proclaimed her to be.

So when Mary comes to the throne upon the death of her father and her brother, her brother reigns in there for a short spell, she wanted to reinstate Catholicism and renew warm relations with the Pope and Rome. And to do that, she found all of the Protestants to be heretics and to shock the nation into obedience. These individuals were not just hung, not just executed, they were burned at the stake.

There was some thought when burning heretics was first instituted that those who would not recant could be put in the midst of a flame, and as the heat began to get to them, they would recant at that point, and then they would be rescued from the flames. That was part of the thinking. She wasn't the first to burn heretics.

In fact, her father, Henry VIII, executed hundreds and thousands of people over the course of his reign because religion was so interwoven with political fealty. It was felt that a common religion is what held a nation together, and someone who sowed the seeds of an alternate or opposing religion was not only attacking the faith, but was attacking the nation. The head of the nation was seen to be the head of the church, especially once Henry took that distinction away from the Pope.

It's very entangled. It's very wrong at any number of levels, but the upshot of it was that in the days of Mary, to not agree with Catholic doctrine publicly was to get yourself imprisoned and ultimately executed. In the space of only about six years of her reign, depending on how you count them, there were over 280, many of them prominent.

Cranmer, Ridley, and others were very famously burned at the stake. The reason was, among other things, they did not hold with transubstantiation. They even departed from Luther in that regard.

You have to follow the history of the Reformation. You have the Lutherans as the first reformers. They still held many of the Catholic doctrines.

They just didn't recognize the role of the church as being co-equal with Scripture and speaking for God in all cases, and the worst abuses in terms of indulgences and so on. But the Lutherans still believe many Catholic doctrines, including transubstantiation. The Swiss reformers were some of the first to change their understanding or to begin to proclaim the understanding that these are symbolic elements.

You can refresh your mind on that history as you wish. I only bring it up to emphasize that however you want to view that argument, that controversy, it was a life and death matter how to understand some of these doctrines, including the meaning of the Lord's Table, which was viewed by nearly all as an ordinance that had to be observed. So what is it? It was important enough to kill people over on both sides.

And thankfully today in this country and in many other places in the world, you can have a profound doctrinal disagreement without endangering your life over it. But the indication that Jesus gives that clearly identifies these elements as symbolic is in the next verse. Verse 28, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

The remission of sins is not accomplished by physical blood. This is conceptual. This is in the realm of the immaterial and the spiritual.

So the blood representing death, the life of the flesh is in the blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. It is life for a life.

Misunderstanding this was Cain's mistake, offering a bloodless sacrifice to God from the outset is an important issue. The wages of sin is death. And in the teaching economy of God, it isn't as though God must be appeased with blood because he's a pagan, brute, primitive deity or force.

This is designed to emphasize the reason there is a death penalty for sin is to emphasize how dangerous and how consequential sin is. And the consequences of it are dire. Tolerating it, practicing it, permitting it is dangerous.

It endangers life to the extent that much as when murderers are caught, especially when they are random murderers who will kill in the course of a robbery or kill in the course of pursuing their own designs, they are often assigned the death penalty. This person, it's either his life or ours. We need to take his life to preserve innocent lives, so to speak.

So the life and death importance of dealing with sin, being cleansed from it, having it purged not only from our hearts, but from our record so that we are qualified to live in God's presence and to receive eternal life is in view. Jesus not only emphasizes this in the upper room, this is my blood of the new covenant. It is a covenant.

It is an agreement. It is conceptual. It is immaterial.

And notice he speaks of the wine in the cup as representing the blood of the covenant, which is shed, although it has not yet been shed. Another marker of the fact that this is to be taken symbolically, representationally. It is a representation.

This is an understanding that should have been firmly in mind from the earliest days of Jesus' ministry. So we're going to look at some passages where this is made clear. Turn to the Gospel of John, John chapter 6, after Jesus has spoken of bread from heaven.

You begin in verse 22, the people are standing on the other side of the sea. They see that there is no other boat there except the one Jesus and his disciples had entered. They have followed him around because of the feeding of the 5,000 that's in the first part of chapter 6. So they chase him down.

And in verse 24, the people see Jesus is not there. They come to seeking him when they find him on the other side of the sea. Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus ignores that question and says, most assuredly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

You are seeking me because of the physical bread that you ate that satiated your bodily appetite. Immediately, Jesus strikes at the heart of the issue. You should not be thinking about physical bread and physical fullness.

This miracle was designed to teach, to be meaningful at the spiritual level. Do not labor, verse 27, for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures with a view toward everlasting life. Now, man is to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

Is this a contradiction? He that does not work should not eat, Paul tells the church. Here, Jesus says, do not labor for the food which perishes. Should we all resign from our jobs and wait for manna? Context, context, context.

