

Communion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 May 2006

Preacher: John McIntosh

[0 : 00] Mark's Gospel, chapter 14, and we'll read from the beginning. Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

But not during the feast, they said, or the people may riot. While he was in Bethany reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure nard.

She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, Why this waste of perfume?

It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. And they rebuked her harshly. Leave her alone, said Jesus.

Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.

[1 : 21] But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

I tell you the truth. Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money.

So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him.

[2 : 28] Say to the owner of the house he enters, The teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there. The disciples left, went into the city, and found things just as Jesus had told them.

So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, Surely not I. It is one of the twelve, he replied, one who dips bread into the bowl with me.

The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man. It would be better for him if he had not been born.

[3 : 39] While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take it, this is my body.

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, he said to them.

I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Amen, and may the Lord add his blessing to that reading of his own holy word. Let us sing again, this time in Psalm 22, 22nd Psalm, and from Sing Psalms, and it's on page 26, and we'll sing from verse 15.

Psalm 22, verse 15, on page 26 of the psalm book. And we'll sing to the tune, Soul Thou.

[4 : 54] My strength is dried like shattered clay, and as I fight to draw my breath, my tongue is sticking to my jaws, you lay me in the dust of death.

A pack of dogs encloses me, their circle round me is complete. I am beset by evil men, they have pierced my hands and feet.

And we'll sing from verse 15 to verse 22. Psalm 22, verses 15 to 22, page 26. My strength is dried like shattered clay, and we'll stand to sing.

Would you turn with me now to the chapter we read? Mark chapter 14, and to verses 22 to 25. Mark chapter 14, verses 22 to 25. While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, gave it to his disciples, saying, Take it, this is my body.

[6 : 06] Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, he said to them.

I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.

I want to turn our attention for a few minutes this morning to the very first Lord's Supper. And I want to perhaps say something to the young people in the congregation first, to the boys and girls.

Now I think you, well I know you, all know about the parables in the Bible. The stories that Jesus told, but they weren't just ordinary stories, were they?

And if I said to you, by yourselves, if I was to say, tell me what a parable is, what particular sort of story is a parable, you would probably say to me something like, well it's a story which, while it's interesting, it also is intended to teach us something.

[7 : 20] Parables with stories which Jesus told to teach the people who've heard them. And some of you might say to me, well, and I've heard this oftentimes and you probably have as well, you would say it's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

That's true too. But I might ask you another question and say, do you know about parables in the Old Testament?

And perhaps not all of you would realise that there are parables in the Old Testament as well. But there's a difference, you know, between the parables that Jesus told and the parables in the Old Testament.

That is that the Old Testament parables weren't stories that were told, they were stories which were acted out. They were acted out.

The Old Testament prophets sometimes were told by God to do dramatic, symbolic actions. I'll just mention very quickly three of them so that you get a feeling for what I'm talking about.

[8 : 30] Back in 1 Kings chapter 11, the prophet Ahijah went to Jeroboam who was to be the king of the ten northern tribes when they decided to revolt and he took his robe, his cloak, and he tore it into twelve pieces and he gave ten of the pieces to Jeroboam to symbolise that he was going to be king over ten tribes out of the twelve tribes of Israel.

That was, if you like, a sort of acted parable. In the prophecy of Jeremiah, there are two or three as well. One of them was when he put a yoke, you know, which they used to put on the necks of oxen so that they could draw plows.

Jeremiah put a yoke on his own shoulders and that was to symbolise how the children of Israel were going to go away into captivity in Babylon and work as slaves, if you like, in the land of Babylon.

And there are several in the prophecy of Ezekiel. In one of them, he drew a picture of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and around it, he drew an enemy camp and siege works, you know, the towers and ramps going up to the city walls which would enable the attacking army to capture the city.

And that was to symbolise how Jerusalem was going to be surrounded by enemy forces and then captured. And on another occasion, he shaved off all his hair and shaved off all his beard and a third of his hair he burnt and a third of his hair he took a sword to and sort of chopped it up and a third of it he scattered to the wind.

[10 : 28] And that was to demonstrate, to prophesy what was going to happen to the people of Israel. So, there are these parables in the Old Testament which are like acted out stories.

And I want to suggest to not just you young people but to everybody here this morning is that one way that we can look at the Lord's Supper and I think a profitable way that we can look at the Lord's Supper is by seeing it as enacted parable.

