# The Lords Supper

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Preacher: Rev. Duncan Macaskill

[0:00] Thank you indeed Thomas and I greet you all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're going to read the scriptures first of all and bring from the epistle 1 John 5 verses 1 to 12.

This is the word of the Lord to us. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever he has been born of him.

By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is he who came by water and blood Jesus Christ, not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.

[1:12] For there are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has born concerning his Son.

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has born concerning his Son.

And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his Son. Anyone who has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Amen. God blesses word to us in the hearing and in the receiving and the application of the two hearts. Let's have a word of prayer before we begin.

Our gracious God and loving Father, how blessed we are to be called your sons and daughters through faith in Jesus Christ. The free gift that you offer to all mankind when we come and receive, when we confessors and when we acknowledge that we are frail and destined for hell until we receive the mercy of God through Christ.

[2:32] You have spared us from that pit and brought us into the family of God and into an eternal kingdom and into an inheritance for us here in eternity that will never perish.

You bless the Lord that you've invested your spirit within us, that deposit that will guarantee us that when we depart from this world we shall spend eternity with you in the glory of glories.

Help us Lord, even tonight as we speak of it practical issues that we'll have a mind that is in heaven, conscious that God is watching over us to at every word, to the way that the word is preached, to the way that we're being faithful to the word of God, that we would apply it with faith, knowing that it will bring forth great fruit and blessing as we do so.

So may the Spirit of God attend to the word, the preaching, the listening, to the hearts and tenderize our hearts Lord, for we all need to be melted and molded to conform to the image of God and His word.

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Help us Lord not to be rebellious or wanting our own way, but to comply with the grace that is poured forth to us through Jesus Christ. Will we ask you to lead us and to glorify your name as we gather tonight as your people in a wonderful expression of unity.

[3:51] Come among us in a unique and special way. Glorify your name and your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask this. Amen.

While running through the epistle of 1 Peter, there's a recurring theme and the theme is love.

God's love for us, our love for God and our love for one another. And love as we read earlier in the epistle, love is from God because God is love.

And as Thomas I believe has been preaching recently, emphasizing God is God and grace is grace, so we can affirm according to the word that God is love.

God is love. Love is not simply an attribute that God displays, but in himself and his very being, God is love. And the mystery of the Gospel is not that we love God first, but that he loved us, that he set his love upon us and called us to become sons and daughters of God.

[5:01] And we do that by receiving the gift that he has offered to us, which we've celebrated this morning in a beautiful way that children have, the young folks have, the Gospel story, so profound in its impact on mankind.

So joyful in the outcome for those who trust like little children, who come with the simplicity of faith to believe God's word, that those who would receive Him would become sons and daughters of God.

So God loves, God loves, his love flows to us and out of our hearts, his love flows to one another. And it's a circle of love beginning with God through His people.

And in the early church, what became central to the weekly worship service was having the Lord suffer the breaking of bread.

But it was a continuation of the Jewish practice of having meals in the context of worship. But it's very much not a service over the benediction and everybody depart.

[6:08] But meals, as we well know, is a wonderful time to share, to open our hearts and to have a sense that we belong to a family. And this was something that the synagogue practiced. And as we know, the early believers were Jews.

And that was incorporated into the early church practice. And maintained for several centuries until the church became more formalized in the third and the fourth century. But it was known as the agape or the love meal.

And in the next epistle, a very short epistle, it mentions that feast. And it was a time to celebrate two aspects. First of all, as we're doing tonight, we're celebrating the death of Jesus Christ.

And we're also celebrating the family of God. That is so important to balance the two because he brings us together, not just simply as individuals. We are now called the people of God.

And that gives us a sense that a wonderful sense of knowing that you and I are not individuals going our own way, but that God has engrafted us to a family where we belong to one another.

[7:19] That is our spiritual DNA. He has done something by his spirit whereby we do become the family of God. And it's something to be treasured, something to be really valued and nurtured.

And it doesn't always come easy. We know that in our natural families there are strives and divisions and arguments and things like that. And so sometimes in the spiritual family, these things occur.

