

The Last Supper

Embracing the New Covenant

Sermon The Passion, Cross and Resurrection Maundy Thursday sermon

Luke 22:14-20

Good evening, friends. As we gather on this sacred night, Maundy Thursday, we step into a holy moment in time, a moment steeped in the deep understanding of love, sacrifice, and a promise that resounds through the ages. Tonight, we meditate on the Last Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ with His disciples, a final gathering that would forever alter the course of humanity. In the gentle act of sharing bread and wine, Jesus established the new covenant, ushering in a new era of grace, service, and remembrance.

Let us anchor our hearts in scripture, from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22, verses 14 to 20:

"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Imagine the scene as Jesus takes His place at the table. It is an intimate gathering, filled with the aroma of freshly made bread and the deep red of wine. There is an air of anticipation, a palpable tension as the disciples gather around Jesus, eager to hear His words. This is a pivotal moment, a bridging of the old and the new.

For centuries, the Jewish people celebrated the Passover, remembering their deliverance from Egypt. This night, however, Jesus transforms the familiar ritual into a profound revelation of divine grace. He shifts the focus from the exodus of the Hebrew people to the impending sacrifice He will make for the salvation of all.

Jesus' fervent desire to share this meal reflects His longing, not just for companionship, but for the institution of something monumental — a new covenant, a new promise that extends far beyond the limitations of the old. When He speaks of the new covenant, He is offering a relationship that is not bound by law, but grounded in love and grace.

The old covenant, established on the law given to Moses, demanded perfect adherence to rules and rituals. It served to delineate holiness, and to set apart God's chosen people. Yet how often did humanity fall short, rendering the old covenant incomplete? In this sacred meal, Jesus invites us into a profound

understanding of what it means to relate to God — the new covenant He offers breaks the barriers of sin and shame.

In His gesture of breaking bread, Jesus teaches us that His body would be broken for us. In the sharing of the cup, there is the shedding of His blood, a sacrificial act that fulfils the requirement of the old covenant by establishing grace through faith. This is the core of the good news: we are no longer defined by our failures, or by the weight of the law, but by the unfathomable love of Christ.

When we partake in the Lord's Supper, we are not merely engaging in a ritual practice; we are embracing the reality of what Jesus accomplished on the Cross. This act of communion serves as a window into the heart of God, revealing His desire for closeness, intimacy, and reconciliation.

The evening of the Last Supper was not just about Jesus and His relationship with the disciples; it was also about how they were to relate to one another. The name "Maundy" derives from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means "command." This night was marked by a new commandment: to love one another as He loved us.

In John chapter 13, we read about Jesus washing His disciples' feet, an action that exemplifies servanthood. Here we see that the path to greatness in God's Kingdom is paved with humility and sacrifice. To share in the Lord's Supper is also a call to embody the love and service that Jesus demonstrated.

This self-giving love compels us to look around the communion table and recognise those who share in this family of faith. It compels us to serve those in need, to extend grace to those who seek forgiveness, and to advocate for those who are marginalised. The Last Supper served as a model for the kind of community we are called to be — a community marked by love, reconciliation, and humility.

As we reflect on these things, let us ask ourselves: how does our participation in communion challenge us to love and serve our neighbours? How can we embody the spirit of Christ by serving those who hurt, those who feel isolated, and those who are often overlooked? The new covenant calls us not just to remember, but to act in love towards one another, living out the values of the Kingdom of God.

As we prepare to partake in the Lord's Supper tonight, I invite you to approach this moment with a heart full of gratitude and reflection. Let us remember the immense sacrifice of Jesus, Who willingly bore our sins, pain, and separation from God. When He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," it was not just an invitation to recall His story; it was an invitation to be transformed by it.

Take a moment to reflect on the weight of the bread pressed against your hand, symbolising Christ's body, broken for you. Consider the cup before you, representing His blood, shed for the forgiveness of your sins. The magnitude of this moment calls for introspection. What does it mean for you, personally, to enter into this new covenant? How is God inviting you to embrace His grace, and to extend it to others?

In our fast-paced world, it is easy to rush through moments of significance, but our call tonight is to pause, breathe, and allow the reality of the Last Supper to settle into our spirits. As we come forward to

receive the elements, let every step be imbued with thanksgiving. Let us remember that it is through Christ's scars that we are made whole, through His death that we are granted life.

In conclusion, Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper beckon us to enter into a profound and transformative relationship with Jesus. The new covenant He established is one of hope, grace, and love. It is a reminder that no matter where we find ourselves tonight — whether weary, broken, joyful, or hopeful — we are invited to embrace this divine promise.

As we leave this sacred gathering, let us carry the spirit of the Last Supper into our everyday lives. Let us serve one another, support one another, and love one another as Christ loved us. Let us be agents of grace, ushering in the Kingdom of God through our actions, our words, and our love. May we approach the Lord's Supper not just as a ritual, but as a radical reminder of who we are in Christ — a community called to live out His love and serve one another in His name.

Let us prepare our hearts for communion, reflecting on the deep significance of this sacred meal. As we do, may we be reminded of the new covenant, the overwhelming love of Christ, and the call to live out our faith in tangible ways. Amen.