We can see that happening, I think, in the very first Lord's Supper and I think we gain insights into what we're doing if we look at what we're going to be doing in a few minutes when we sit at the Lord's table and eat the bread and wine as enacted out parable.

what we will be doing shortly actually tells us things not just about the death of the Lord Jesus and what it means but also it tells us something too about the life of heaven.

So, the Lord's Supper is an enacted parable. And what's happening here in these verses in Mark chapter 14 and in the other gospel accounts as well of the Last Supper Jesus dramatically reinterprets the Passover meal and he institutes this radical new observance.

[12 : 01] He combines the words and the symbols to convey the most important truth in the whole world. No more important truth than the truth which is revealed is highlighted is depicted for us at the Lord's Supper as his people as the people of the Lord Jesus come to his table and eat the bread and drink the wine.

And let's go back to what the Passover meal was like at the time of the Lord Jesus. Well, the first we have of course the outline of it in the gospels but in actual fact we know that other things were done and there are other sorts of symbolism used at the Lord's Supper at the time of the Lord Jesus than what's actually recorded in the gospels.

The important things are in the gospels but there are other things as well. For example the lamb, the meat that was eaten was eaten with bitter herbs and those bitter herbs were intended to symbolise and to call the minds of the children of Israel back to the bitter slavery which they endured in Egypt before the Exodus.

And then with the food they would have stewed fruit and I think we all know basically that when you cook fruit it tends to go a sort of brownish colour and a sort of if you overdo it it gets soggy as well. Well that was to remind them both the colour and the consistency of the work that they were involved in in making those bricks back in Egypt in order to make the cities that the pharaoh was forcing them to do to be involved in as slaves.

[13 : 58] Then of course we all know about the roasted lamb. That was to remind them what happened at the very first Passover. when the blood from the lamb that had been slain was put on the doorposts and on the lintels of the house so that the angel of death would pass over the families, the households of the children of Israel.

And they were to eat the lamb within their houses and they were to eat it standing and they were to eat it with unleavened bread so that they would remember how they had to move quickly.

everything that happened at the Passover meal was intended to symbolise to call the minds of the children of Israel back to the captivity to their slavery in Egypt and to remind them of how the Lord their God had delivered them and taken them to the promised land.

Well that's what the main part of the meal involved. And then what would happen was the bread would be taken. And there would be if you like a blessing which was asked on the bread always. And apparently what was said at the time that the Lord Jesus was living in the land of Israel this was the prayer. And this is what Jesus in all probability would have done.

[15 : 22] It's not recorded because the gospel writers record the important things that we need to know as Christians not all the details of what was done at the time and which doesn't need to be done in exactly the same way now.

So Jesus would have taken the bread and he would have said praise be you oh Lord sovereign of the world who causes bread to come forth from the earth.

And the apostles would have said Amen. Amen as we all remember means may it be so. But then Jesus said something absolutely new which had never been said before and absolutely shattered the Passover custom.

He said take eat this is my body. Now I don't think we can probably comprehend how the disciples would have reacted when they heard those words.

They would have been stunned. They might even have been shocked. Perhaps even the hairs on the back of their heads as we say would have stood up.

[16 : 39] Those were words which had never been said before and they would have made a profound impact on the disciples as they reclined at the table there.

And I think that's something which we at least should bear in mind. We've heard those words often. But is it the case that those words make a real impact on us?

Take, eat, this is my body. Because you know those words should make an impact on us. They should make an impact on us when we sit at the table and as whoever the minister is says them and they should make an impact on those who aren't at the table because they're missing out on something which Jesus wants them to have.

Then when the meal was complete what happened at the Passover at the time of the Lord Jesus was the head of the household and in this case it was the Lord Jesus as the head of the household he would have said speak praises to our God to whom belongs what we have eaten and the disciples would have said praise be to God for our food we have eaten and then as the last act at the Passover meal Jesus would have taken the cup he did take the cup and he would have given thanks in these words may the all merciful one make us worthy of the days of the Messiah and of the life of the world to come he brings the salvation of his king he shows covenant faithfulness to his anointed to David and his seed forever he makes peace in his heavenly places may he secure peace for us and for all

Israel and you say amen and the disciples would have said amen and then Jesus passed the cup and did something which had never been said something which had never been said before this is my blood of the new testament or the new covenant which is poured out for many now Paul in 1st Corinthians says that this was done for a remembrance it was done to convey an increasing understanding of the mystery of Christ and his atonement this is done for a remembrance yes to remind us but also to give us an increased understanding of what the Lord