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But by God's grace and by the mercy that He shows us, we can extend love and forbearance to all. And that is one of the great lessons of Christianity that we do, that we must be like Christ and show forbearance, forgiveness and patience with one another.

And by doing so, we strengthen the bonds of the unity of a family. If we simply divide over every argument, we never reinforce the unity that we have.

We lose it all. And we are to, it's to our great loss. So tonight from the text, let's observe who can come to the table.

[8:23] Chapter five verse one says, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. In order to become a child of God, you believe in the one that He has sent.

Chapter four verse nine, this is how God showed His love among us. He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. In Him there is life.

Verse 12 says, whoever has the Son has life. And whoever does not have the Son does not have eternal life. And that's what separates us in a church from those who have made a full commitment to Christ, a public profession.

They have said, yes, He is, He is my Lord. I've put my trust in Him. I receive His life. And there may be even some here tonight who are in the valley of indecision who have not made that step.

And you're standing or sitting out with the family of God looking in. But in your heart, you know that you want to belong to the family. And it's simple by believing in the one that God has sent to be our Savior and Redeemer.

[9:32] That is it. And there is further expectation of anyone to make any public or emotional expression. But in their hearts, do you believe that God sent His Son for you?

And if you do, you will be born of the Spirit and you will be a member of His family. So His life lives in us. Christ has come to make His dwelling place among us individually, but also as His church.

And as we gather as a unified body, whether it's in two congregations or in our own, we have the sense that God's presence increases. The greater the sense of unity, the greater the sense of love between brothers and sisters, the greater measure of forgiveness that we extend, because we encounter situations almost weekly whereby we have to show grace to one another and forbearance.

And so that strengthens our bonds together. And so there's a greater expression of the Spirit of God in our midst, where brothers and sisters, well together in unity, God is pleased, is delighted to make His presence known among us.

And as Thomas prayed, this is what we most of all need in all our churches to know the presence of God. So if we know the things that will draw His presence to us, it would be fitting and right for us to attend to, to make sure that this house and all our churches are places of unity, of mercy and kindness to one another, so that what we are living out is a true biblical example and very true.

[11:11] He gave us the right to be called sons and daughters of God. Now whatever our state is in the natural, whether we are of low or high, or of little or great reputation in the world, we receive our true personal identification by identifying with the one whom God sent.

Thus we are raised with Christ, we're seated with Him in heavenly places. Even seated in these pews, in Christ you are seated in heavenly places.

That's what the Bible says, where you are, where we are when we're God's people, when we think spiritually, politically. We don't live by sight, but by faith in the word of God and we transpose that onto who we are.

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We walk by faith and not by sight. Now in the natural, if we do look around, what do we see? We see our normal natural selves, the people that we know, we see them in the natural.

But we need to apply the eyes of faith to ourselves and to everyone here. So instead of, like many people do, they see their own unworthiness, unfitness to be a son or a daughter worthy of any kind.

[12:30] But that is the self thinking. When we think of ourselves biblically in Christ, He gives us a dignity and a place that raises us up, not in pride or in self, but to a true place of spiritual identity.

That is so important because in communion so many people we know often over the generations have excluded themselves from the table of the Lord because all they see is their own self perception, their own worthiness and the sins that they really haven't forgiven themselves for.

And they're caught in this trap of looking in the wrong place. But God's word is to direct us to look to Him, to look to Christ and to see yourself, to see yourself not in the rags of your own humanity or self unrighteousness, but to see yourself truly clothed in Christ.

Clothe yourselves in Christ Jesus. It's a knack to for faith. And as we come to the table, that is what we're doing. We're applying faith to ensure that we come worthy because we're coming in Christ's righteousness.

We have set aside the filthy garments and we're clothing ourselves in the beauty, the garments of salvation that God adorns His people with.

[13:46] Mystical, invisible, but in the spiritual, they're very real. They're very real to God and they're real to us too when we apply faith.

So how can we show love for God? We gather to worship and to praise. And there's many ways that we can show love for God. But in verses one and two of what I've read, we learn that since we're born of God, they're not only do we love God, but we also love all His children, all His people.

Of every denomination, of every aspect, color and background, we are called by God's love to show that love to every single believer who has confessed Christ.

