

Sermon Notes

Matthew 28:19-20; 26:26-28
 “The Lord’s Supper During Lent”
 March 1, 2020

Introduction

- 1) For Lent, like last year, we will be having the Lord's Supper every Sunday.
 - a) With our traditional “table” Communion on March 1st, April 5th & 12th (Easter Sunday).
 - b) And the “intinction” method (coming forward and dipping the bread in a common cup) on March 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th.
- 2) But why are we doing this? Why during Lent? And why a weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper?
 - a) The sermon is to answer these questions.
 - b) And give a broad basic theological overview of the sacraments.
- 3) So why Lent?
 - a) Lent is the period of fasting before Easter created by the early and medieval church.
 - i) It was a time of prayer, penance, repentance, almsgiving, and self-denial to prepare to remember Christ's sacrifice.
 - ii) “Lent” is not mentioned in the Bible nor is it directly commanded.
 - iii) By church tradition it became tied in with the Lord Jesus' 40 days of fast at the beginning of His earthly ministry. Matthew 4:2;
Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - b) The early Protestants were divided on Lent.
 - i) The “High Church” Protestants, such as Anglicans and Lutherans, kept Lent.
 - ii) The “Low Church” Protestants, especially those of the English Reformed Puritans, such as the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists, rejected it as a medieval Roman Catholic superstition. They went so far in their zeal for pure biblical worship as to outlaw Easter and Christmas!
 - iii) The Continental Reformed tradition, such as the Dutch Reformed, argued for a moderate stance that didn't forbid Lent nor required it.
 - iv) [See the appendix for further discussion.]
- 3) While Lent is at best optional, the Lord's Supper is not.
 - a) It is explicitly commanded by the Lord Jesus Himself. Matt 26:26-27; Mark 14:22,24;
Luke 22:19; 1Cor 11:24-26
 - i) And must be part of any Christian’s worship life and their walk with the Lord.
 - ii) John 6:53-54 – *“So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.’”*
 - b) In the New Testament it seems the tradition was weekly celebration of the Supper:
 - i) Acts 2:42 – *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

- ii) Acts 20:7 – *“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.”*
- iii) 1Cor 11:25-26 – *“In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”*
- c) Historically, the monthly celebration of the Supper seems to be merely pragmatic.
- 4) I think it is a good idea that we experience weekly Communion, even if only for a brief time.
 - a) And if weekly for a brief time, why not Lent?
 - b) So for the rest of this sermon let us ponder the things commanded in Scripture:
The sacraments.

About the Sacraments

- 1) Sacraments are worship rituals commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a) Matt 28:19 – *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” -*
 - b) Matt 26:26-28 – *“While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”*
 - c) Notice the language is not suggestions but commands from our Lord.
 - d) And the sacraments are found throughout the entire Bible.
 - i) From their prefiguring/foreshadowing in the Old Testament.¹
(Circumcision = Baptism)
(Passover = Lord’s Supper)
 - ii) To the apostles being commanded to do them. Matt 28:19-20; 26:26-28
 - iii) To their common practice throughout the New Testament church.²
- 2) Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the only two such clearly commanded rituals in the Bible for the New Testament church.
 - a) This is one of the big differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics.
 - b) Rome has seven sacraments: Baptism, Lord's Supper + penance, confirmation, marriage, ordination & extreme unction (anointing the sick).
 - c) Protestants don't deny the importance of the other five, but argue they are not sacraments, because they are not commanded by Christ in the Bible for all Christians, and because they do not directly, as a function of their administration, proclaim the Gospel.

¹ Gen 17:1-22; Ex 12:1-13; Num 9:1-14; Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:15-20; John 13:1-4; 1Cor 5:6-8; 10:1-4; Col 2:9-17; Heb 8:1-6.

² Acts 2:38,41-42,46; 8:12-16; 20:7; 1Cor 5:7-8; 10:16; 11:20,25; 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2;12; 1Pet 3:21; Jude 12; Rev 19:9.