[19:56] Jesus has done the Lord's table as I said is an acted parable and what we've got to do just now is to consider what we are proclaiming through what we do at the Lord's supper as we sit at his table so let's look first of all then at verse 22 while they were eating Jesus took bread gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples saying take it this is my body we need to look at the meaning of the bread what does the bread mean now Jesus is not saying that the bread literally is his body that's the mistake of course which the

Roman Catholics make with their doctrine of transubstantiation that in some miraculous way the bread becomes really literally the body of Christ and the wine becomes really literally the blood of Christ now that's not what Jesus was saying and the Jews with their tradition of parables not just the parables that were told but the parables that were acted out they understood that Christ was speaking figuratively he was meaning that the bread and the wine symbolise his body and his blood but we still have to ask ourselves what does the bread actually mean but I have to suggest to you this morning that it refers to the life of Christ the bread refers to the life of Christ remember when Jesus was born in Bethlehem the incarnation it happened in Bethlehem and Bethlehem means quite literally the place or the city of bread there

Christ took on a human body and he demonstrated his divine life by living a sinless life in that body the Lord Jesus never sinned and in this day of the Da Vinci Code and all that nonsense we need to remember this basic truth the Lord Jesus did not sin even though he had a human body and he demonstrated his divinity his godness by the fact that he never sinned the Jews no matter how hard they tried couldn't find any evidence of any sort of sin in the life of the Lord Jesus and there were enough people who rejected what his teaching was who rejected what he said about himself that if they could have pinned anything on him they would have been able to find somebody who could have he demonstrated that divine life his divine life by living a sinless life in his human body and he triumphed over the grave by bringing that body back to life and there were 500 or upwards more people who saw him and many of those 500 people went to their deaths because they were utterly persuaded that they had seen the Lord

Jesus and believe you me if Jesus had left any human ancestors behind they would have been known about they would have been known about and at the time there was totally nothing so do treat this da Vinci code business as the fiction and the atheistic fiction really that it is don't be deceived by it that's just under by Lord Jesus triumphed over the grave by bringing that body back to life his human body back to life and now he lives in that glorified body at the right hand of the father that's his life and as members of his body every single Christian believer shares that life we share that life that's why Paul in 1st

Corinthians chapter 10 verse 16 says this the bread which we break is it not the communion of Christ is not the bread that we break a participation in the body that is the life of Christ the Christian believer participates in the life of Christ through the bread we see Jesus' incarnation we see his death and we see his resurrection life when we take the bread and eat the bread at his table we are

showing three things two things first of all our partaking of the bread symbolizes our real participation in his life if we are believers we all partake of the life of [26 : 07] Christ that is the body of Christ that's what it means we are participants in his life in his incarnation in his death in his resurrection life too and there's a second thing it also means that we participate in each other's lives Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 the next verse verse 17 says because there is one bread because there is one loaf that is Christ we who are many are one body for we all partake of the one loaf so the second benefit of the bread is sharing the lives of one another as we take the bread we announce to the world around us that we really have received and are participating in the life of

Christ and by virtue of that we are participating in the life of one another now that's important the great thing about Christians is this or one of the great things is that we participate in each other's lives you know one of the poets said no man is an island that's even more true of the Lord's people no Christian is an island bread our partaking of the bread is not only an announcement it's also an invitation it's an invitation to those who weren't at the table but coming to us it's meant to make those around those who look on at the

Lord's supper it's meant to make them hungry hungry for what we as Christians have and those people here who aren't going to be at the Lord's table can I ask you that is it making you want to be there because it's meant to make you want to be there and to share in the privileges and the blessings and the fellowship which the Lord's people have meant to be like that you know and if you don't even have the slightest smidgen of that desire when you look at the Lord's people at his table then as it were you've missed the point for you it's meant to make you want to be there too a very solemn thing actually for people who aren't at the Lord's table to be in the same building as the Lord's people are remembering his death not to want to share it do think on that it's important that's the meaning of the bread verses 23 and 24 the meaning of the cup now the redness of the wine we're often reminded the redness of the wine in the cup represents Christ's atoning blood well that's certainly true being poured out for many refers to Isaiah 53 at verse 12 which speaks of the Messiah as the one who poured out his life unto death that means a violent death and the many refers of course to those who would benefit from it all over the world and the Jewish people certainly when they heard those words were reminded of the old covenant which had been set up the old covenant of the law set up at Mount Sinai back in the days of the exodus of Moses the old covenant of the law was solemnized by the blood of sacrificial animals and the blood of the sacrificial animals was meant to remind the children of Israel that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins no forgiveness of sins and that was hammered home to them in all the sacrifices of the temple no Jew could ever forget that you can't have forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood that was why what to our sensitivities was an appalling scene at the temple in