That brings them into a place where we address them in a different way. And how it does delight the heart of our Heavenly Father when He sees, as Thomas was so enthusiastic to look out in the congregation tonight, and rightly so.

It's a beautiful vista to see here. And we can only imagine with the eyes of faith that our Heavenly Father, how much more delighted is He when He sees that we've come together in this way.

[15:08] And in the natural way to Christmas time when the family get together, I'm sure it is the parents greatest joy to look at His children, His grandchildren.

They're interacting. They're happy together. And if there have been wrongs or arguments through the year, they've put them right. And so their greatest joy is to see everybody happy at the table.

And this is what we are striving to do in our hearts and bringing ourselves into a place where we will too bring joy to one another in this act. And this is not just a one-off act which we'll forget, but it's the beginning of a process of growing us together as people of God here in Carlyway across our parish.

We want to bring joy to our Heavenly Father's heart, and we will certainly do that tonight. The stay-at-home son and the prodigal son, they were both invited to come to the feast.

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But one of them had to forgive the other before he could actually and genuinely sit at the table in unity with his brother. And for us here, we represent two parts of Christ's church in this island, this parish.

[16:25] And there's no doubt that there have been over the years hearts, deep hearts, divisions, arguments, and worse, that have been present in our collective spiritual history.

We know that, and we need to be honest about it and acknowledge that maybe we ourselves have been part of it. We perpetuate sometimes the divisions that we're taught in our homes.

If we grow up in a certain denomination, we hear a negativity towards another denomination. We imbibe that, and it somehow comes out in our manner, in our attitude to them.

And so God is calling us to a deeper place whereby these ways are gone. They must go forever if we are to truly enter into the deep place of true Christ-like unity.

Our past hurts, we have to forgive one another and forgive those who have caused division in our denominations. Men who did what they felt was the right thing to do, but it has caused so much heartache, broke families, split apart, and the Christian community divided.

[17:38] So we want to see a healing, a deep, deep healing that only God can bring about, but we can bring ourselves to the place where we offer ourselves on the altar, and we say, Father, forgive us, forgive us and our forefathers for what they did, what they said, how they spoke against one another, how they decried another denomination and didn't give them equal status.

These are things we've all heard. And you know tonight, this is not a façade or a pretense, this is a genuine effort to bring us all around the same Lord's table with clean hands and a pure heart.

Ensuring that what we have on the inside is what we're doing on the outside, making it as real as possible.

You know, Jesus, one of his wonderful prayers was, prayer for unity. He said, I pray for these who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, that they may be brought to complete unity, then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

And we here tonight are in a measure answering that wonderful prayer of Jesus, our Lord. True unity can never be in what we do or how we do it or in any peripheral church matter.

[19:15] Unity can only be found when we identify ourselves with the head of the church who is Jesus Christ. Our denominations are secondary by a long, long way.

But all too often in church history, both in this land and elsewhere, denominational differences have kept Christians apart, tearing the communities with intransigence, hardness of heart towards the other and a reluctance to truly forgive.

And yet they would come and take the cup and take the bread, but harbour bitterness towards brothers and sisters. And God's Spirit exposes all that as a sham.

So we want, and we're doing it tonight to the very best of our ability, to be as genuine, as sincere and as honest as we can and bring in our hearts, because this is all we can do, bring our hearts to God to be cleansed and to be forgiven.

And as Scripture says, let go of all woot of bitterness, cleave to that which is pure and good. And we want to cast off that which is secondary and divisive, which so often we make so important to our interaction as Christians.

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[20:31] But we need to see it in the light of everyday living, but in the light of eternity it bears very little significance at all. So God wants to unite us in His love, and as He has shown mercy to each of us in Christ, we are then to extend mercy to each and every Christian.

Let it begin in a household of God. Before we can preach true repentance to the ungodly and to the unsaid, we need to be living examples. Behold how these Christians in Carlyway truly love one another.

See how they've come together, not just on a once off evening, but they've come together in genuine, sincere unity of heart to build something that will be pleasing to God and a blessing to every household in our parish.

Because the church is being observed by the world, and we want to set a wonderful example, and I'm sure you do too, and I know this is the pastor's heart, to be a light to the community in these wonderful ways.

