

#Foundational Beliefs: The Meaning of the Lord's Supper
Matthew 26:20-29
May 1, 2011

This past week we have witnessed in the south eastern region of the United States the destruction done by tornadoes. We have seen on television and internet the damaged cause by the spiraling winds as they touch down and destroy what ever they come in contact. Some tornadoes were so strong and destructive that satellites could see the debris they carried as the tornadoes moved on to their next destination. Those who were caught in the path of the tornadoes yet survived in most cases were those who could seek shelter in a strong building with a strong foundation.

The Bible teaches us in Genesis 1:26 that we are created in the image of God. Psalm 139:14 states that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. However we can take our human freedom and mix in with it pride, selfishness, greed, the desire to be liked more than to do the right thing, and when all those forces get spinning inside our hearts, spiritually speaking we become tornadoes touching down causing damage to ourselves and others. Romans 3:23 says all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All of us make choices to miss use situations, relationships among other things in this life.

But just like those who were saved from the tornadoes because they sought shelter in building built on a sound foundation, we want to enter a new sermon series this week that touches on Christians doctrines that are spiritual foundations for our lives. The word doctrine simply means the correct teachings. These teachings are essential to know and live as Christians because they are basics about how and what God has done and can do to save us from our own spiritual self destruction.

Since this is the first Sunday of the month and we celebrate the

Lord's Supper, or as some call it Communion, and even others may think of this as The Eucharist, we thought we would preach about the foundational or basic meaning of the Lord's Supper.

Introduction

The Lord's Supper is a meal. Meals are often used to communicate that something is important. A meal to celebrate some one's birthday is generally held on the day that person was born. A meal to remember and celebrate the day a couple was married is generally held on the day they were married. (except when the husband forgets the date.)

When Jesus began the meal we call the Lord's Supper, he did so on a very special night. The Lord's Supper first occurred on the night Jesus was celebrating a special meal called Passover. The Passover meal remembered the mighty power and love of God for his people to be freed from slavery.

- Passover remembers what God did to break the grip of slavery that King Pharaoh of Egypt had over the lives of God's people, the Hebrews or Jews.
- Passover remembers how God's power brought about the tenth plague, the plague of death of the first born male child in Egypt including in the family of Pharaoh.
- Only those who sacrificed a lamb and smeared its blood over the doorway way to their house would be saved.

Pharaoh defied God and put no blood over his doorway. Pharaoh and many others had to experience God's power through death before they would be humbled. But those who trusted and loved God enough to sacrifice a lamb and brush its blood over their door post were saved from death. After that night Pharaoh would release the slaves and God would call his people out of a condition of slavery = they would make their Exodus out of Egypt.

Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper on the occasion when he was celebrating Passover with his disciples. The Lord's Supper is for us to remember and experience how God's love through Jesus Christ frees us from sin, and our sinful ways. The Lord's Supper is our Christian exodus from the power of sin.

The cause = our sin v.28 - "for the forgiveness of sins

Jesus said in verse 28 that **the cause for laying down his life was for the "forgiveness of our sin."** Spiritually speaking the truth is we all play Pharaoh. Pharaoh in the Old Testament was a king who defied God, wanted to be in sole control, didn't think he had to answer to any one but himself. His wishes were fulfilled at the expense of others. Whatever power he had, he used for himself while making life miserable for everyone else. Sometimes we think if only I were a king. Well spiritually speaking, the Bible teaches we have all played the role of Pharaoh because we have defied God and what is right and made our selves slaves to sin. John 8:34 states that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. In our past and present we take our God given powers and like Pharaoh misuse them.

It's easy to see this misguided self defeating slavery and destruction in some more than others. It's easier to see the lives of some that resemble a destructive tornado when we think about people caught up in addictions to food, drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping. Those who commit acts of violence or theft.

But we all play pharaoh when we deceive in order to get what we want. We treat some unfairly than others. We pray and assume everything we get in our lives must be God's will. Because we prayed for it and we have it. We're Pharaoh when we treat God like the police, we want him near for our crisis; but we sure hope he isn't looking so we can do what conflicts with scripture.

Yet God is holy and pure and we're not. So in order to reach down to us God's has to sacrifice himself. God doesn't dumb down or water down his expectations for us to be holy and pure. **WHAT GOD DOES SACRIFICE IS HIS RIGHT TO PUNISH US, REJECT US, WALK AWAY FROM US, AND SAY NEVER MIND.** We can be quick to treat one another that way. But when Jesus said he was laying down his life for the forgiveness of our sins, he was saying in spite of our failures, God will not walk away. He is willing to release his reasons to punish us so we can have another chance if we repent, if we turn away from sin.