[31 : 30] Jerusalem if we just look at the physical reality of what happened hundreds and thousands of animals being sacrificed but it reminded the children of Israel of a profound truth without that no shedding of blood then the Lord Jesus shed his blood once and for all on the cross and that scene passed into the past the Lord Jesus was the defining sacrifice he shed his blood once and for all the blood of the Lord Jesus seals the new covenant whereby men and women and young people too are saved by resting their faith on the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus and Jesus here confirmed the prophetic declaration which John the Baptist had made three years before when he proclaimed that the

Lord Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away who takes away the sin of the world so the cup drives home to us the objective fact of our redemption as we partake of the cup we share fellowship in the blood of Christ which was shed for our sins you know what Calvin actually said when he preached I think on this particular verse he said this the godly ought by all means to keep this rule whenever they see the symbols to think and be persuaded that the truth is surely present there for why should the Lord put in your hand the symbol of his blood except to assure you of a true participation in it

I'll read it again the godly ought by all means to keep this rule whenever they see the symbols to think and be persuaded that the truth is surely present there for why should the Lord put in your hand the symbol of his blood except to assure you of a true participation in it in other words in a few minutes as we sit at the table those of you will be at the table as we hold the cup we should say to ourselves yes I really am forgiven and rest in that fact that's what the cup is meant to be can I

suggest as well that there's something else that we should note and kind of direct your attention to John chapter 6 John chapter 6 at verses 53 to 56 John chapter 6 verse 53 Jesus said to them to the Jews I tell you the truth unless you can eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you have no life in you whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him now in

John chapter 6 there Jesus is speaking figuratively about belief about faith and the great Augustine said when he wrote about those verses he said the famous words believe and you have eaten believe and you have eaten now that I think is a very important message for anybody here who does believe in the Lord Jesus who does know and acknowledge that he's the son of God if any of you are here who are saying but I can't I believe I trust the Lord Jesus but I can't go to this table at least not yet because I'm not worthy enough or I'm still in my sins or something like that you should bear in mind what

[36 : 52] Jesus says there if you believe you have already eaten his body and drunk his blood and can I say to you today why deny yourself the symbol when you already have the reality if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus why not avail yourself of the symbol of it and the benefits which that brings perhaps it's too late to do it today but you shouldn't delay it any further I do call your attention to that you see there's a challenge in the bread and in the cup we've got to really we've got to truly feed on

Christ or there is no spiritual life he must be as real to us spiritually as something we can eat and we must ask ourselves I must ask myself you must ask yourselves too is he as real as that to me to yourselves he should be he should be there's a challenge in the bread and in the cup and I would suggest that the illustration tells us spiritually that it's impossible for a Christian to live without Christ you know I read a story somewhere about one of the very first one of the early secretaries general of the United Nations we know of course that the present one only has six months or so to continue as secretary general but this man and I've had trouble actually tracking him down he was called Charles Malick and I don't know anything more about him than that I've tried to track him down on the web and all I can find is that he was the secretary general of the United Nations and that's about it so he perhaps didn't remain secretary general for very long that's not the point he was a Christian and he said this I can live without food without drink without sleep without air but I cannot live without Jesus now that's the way Jesus is to us today that's the challenge of the bread and of the cup and when we come to the Lord's table we are proclaiming to each other and indeed we are proclaiming to those outside as well that we are people who can't live without Jesus so with these few thoughts can I we proceed now to the actual celebration of the

Lord's Supper let us unite together in prayer we come before you oh Lord and we acknowledge the value the significance the help which these symbols of bread and wine give to your people we pray oh Lord that we might be more aware of what we share in fellowship in the Lord Jesus we are involved in his incarnation in his taking to himself a true body a reasonable soul as the words of the catechism which so many of us know we give thanks that we participate also in his life and especially in his death may we also have an insight into the way that we participate in his glorious resurrection life and we give thanks oh Lord also that we are people who are refreshed when we think of the blood which he shed for us may it be the case oh

Lord that more and more people both connected with this congregation and throughout the whole world might come to realize that in the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus there is life beyond anything that this world can offer the life of the world to come and we pray Lord that the things that we are about to do shortly will be blessed to us all forgive us for our sins oh Lord we pray and increase our faith and be with and bless each and every one of us these things we ask in Jesus name Amen let us sing again this time in Psalm 130 we sing from the Scottish Psalter on page 421 Psalm 130 the well known words