So we boast not in our efforts tonight, as if what we're presenting to the world was a false suit of unity, a papering over the cracks.

[21:50] There'll always be cracks, but remember love covers a multitude of sins and cracks. And yet we mustn't let these cracks between us if there are, win the day, not at all.

What we want to do is to enter in what verse 4 says, to enter into the victory that comes through our faith. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Our desire to express unity of faith overrides the worldly ways that the church and maybe ourselves have lived in so much of our lives.

The ways and the habits of the world, they would say, be different, go your own way, be superior, you're right. And so that kind of pride element has come into so many of our churches, into our own hearts, and we so often think, yeah, we are the nearest to Christ and to his church.

And so we look down on others, but we want to rid ourselves of that and not follow the spirit of the world that dictates division, separation.

[22:58] But we listen to God and his word, who says, unite, forgive, become one, come under the headship of Christ. And in communion, that's what we do.

We forget about our denominations, our background, we simply see ourselves coming to Christ as individual believers, but as a community of faith who love the Lord Jesus.

So it's a call for us all in the days to come, and we leave here to arise above the pettiness of past generations, even as being in our own hearts, to arise above them, not to fall down into these lower ways again.

We have to set the standards for this generation and impart it to the younger generation, that they will take the baton and see it so important to continue what is happening here.

And a very good foundation has been laid here between the Carlyway churches over the year, through men who led with courage, but yet with humility and sensitivity.

[24:02] But we're in a new day now, and so new steps must be taken by current leaders. And that is what we're seeking to do, to build on the good will, the harmony and the respect, and to take it to a higher level by demonstrating in this sacrament what the Scripture directs us to do is what we must do and what we will do.

Let love be sincere, hate what is evil and cling to what is good. Be devoted one to another. Honor one another above yourselves.

Live in harmony with one another. Romans 12. So brothers and sisters, let us be a faithful people, and put all these words and commandments into practice.

They're not burdensome commands, they're commands that will bear fruit and bring joy to us in the days to come. We want to love in words and in actions.

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And this is the desire now of our hearts as we come to take communion, together as two congregations but as one church under Christ. And we're giving a clear sign of the unity that we see in Scripture, because, as Scripture says, because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

[25:25] Now in practice tonight we can't all partake of the one bread, but symbolism is clear. But we will partake of the bread altogether at the same time, which is the best that we can manage in this sac.

So we're expressing a unity that God, each we're taking a part of the one loaf which represents the body of Christ here in Carlyway tonight.

And finally, in taking communion, God is affirming His love to you and to me, sons and daughters of God, giving us a wonderful self-perception of who we are as Christians, not to look down on ourselves and certainly not to look down on any other, but to see one another with the eyes of love and faith, and secondly and significantly each of us, we are affirming our love and our faith in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for such days and such moments in our lives.

We sense that something very special and precious is happening and that we could be entering into a deep place of your heart. The tenderness and mercy that was poured out upon us and the spirit of grace and supplication may be so, Lord, may there be a new voice arise out of this act of worship and the sacrament tonight as we bring ourselves in contrition and humbleness of heart and attitude, confessing wrongdoings of the past and seeking to have our hearts and our hands clean and to be renewed by the spirit.

[27:23] We thank you that you have provided means of grace, the word, the spirit, and also the table of your mercy which we now attend to, Lord. We thank you for the wonderful invitation that Christ gives to each of us to come and partake, to be part of this precious family which we earnestly desire to do, Lord.

Bless that word to us and all that's been said and worship in the song and just fill our hearts with joy of an expectation of a new day to come here because of this very evening.

Lead us now in bless the remaining part of our service in Christ's name. Amen. Let's come to the table and we're going to sing Psalm 118 verses 16 to 21.

The light of the mighty Lord exalted is the night.

The light unknown, the mighty Lord, the never-finding King.

[29:01] I shall not die but may hand shall the word so God disdain.

The Lord have been just as His Son, have not yet been born.

For said He opened unto me that it's of righteousness, then will I enter into them, and I the Lord will bless.

This is the gift of all night, and just shall enter it.

And I will not die but may hand shall the word so God disdain.

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