

THE COMMANDS OF JESUS - WEEK 7
The Lord's Supper/Communion: Luke 22:19-20

As we go through our study of the commands of Christ, they are all, of course, important. But there are only 2 that we label as "sacraments." By definition, a sacrament is something of mysterious and sacred significance. The first of the sacraments was baptism, which we covered in Week 2. This week we will look at the second of the sacraments: The Lord's Supper or Communion.

The Institution of Communion:

In Luke 22, we see Christ instituting communion. He reveals to His disciples something wonderful and mysterious—the traditional Passover meal celebrated by the Jews for centuries was meant to not only remind them of God's past redemption of His people, but it also was pointing them to the coming Messiah and His sacrificial redemption of all mankind. With the coming of Jesus and his death on the cross, a new covenant was being instituted—not just with the Jews but also with the Gentiles.

With this new covenant there was to be a new meal with 2 key components: the breaking of bread to remind us of the breaking of Jesus' body for our sins and the drinking of wine to remind us of redemption we have through Jesus' blood covering our sins. Both were to be consumed in remembrance of Jesus and His atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Differing Views of the Eucharist:

There is one thing of which we can be assured—when God gives us something good, Satan is going to do his best to tempt us to confuse and abuse God's gift. In 1 Cor. 11, we find that the church in Corinth was twisting the Lord's Supper and using it to elevate some believers while humiliating others. Throughout the history of the Church, the very thing God gave us to promote unity has instead been used to create division. From this division has emerged 3 main views of the significance of Communion:

1. **Transubstantiation.** This view is held by Roman Catholics and other Orthodox denominations. Transubstantiation holds that the elements (the host and the wine) literally and mysteriously transform into the actual body and blood of Christ upon consumption by the believer.

2. **Merely Symbolic.** This view is held by the evangelical denominations who trace their roots to the reformer Zwingli and groups such as the Anabaptists. These groups hold that there is nothing special to the wafers and wine/grape juice served at Communion. They are merely symbols meant to cause the believer to reflect on his or her relationship with God and others.

3. **Consubstantiation.** This is the view we hold here at Redeemer, and it is a middle ground approach to the views outlined above. This view is based on the writings of Augustine in the 4th Century. For Augustine, transubstantiation went too far, for how can the body of Christ be consumed? Yet, Communion was more than merely symbolic; there was a mysterious impartation of grace that surpassed human understanding and definition. This grace was manifest in the unity of the body of Christ (the Church) and our participation in that unity.

Questions:

1. If you were raised in a different church tradition, what was that church's view of Communion?
2. How does the view of consubstantiation interplay with the Redeemer distinctive, "Dedicated to Unity?"
3. Has this discussion changed your view or understanding of Communion? How so? How would this change your attitudes or actions in taking Communion?