[42 : 32] Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear Lord who shall stand if thou O Lord shouldst mark iniquity but yet with thee forgivenesses that fear thou mayest be will sing the whole psalm to tune martyrdom will stand to sing Lord from the depths to thee I cried we come now to the heart of the traditional Scottish communion service which is known as the fencing of the table in some parts of the country in the past this used to be called or was known properly as the barring that is really an utter distortion of what this particular part of the service is intended to be you may well have been told before I'm sure

you will have been told that it's an old scott legal term and think to indicate those who were entitled to appear before a court to bring a case to the court that's really what the significance is it's intended to indicate who has a right to be at the

Lord's table that's the emphasis and I just want to direct your attention for a moment or two to the first part of chapter 14 in Mark's gospel which we didn't read sorry which we didn't think about in the course of the sermon the meal at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany and the woman who came with the alabaster jar of oisement now we know that that was Mary Magdalene from the other gospels and we know that she perceived herself to be a sinner that's all that we know about don't draw any further conclusions about Mary Magdalene but we are told several things both here in Mark and in the other gospel accounts of what happened at this meal we are told that she came without any covering on her head now that for a

Jewish woman was almost unthinkable a Jewish woman was never seen in public without her hair being covered in fact there was apparently a woman seven of whose sons became high priests and the greatest compliment that was paid to that woman was that no one had ever seen her hair in public can I suggest to you that the first thing that we need to notice about the woman who came to anoint Jesus was that she came utterly humbly she came humbly and we should come to the Lord's table humbly Spurgeon actually said about humility that humility gives you a strong foothold in prayer well can I suggest to you this morning humility gives you a strong foothold a strong right to be at the

Lord's table people come to the Lord's table aware of their sin and aware of what the Lord Jesus has done for them and they come humbly the second thing I think we need to notice about the woman here Mary was that she came to do Jesus a costly honour this fabulously expensive perfume and she was willing to do that to honour the one who saved her and that's what we do it's not costly of course is it but we come to honour the Lord Jesus we come humbly and we come to honour him and there's a third thing and I would never have put it like this until I happened to be reading in the course of preparing lectures something that one of the fathers of the Scottish church George Gillespie said George Gillespie was one of the Scottish commissioners at the Westminster Assembly which drew up the Westminster Confession which is the subordinate standard of our church but when he was speaking of the Lord's table and how we should come he said two things and I think we can say that these things apply to Mary here at Bethany as well he said we should come eucharistically and for consolation that word eucharist is not a word which we use very much in our spiritual tradition there are others Roman Catholics Anglicans and others tend to use the word eucharist when we would say sacrament or the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or communion they call it the eucharist but the word means quite simply thanksgiving and that's the third thing

[48 : 25] I think it's the case that Mary came here with this fabulously expensive perfume giving thanks to the Lord Jesus for what he done for her and that I would suggest is the third thing we should notice we come to the Lord's table with thanksgiving in our hearts for how he saved us from sin the fourth thing this is the thing which Gillespie said he said the Lord's table is a consolatory ordinance we come to it for consolation well I think probably we would say that means nowadays what we would call encouragement and you know Mary I think well the Lord Jesus recognized that Mary needed encouragement because of what he said why are you bothering her she's done a beautiful thing to me and so on the

Lord's table encourages us and I want to suggest that these are four things which should be in the hearts of everyone which will be in the hearts of everyone who has the right to be at the Lord's table they're humble they're wanting to honour the Lord Jesus they've got thanksgiving in their hearts and they're coming for encouragement if you've got you know I was going to say if you have those four things in your heart then you've got a right to be at the table if you've got one of them in your heart you've got a right to be at the Lord's table everyone who knows who can say yes I know what he means those are the people who should be at the table and if you haven't got any of those things in your heart well fair enough you shouldn't be at the table but let's be positive we come humbly we come wanting to honour the

Lord Jesus we come with thanksgiving for everything that he's done for us on the cross and we come needing encouragement the Lord's supper has been called often times a strengthening ordinance well of course it is it's to encourage us and the Lord's people we all need encouragement don't we encouragement in our faith encouragement to stand firm against the temptation and the

attacks which they're constantly experiencing we come to the Lord's table for encouragement well then may I invite everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus who's member in good communion good standing with any Christian denomination not the table of the free church the table of the Lord Jesus and on behalf of the congregation I invite you to join us as we remember the death of the Lord Jesus we're going to sing in Psalm 118

Psalm 118 on page 398 we'll sing for the tune Coles Hill and any who are not yet seated at the table who desire to partake they should come forward as soon as possible during the singing of these verses Psalm 118 we'll sing from verse 15 in dwellings of the righteous has heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly the right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high the right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly we'll sing on till everybody's seated Psalm 118 at verse 15 in dwellings of the righteous has heard the melody of joy and health tunis coles hill we'll now read the warrant for what we are about to do as we find it in first Corinthians chapter 11 and at verse 23 chapter 1 I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.