You can't rip something out of its context and make a dogmatic principle out of it, as people do so often with, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father, and so on. Representational pictures have to be understood as such. So when Jesus says, do not labor for the food which perishes, what is he saying? He's not saying, don't work, because that's how you get your daily bread.

Your priority, the goal of your efforts ultimately should be to find the food which endures with a view toward everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the

Father has set his seal on him. You should understand this miraculous breaking of bread in spiritual terms. Look at the reason for which that bread was broken.

Are there hungry people? Yes, but they could have been fed in any number of ways. They could have simply been dismissed to go home and find their own food. But Jesus uses the occasion to invest a communal meal with spiritual meaning.

I say again, the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 is Jesus investing a communal meal with spiritual significance. So Jesus says, labor for the food that endures to everlasting life. Their response is to ask the question in verse 28, what shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he sent.

In context, this is the explanation of laboring for the food that endures with a view toward eternal life. Believe in him whom the Father has sent, whom God has sent. So we see a link building here between partaking of the bread from heaven, which began as a physical sign miracle, but is invested with spiritual significance, labor for that which endures for eternal life.

And that is believing in the son that God has sent. What sign will you perform, verse 30, that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Which is something easy to find fault with in view of what just happened. These are the people that ate the miraculously broken bread.

And Jesus says, you're chasing me around because you ate that bread and you want more. And now they're asking for a sign. They are talking about a sign they just saw the previous day, right? And this is something we can do where we are asking for something that God has already provided.

And many times we are focused on the physical when we should be focused on the spiritual. We've seen this before in our discussion of the gospel of John, our study of it. Our fathers ate manna.

What are they doing here? They're arguing for more bread. They haven't been able to lift their minds. All they're doing is try to use the words of Jesus to get back to this more bread, please.

Motif. Jesus said to them in verse 32, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven. My father gives you the true bread from heaven.

That manna is also representational and symbolic, even as the physical manna sustained Israel in the wilderness. The spiritual value of that is what has counted for every succeeding generation since. So they can't get away from the bread.

Verse 34, Lord, give us this bread always. Any way we can take your words and twist

them around for you to give us what we want. And this happens so often in the modern day.

It happens so often in the modern and postmodern church. Jesus said, look, I am the bread of life. The work of God is to believe in him whom God sent.

I am that bread. Partake spiritually of what is right before your eyes, having been sent by God. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

Hunger and thirst, bread and wine. What does it mean to eat the bread? What does it mean to drink of the cup? It means to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in spiritual terms and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in spiritual terms. Jesus is endeavoring in a number of different ways here to raise these people's perception, their mindset, their expectation, their hope and their goal into the spiritual out of the physical.

You're talking about physical hunger and physical thirst. I am talking about the transcendent need that you have for bread and wine that comes from God. Come to me and you will not hunger.

Believe in me and you will not thirst. Partaking of Christ is represented in the bread. It is represented in the cup.

We know this, but reviewing the emphasis on it is going to make some other passages very clear. I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. You've seen me and you've seen me break bread and feed you and you're still not getting the message.

Look at verse 41. The Jews complained about him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it that he says, I have come down from heaven? Physical versus spiritual.

If you start with the physical and focus on the physical, the spiritual is going to be opaque. We should view our physical lives and circumstances in spiritual terms and when we don't, we are blind. You have that a few chapters hence in John 9. Because you say you have no sin, which is conceptual, you are blind, O Pharisees.

Are we blind also? If you were blind, you would have no sin, but because you say we see, your sin remains. You say you see, but you don't. You look at the physical, you never graduate to the spiritual.

Jesus says in verse 43, do not murmur among yourselves and talks about no one being able to come unless he is drawn. Many are called, few are chosen. Many are drawn, few are the drawn, because they are drawn to Christ, come to that destination and respond in faith.

They come and they believe. People try to understand verse 44 without looking at verse 35. Coming and believing is the proper result and end point of being drawn.

No one can come unless the Father draws him. This is the difference between clay and wax. Clay hardens in the sun, wax melts in the sun.

No one can come unless he melts under the sun. Well, what kind of substance are you? Are you humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God or are you hardening your heart in the face of the same God with the very same grace, offering the very same salvation and opportunities for eternal life? What is our response? It is the same Father who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, who loved the world and sent his Son. I have come down from heaven, verse 38, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. This is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him." These people are looking at the Son. They have witnessed sign miracles, but seeing they do not see.

What sign will you give us? We just saw a sign, but we didn't see it. We're looking at you, but we don't believe you're the bread from heaven. Seeing they see and do not perceive.

Hearing they hear and do not understand. The heart has become callous. It is mired in the physical, that which comes from the dirt.

Cain made his sacrifice out of what he grew from the cursed soil. He didn't recognize the significance and the importance of the blood. The covenant is in the blood.