- 3) It is so critical to understand this Protestant contention by noting two things:
- a) First, the **direction** of the sacraments is NOT us trying to get to God by taking them, as if we are trying to make ourselves feel spiritual by taking them.
 - i) Instead, the direction IS God speaking to us (the saints).
 - ii) Where God is speaking to us with visual aids (water, wine & bread).
 - iii) Thus the sacraments require the addition of the preaching of the Gospel. The verbal and visual giving of the Gospel combined.
 - b) Second, it is critical to know what God is speaking to us, which is **the Gospel**.
 - i) The Gospel is the proclamation of Christ's finished work that we have been justified (declared righteous) solely by the crediting/imputing of Christ's perfect righteousness to us, which we received by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone.³
 - ii) The Gospel is the "*power of God*." Rom 1:16-17; 1Cor 1:18,24; 2:2,5; 2Tim 1:8; 1Pet 1:3-5
 - iii) It is the power of God for our salvation, both for declaring us righteous and to continue to keep us in Christ as we walk through this fallen world by faith, hope and love, in Christ.⁴
 - iv) So the Gospel is not just proclaimed to unbelievers to "get them saved" but is also proclaimed to believers to empower them.
- 4) This is the fundamental reason to be a Protestant: That our forefathers, during the Reformation in the 16th century, rediscovered the purity of the Gospel which had been at best obscured, if not mutilated, during the Middle Ages.
- 5) One of the key aspects of getting the Gospel right is to correctly understand the similarities and differences of justification & sanctification.
- a) **Justification** is when we first believe in Christ for our salvation and are declared completely righteous, innocent, holy, adopted, i.e. "justified" in God's sight solely by the work of Christ.
 - i) Thus justification is a once in a lifetime event.
 - ii) Whether you can remember a date of "conversion" or not is unimportant.
 - iii) What is critical is that you know and repent of your sinful fallen condition and trust in Christ as your Savior, Lord and God.
 - iv) Thus justification is by faith alone and not by works!
 - v) However, though we are justified by faith alone, justifying faith is never alone.
 - b) **Sanctification** is that daily life long walk of dying to sin and living for Christ.
 - i) Sanctification is different from justification because . . .
 - It's the byproduct of justification, never its cause, lest you believe in the heresy that one can be justified without Christ and by works alone.
 - Unlike justification, sanctification is a lifelong process and thus involves works.

³ Matt 16:16-17; John 6:28-29; Acts 8:22; 13:39; 15:11; 16:14; Rom 1:16-17; 3:20-21,24,28; 10:3-4; Gal 2:16; 3:11; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; 3:9; 2Tim 1:9; 2:25; Heb 12:2; 1Pet 1:5.

⁴ Ps 31:23-24; 119:42,47-49; 146:3,5-6,8; John 5:42,44-47; Rom 5:1-5; 12:5,9-12; 1Cor 13:4,7,13; 2Cor 5:7,11,14; Gal 5:5-6; Eph 1:12-13,15,18-19; 2:4,8,12; 4:2,4-5; Col 1:4-5,23; 1Thes 1:3-5; 5:8; 2Thes 2:13-16; 1Tim 1:1-2,4-5; 4:10-12; Titus 1:1-2,4,6,8-9; 3:4,7-8,15; Heb 10:23-25; 1Pet 1:3,5,7-9; 1:20-23

- ii) If you blur the two together (as Roman Catholicism does) it destroys the power of the Gospel. (See the Book of Galatians.)
- iii) Likewise, if you have no sanctification then you really haven't been justified. (See the Book of James.)
- Because mere intellectual belief about Christ is the faith the demons have.
 - Instead, true justifying faith has: John 6:28-29; Rom 1:16-17; 4:16-22; 5:1; 10:10
 - (1) Intellectual knowledge of Christ,
 - (2) Agreement with, or assent to, His Gospel
 - (3) AND Daily willful trust in Him as our Lord, Savior and God.
- 6) Again, it is critical to remember it is the Gospel that drives both justification and sanctification.
- a) In Pastor Doug's opinion it is one of the greatest mistakes of modern Evangelicalism that we have forgotten that the Gospel is for Christians too!
 - b) The Gospel is both for our justification (as Evangelicals horribly put it "getting saved").
 - c) *AND* the Gospel is to keep us Christians in Christ's salvation, which is our sanctification, where we are empowered to do good works.
 - i) Loving God and our neighbor, the supreme summary of good works, is empowered not by the Law of God (which is still critical!) but by the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel and working out the Gospel, in us.

	Matt 22:36-40;
	Rom 3:31; 5-8; 8:4;
	Gal 3:22-29; Eph 2:8-10;
	Titus 3:5-8
 - ii) So we are always returning to trusting in Christ's Gospel which creates in us hope and produces love, which covers a multitude of sins. 1Pet 4:8
 - c) We see this because the Lord has given us two sacraments that speak the Gospel to us, both about our justification and our sanctification!
- 7) What is the sacrament related to our justification? Baptism!
- a) Baptism is where we are declared washed by the blood of Christ and "buried" with Him (i.e. put into, or made partakers in, the saving power of His cross).

	Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:4;
	1Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26;
	Col 2:12; Titus 3:5
 - b) What makes baptism valid, as we read in Matthew 28:19-20, is the administration of water done in the name of the Triune God with the verbal proclamation of the Gospel.
 - i) The quality of the officiant (the one performing the baptism) is irrelevant.
 - So baptism done by an evil Roman Catholic priest, or an unbelieving Congregational minister, counts.
 - But a baptism done by a nice Mormon elder doesn't count.
 - (Roman Catholics & Congregationalists believe in the Trinity, Mormons do not.)
 - iii) A public proclamation of faith is required, whether by the person being baptized or the parents having their child baptized. (Of course there is a debate about whether infants should be baptized, including between Congregationalists and Baptists, but we don't have time for that this morning.)