[52 : 53] The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread. When he had given thanks he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way after supper he took the cup saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment.

I emphasize judgment, not damnation. Judgment. And so on. Well let's follow the Lord's example and ask a blessing on what we are about to do.

[54 : 01] Let us pray. Again, O Lord, we give thanks for these elements of bread and wine which symbolize the broken bread and the poured out blood of the Lord Jesus.

We acknowledge, O Lord, that without his death, which these things symbolize, we would be utterly lost. There's no hope in this world and none in the next either.

But we do give thanks, O Lord, that because the Lord Jesus came and died and rose again, we have also the hope of everlasting life.

Life beyond the grave. Life beyond this world and all the difficulties and sadnesses and miseries which we all know about.

And we pray, O Lord, that when we think of the purpose for which the Lord Jesus came, that our hearts would be softened, that our hearts would be warmed, and that we would indeed get an insight, an additional insight beyond what we perhaps already have had of what it meant for the Lord Jesus to die and how he loved us.

[55 : 21] We pray, Lord, for those who are perhaps here at this table for the very first time. We give thanks for their profession. We give thanks for the faith which you have given them.

And we pray, Lord, that the bread and the wine would strengthen them for the road ahead. We pray, Lord, that they indeed would partake of spiritual food and that in its strength they would go on for many days.

We pray that that would be the case for all of us. And should there be any here in your providence, O Lord, who are here for the last time on earth, we pray that these elements of bread and wine and the experience of fellowship with the Lord Jesus and with his people would strengthen them for their road through the valley of the shadow.

But we pray, Lord, that you would bless these, what we do now, to everyone in our particular situation. May they indeed be spiritual food and spiritual drink which will nourish us and which will refresh us and which will bind us closer to the Lord Jesus and closer also to his people.

We pray, Lord, then that your spirit would be with us now and that your blessing would rest upon these elements of which we are about to partake.

[56 : 49] These things we'd ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Now just before we partake of the bread and the wine, can I draw your attention just again quickly to that meal at Bethany.

I just want to highlight three things. Mary came to honour Christ as her King. But we must remember that dimension as well.

we come here to honour Christ as our Saviour, yes, of course. We come to honour him as our King too. Mary came to prepare his body beforehand for his death because she wasn't going to be able to do it later.

She came to honour Christ in his death. And we do that as well. We do it afterwards.

The Lord Jesus did all these things for you and for me. And what he's asked us to do in remembrance of him is just what we are about to do now.

[58 : 10] nothing more in connection with his death but to honour him by eating the bread and drinking the wine in memory of him, in remembrance of him.

Let's keep that in our minds. And we're told that Jesus said to Mary, said of Mary, she did what she could.

She did what she could. much more cost to her than what he's asking us to do just now. All he asked us to do is to do what he asks.

And if you want evidence of your obedience, well, here's another evidence. You're doing what he asks. What more can any believer want to do than to do what the Lord Jesus asks?

If there are any of you here who are believers but not at the table, can I ask you? Why aren't you doing what the Lord Jesus asks?

[59 : 20] We're here sitting at his table but taking of the bread and wine to do what he asks. John's gospel in his account says that when the perfume was poured out in the Lord Jesus, the fragrance filled the house.

Now, why do you think John recorded that? The fragrance filled the house. Just to sort of tell us a little bit about the perfume?

Of course not. I think it's there to remind us that when we sit at the Lord's table in accordance with his request and his command, we are doing something far more than we know.

We don't know what it might be but we're doing something far more than we know. It might be that someone in our families, someone we work with, someone we play football with or whatever it happens to be, hears that on the Lord's day we were at the table and that might be the start of their spiritual life.

Whenever we sit at the Lord's table, we are like Mary. we are doing far more than we know. May it be the case that for all of us today, we are doing far more than we know.

[61 : 02] Well, we've read the warrant, we've given thanks, we now come to the take of the bread and the wine. The Lord Jesus, took the bread and he said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, the stew in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also, he took the cup, when they'd supped, he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Drink you all of it.

Thank you.