You know the only thing we can do is decide whether we genuinely need and want that type of love and presence in our lives. **There is nothing else we have to offer God at the Lord's supper but whether we trust that what God has to offer is really what we need most in this life.**

Illustration: We are invited to the Lord's Supper like when some people are invited to stay for a church potluck dinner. They sometimes refuse to stay and eat because they say they didn't bring any food to contribute to the meal. They'll say, I hate to come to a dinner empty handed. **Because of our sin we all come to the Lord's Table empty handed.** It doesn't matter how long we have been a Christian, or any other aspect of who we are or are not. It doesn't matter how well dressed you or wear tattoos or anything else. It is the reason we teach that The Lord's Supper is a means of grace or "sacrament." God is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The cost = his son v.26 - "this my body"

The only way for God to stay connected to our pharaoh like tornadic sinfulness is to offer us the forgiveness of his love. God himself in Jesus Christ was willing to be the sacrifice. Our sin is

against God who is holy and the author of all life; yet he gives to us.

Illustration: The other night Chad and Amy Davis hosted a few of us for a cookout. And at after dinner we watched a short movie by Loui Giglio who described how immense and expansive is our universe. He did a great job to show how mind-boggling it is to think of how large the universe is and we are but a speck even in our own galaxy out of the millions perhaps billions of galaxies. Were little blip on the radar screen.

Yet there is a creator behind all we know that exist. Even if some one says well the universe started from a particle like an atom or smaller, then God was the giver of that particle. What saves us is that the God who breathed everything into life would reveal love and forgiveness in the life of his son.

It's one thing to stay connected and love those who love us; it is godliness to reach out and walk into situations knowing you're about to be cut down. Jesus knew revealing God's love would come at a great cost. It is the reason on that night he said to his disciples **“take and eat this my body, this my blood.”** It was giving his total self.

As the Holy Spirit is present with us in this meal, the bread and the cup is our way to receive grace and forgiveness that came at a cost only God could afford - his son.

- We need that foundation when we think we are made right with God based on what we do - that's wrong it about the cost Jesus paid.
- We need that foundational truth when we think how were living and serving as a Christian is to much to bear; that's wrong because it cost Jesus everything.

- We need that foundation when we think God condones the bad things that happen in life or doesn't understand our heart break; that's wrong, the one who created the trees watched his son get nailed to a tree.

The covenant = our hope v.28 - "poured out for many"

Jesus said his blood was **"the covenant which is poured out for many."** The word covenant can have many meanings but one of its more common usages is one person does for another person or group. The only thing those who are receiving can do in this covenant is receive and be faithful to the giver.

One of the foundation truths about communion is that this more than just remembering what Jesus did for us. The Lord's Supper is a covenant. Lord's Supper is on going. Jesus said he would not drink of the cup until he drinks its new in his Father's kingdom. Mean while Jesus instructed us to continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but Jesus will hold off and wait for us until some future point in time.

We keep coming to the Lord's Table for the Lord's supper for two key reasons.

1.) We are in continual need of grace. Christians aren't perfect. Just like the physical body continues to need food; we need forgiveness. It's true we don't have to wait to celebrate the Lord's Supper to receive forgiveness, but the Lord's Supper reminds when we are together we all need forgiveness. No one need to feel or act superior if we truly take reverently the need to eat from the Lord's Table.

2.) We share the Lord's Supper for hope. Jesus said one day he will share this again. Not now but one day, which means the future is somehow in God's hands. That must have been tough words to

speaking when you know you are about ready to suffer and die. **One New Testament scholar said in regards to Jesus facing his crucifixion, "...the events will unfold tragically, but not hopelessly. (Michael Wilkins, NIV Commentary of the Gospel of Matthew, p.864)** There is a difference.

The one who gave freedom to the stars to burn brightly and freedom to powerful forces of nature that cause us to suffer, said one day he'll celebrate with us again. That is another way of teaching that God walks us through suffering until we are fully with God in his heavenly kingdom. Sometimes we get blinded to that truth because we look so much on the suffering we miss God's hope.

The Lord's supper is a channel of grace that reminds us that yes life events can be absolutely tragic and crushing. Jesus knows that better than anyone but when he spoke of one day celebrating a great banquet with us it is empowerment to know our sin and life hurts are not hopeless.