- c) But should I get rebaptized since I might not have really believed when it happened?
- i) No. Remember the direction: From God to the saints.
God is always faithful, even when we are not. 2Tim 2:13
 - ii) We are baptized only once because Christ only had to die once. Rom 6:3,10
 - iii) Pastor Doug would argue it is a sin to be rebaptized if one is simply trying to experience some self-focused spiritual feeling.
 - iv) Granted, if one was baptized as an infant, and then one comes to Baptist convictions later in life, that wouldn't be rebaptism or a sin.
- d) But my baptism was so long ago! I need to feel Christ's love now!
That is why we have the Lord's Supper!

8) The Lord's Supper is the sacrament that is related to our sanctification.

- a) The Lord's Supper is where we are fed the Gospel, Luke 22:20; John 6:31-58; 1Cor 10:3-4;
receiving spiritual nourishment by the declaration 1Cor 16-17; 11:25; Eph 5:29-30;
of Christ's perfect love for us. Heb 10:10; 1Pet 1:18-19
- b) Remember the words of our sermon text, Matt 26:26-28 – *“Take, eat; this is My body . . . Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”*

9) The sacraments are not magical; we should never be superstitious about them.

- a) The grace they give is received by faith alone, never by anything they do by themselves.
- b) One can be saved without them, like the thief on the cross, Luke 23:40-43;
or a believer who is killed while driving to his baptism. 1Cor 1:14-17
- c) However, it is a sin to ignore baptism and/or the Lord's Supper, because they are commanded by Christ Himself.
 - i) Baptism is where Christ publically states we are part of His spiritual body here on earth, i.e. the church, which is the only place for salvation.
 - ii) The Lord's Supper is where Christ nourishes and feeds us His grace so that we may remain faithful and grow in holiness.
- d) How could anyone who calls themselves a Christian ignore such godly things?!

10) At the supper we are seated at a Royal Table, where the King declares who we are:
That we are fully justified/righteous because of Him!

- a) This is more than a memorial but a royal proclamation: It has power!
- b) Like the President issuing us full pardon for our sins. But more so because it is from God and perfect and covers all sins; past, present & future.
- c) What is required is to receive it by faith.
- d) The King has said you are forgiven, do you believe Christ or not?
 - i) Some might say: “But I have done some really bad things.”
True, your sins are actually far worse than you can imagine.
But knowing your sinful condition is a gracious act of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii) But are you daring to say Christ and His cross is insufficient?
Who are you O man to question back to God?!
 - iii) Therefore repent (turn from your sins) and trust in Christ, and follow Him.

Appendix – Two Reformation Views about Lent

1) The great Reformed theologian John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote strongly against Lent:

“At that time the superstitious observance of Lent had prevailed everywhere, because the common people thought that in it they were doing some exceptional service to God, and the pastors commended it as a holy imitation of Christ. On the contrary, it is plain that Christ did not fast to set an example for others, but to prove, in so beginning to proclaim the gospel, that it was no human doctrine but actually one sent from heaven [Matt. 4:2]. And the marvel is that such sheer hallucination (which is refuted so often and with such clear arguments) could creep upon men of keen judgment. For Christ does not fast often – as he would have to do if he had willed to lay down a law of yearly fasting – but only once, when he girded himself for the proclamation of the gospel. Nor does he fast in human fashion, as would have been fitting if he willed to arouse men to imitate him; but he shows an example rather to transport all men to admiration of him than to arouse them with zeal to imitate him.” Institutes, 4.12.20.

2) While the continental Reformed Second Helvetic Confession, 24, is much more moderate:

“The fast of Lent is attested by antiquity but not at all in the writings of the Apostles. Therefore it ought not, and cannot, be imposed on the faithful. It is certain that formerly there were various forms and customs of fasting. Hence, Irenaeus (d.c. 202 AD), a most ancient writer, says: ‘Some think that a fast should be observed one day only, others two days, but others more, and some forty days. This diversity in keeping this fast did not first begin in our times, but long before us by those, as I suppose, who did not simply keep to what had been delivered to them from the beginning, but afterwards fell into another custom either through negligence or ignorance.’ Moreover, Socrates (c.380-c.450 AD), the historian (not the philosopher), says: ‘Because no ancient text is found concerning this matter, I think the Apostles left this to every man's own judgment, that every one might do what is good without fear or constraint’”

The church has a Sacrament, Baptism and Lord's Supper Policy which can be found online at:
sccwinsted.org/by-laws-policies