

SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 28 JANUARY 2018

The Session of North Toowoomba has resolved that, commencing next week, the Lord's Supper will be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month at St David's, rather than only once a quarter.

Here's why...



Meal Above All Meals

Stephen Witmer

Has the Lord's Supper become humdrum for you, something you do mindlessly, something you've simply done for years?

Is it something that you do as you travel down the path of least resistance, something that is routinely passed to you so you figure you might as well?

Luke tells us that it is so much more. His account of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:7–30) provides us five magnificent reasons why this meal is above all others.

1. It Is Rooted in Redemption

Are you in need of forgiveness, of deliverance, of grace? *This meal is for you.*

Its roots extend deep into the history of God's people and the riches of God's character. Luke's

account makes clear that Jesus celebrates a Passover meal (Luke 22:8, 11, 13, 15), recalling God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. We're reminded that God is eager to save his people (Psalm 86:5).

And even as Jesus observes the Passover meal, he elevates it, claiming that it's ultimately about his own imminent death. Jesus himself is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. He is the Son whom God does not spare (unlike the firstborn sons of Israel at the first Passover) so that *we* may be spared.

We receive this meal because we have been delivered from death and hell, and because we know we're in desperate need of daily grace.

2. It Is Planned by Jesus Himself

Do you relish being at the table of a host who rejoices at your presence? *This meal is for you.*

Jesus provides elaborate instructions for Peter and John about how and where to prepare the Passover (Luke 22:8–13). It's clear that this meal is Jesus' idea. It occurs at his initiative, under his leadership, and according to his plan.

When I proposed marriage to my wife Emma in October 2005, I left nothing to chance. I meticulously prepared a plan – plus two backup plans (depending on weather conditions). In the years since, we've laughed about my over-preparation. But it clearly communicated to her my strong desire to marry her.

Jesus carefully plans the meal, then says to his disciples: "I have *earnestly desired* to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). He longs for us to join him at his Table.

It's good to ask ourselves, do *we* long to share this meal with him? Do we anticipate the Lord's Supper, or is it an afterthought?

Jesus' earnest desire invites us to desire the meal more, preparing ourselves beforehand through confession of sin, reconciliation with others, and joyfully expectant prayer.

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to save His people.***

3. It Anticipates the Future

Do you want a foretaste of the new creation? *This meal is for you.*

The reason Jesus is eager to share the meal with his disciples is that he won't eat it again until "it is

fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). The "kingdom of God" here refers to the new creation (Luke 22:18). Therefore, the implication of Jesus' words is that the Lord's Supper anticipates and begins the glorious future feast of the Messiah, a meal described in the Old and New Testaments.

The fragment of bread and taste of the cup we receive at the Lord's Supper is the first course of a splendid eternal feast. It will be "fulfilled" later, but it starts now.

At its source in northern Minnesota, the Mississippi River is an unimpressive little stream you can easily wade. But even at that point, it's the real thing, the actual Mississippi. At the Lord's Table, in the midst of a sin-sick world, the perfect future for which we long comes rushing into the present.

We hold in our hands a foretaste of the future. The apostle Paul was looking forward when he said, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *until he comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The present meal heightens our desire for the full and final feast.

4. It Recalls Jesus' Substitutionary Death

Do you desire a deeper understanding of Jesus' death? *This meal is for you.*

Jesus says it refers mainly to himself and his redemptive work: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). And we're to remember not just the external events of his death – the soldiers, the scourging, the thorns, the nails – but their redemptive significance: "This is my body, *which is given for you*" (Luke 22:19). We remember that Jesus dies as our substitute.

We remember that by shedding his blood for us, he inaugurates a new covenant (Luke 22:20). God's judgment is fully poured out upon Jesus. Our sin is fully forgiven. As we share this meal with Jesus, we remember his unique, once-for-all,

fully sufficient, substitutionary death.

5. It Forms a New Community

Do you long for life in true community? *This meal is for you.*

Immediately after eating, Jesus' disciples dispute "as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24). They've clearly missed the meal's meaning and transforming power. We may miss it, too, though perhaps in subtler ways.

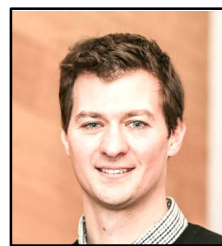
As we leave the Communion gathering, are we annoyed that someone is talking in the parking lot, momentarily blocking our exit? Do we complain about missing the Sunday afternoon football game because a spouse or child needs our help? Later in the week, having been so powerfully reminded of God's forgiveness, do we refuse to forgive someone who has sinned against us?

The reason Luke moves immediately from the institution of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14–23) to Jesus' teaching about humble service (Luke 22:24–27) is that he wants us to see that Jesus' death in our place is meant to form a new community, creating in us servant hearts, propelling us to love one another in humble ways.

Long ago, J C Ryle wrote, "He that eats the bread and drinks the wine in a right spirit will find himself drawn into closer communion with Christ, and will feel to know him more and understand him better."

This is still true. This promise is for us when we feast at Jesus' Table.

The Lord's Supper is the first course of a splendid eternal feast.



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Source: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/meal-above-all-meals/>

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St David's Presbyterian Church seeks to promote and share biblical teaching for the benefit and encouragement of all.

Our regular Sunday services are at 9:30 am
at 46 Mary Street, North Toowoomba.

You are warmly invited to attend.

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