Verse 47, Assuredly, I say to you, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. I am the bread.

Your fathers ate the physical manna in the wilderness, and they're dead. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. Do those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ still experience physical death? Of course.

Yet Jesus says here, when you partake of the bread which comes down from heaven, you do not die. What's he talking about? Spiritual life. I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. Eating of this bread signifies what? Coming to Christ and believing in Him. The bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.

It is life for a life. Life is required, life will be given, because the wages of sin is death. To be relieved of the wages, a life must be paid.

The bread represents His body. The life of His body is going to be given. How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Verse 52, These people cannot get their minds out of the physical.

And the transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and all the other ways to try to make the ritual bread and the ritual cup into the actual flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus, makes this very same mistake. And people died by the hundreds and by the thousands over this. How sad is that? Making a life and death issue out of the life and death of the Lord Jesus, who died that we might have life, but people are going to take other people's lives away because they don't believe the way people think they ought to believe.

The pettiness, the insensitivity, the busybody, self-important, arrogant, self-righteous attitude that not only should I believe what is right, but I will make sure other people believe what is right. And if they don't, I will kill them. This is what prevailed back in your 15th, 16th, 17th century.

In the church, people claiming the name of Christ, killing each other over doctrinal differences. How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus said, most assuredly, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. So, what do you think about the common ritual practice of the communion table in the Catholic church and in the Protestant church? Denominational churches largely, almost universally, practice the physical ritual of the bread and the cup.

By the way, have you ever noticed this? Most of us not having a Catholic background may not really be aware of this, but when you think about the quote-unquote Lord's table in the Catholic church, how does that work? Have you ever been to a Catholic service or even some of the those that are Protestant but still model their Lord's table ideas on the Catholic church? How does it work? Have you ever seen in a movie or in actual experience being in a congregation where you come forward and a priest or an officiant of some kind lays a round wafer on your tongue? Never done that or seen it done? What's missing there? Do they also have you come up and drink from a cup? In the Catholic church, who drinks the cup? Only the priest. Catholics do not drink the cup, do they? Did you ever drink a cup at a Catholic mass? Sometimes it's a universal cup, sometimes it's those little cups. Yeah, well, many times they only hand out the host.

They come up to the front and have the host given by the priest. But what Jesus says is, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Does this require having been present for the feeding of the 5,000? Does this require having been present in the upper room where Jesus breaks the bread and has His 12 disciples drink from the cup? What if you weren't there? Well, if you haven't partaken of that bread and cup, you have no life in you.

What's He talking about? Verse 35, He who comes to me shall never hunger, he who believes in me shall never thirst. Why? Because coming to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith is

partaking of that heavenly bread. Believing in Him is drinking that cup of the new covenant.

Coming to Him in faith, believing in Him for deliverance, forgiveness, and life is eating the bread and drinking the cup. Verse 35 is key. Put stars next to it, circle it, reference it outside the margin of every other verse here that talks about eating and drinking, because the spiritual actions of coming and the spiritual actions of believing are eating and drinking.

Partaking of the flesh, partaking of the blood is not literal. Whoever, verse 54, eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Jesus doesn't say get together in small groups, have some bread broken, pass around a cup of wine, and then you will have eternal life.

These are spiritual functions with spiritual results. If the physical communion observance were in view, then physical never dying would be the result. How is it that you eat and drink at a physical table and from a physical cup and yet still physically die? Partaking of the Lord Jesus you never die.

You have eternal life and you're raised up at the last day because your physical body is going to be redeemed and resurrected and transformed because of the spiritual reality that was observed, not because of a physical communion table. Making this mistake is all the same as strapping a phylactery to your head and your hand, nailing the representative scripture to your doorpost. It is not the physical that accomplishes anything.

It is the spiritual, and sometimes that point needs to be emphasized by physically abstaining from doing things that are in themselves intrinsically wrong, but they become wrong when people invest them with mystical value they do not have. There is no value in a communion cracker. There is no value in communion Kool-Aid.

No value. And it enables misunderstanding at a widespread and fundamental level. This is a very important truth and God devotes a chapter to it in the gospel of John.

Paul is going to devote two chapters to it in 1 Corinthians to which we will be turning after the break. But remember this physical life in its entirety is the means to an end. It is the means to the goal of coming to understand who we are in Christ, spiritual truth, spiritual growth, spiritual accomplishment that qualifies us for the spiritual kingdoms that will find literal fulfillment in the age of the kingdom of the Son and the eternal future kingdom of the Father.

But we do not go there with this physical body. We go there with our spirit inhabiting a new and eternal body. I will raise him up at the last day.

Let us pause here and take our break. When we come back we will take our review and

emphasis on the spiritual nature of these elements to 1 Corinthians.