

Lord's Supper during lock down

This is a slightly longer than normal 'blog' post and that's because I want us to fully understand the position we are taking over The Lord's Supper.

One of the greatest blessings that God's people enjoy is to gather together to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Ever since Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples, showing how that meal pointed to him as the fulfilment, the church has joined together to eat the Lord's Supper.

It's a special time for us to look back to what Jesus accomplished by his death and resurrection, and to look forward to the day when he returns for us, and we eat together at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

But what do we do when we can't meet together physically?

We've been able to do a form of church online. Using the technology available to us, we can hear a sermon, watch worship videos and sing along, hear news from our church family and be prayed for.

But what about eating the Lord's Supper together? Is that something we can do online?

It's a question pastors haven't had to deal with before, and so we are feeling our way through the issue, as we seek to apply the principles of scripture to the current situation. Church leaders have come to different conclusions on this, although most are coming down on one side.

For myself this is where I've landed at the current time.

In the eleventh chapter of his letter to the church at Corinth Paul refers five times to the fact that they celebrate the Lord's supper when they all come together as a church, as one assembly meeting in one place and one time.

Why is that important?

It's important because the Lord's Supper is a time when we enact the church's unity. When we physically demonstrate the church's oneness. That's seen in the one loaf that is broken and distributed. It's a means of grace when we fellowship with our risen Saviour. But it's a means of showing and seeing our oneness as a local church.

To me, that can't be done online, or if it is, it's not the Lord's Supper. Online, you might be able to see me breaking a bread roll but you can't see anyone else, and I can't see you. We have no idea who is 'gathering' with us.

Now I know you could argue that because Christ is present everywhere, he is the one uniting us together. That's true. I've been saying that when it comes to our worship. We are gathering and are united in Christ.

However, a meal that is specifically designed to show our unity needs to be much more visible to all of us, including those who love this meal but aren't online. They would normally be faithful attenders at this means of grace, but are now excluded. How can that be a loving thing to do? To exclude our brothers and sisters from a meal that is meant to show unity, just because they don't have the technology.

There is another issue also. If we are not careful, we will give the impression that the whole of church can be done online - that there is no need to gather when Covid19 restrictions are lifted. We've managed to do everything we normally do through the internet, so why not just carry on like

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that. I'll get my own glass of wine and bread roll and drink and eat when I see everyone else on my TV doing it.

To me that would make a mockery of what the church is - a physical, visible, gathering of God's people, where we see each other and see our unity.

Of course, this view has implications for our Good Friday service. It means we aren't going to be able to celebrate the Lord's Supper. It pains me to make that statement. It pains me greatly that this precious gift of Christ's grace has been taken from us for this period of lockdown.

However, for me, this pain causes me to look forward to when we can gather and can celebrate this meal together in the way Jesus has commanded.

What can we do to make Good Friday meaningful?

Well, here are some suggestions.

Make use of this week to read the gospel accounts leading up to the crucifixion of Christ. Prepare your heart for Good Friday by meditating on all that Jesus went through in the lead up to the day when he was crucified as a sacrifice for our sin. A good place to go would be John 14-17.

Tune into the Good Friday service where we will have songs that remind us of the cross, and have a short devotional meditation on what the death of Jesus accomplished.

Use your main meal time on Good Friday as an opportunity to reflect on the death of Christ. Whether you live alone or with your family, you could make more of that meal time than normal. Begin the meal time by reading a portion of scripture. Have some extra courses in your meal, and between those courses read scripture and give thanks to God for Jesus.

Let me close with a quote from The Gospel Coalition website.

All suffering involves loss; every loss is a form of suffering. Right now, amid much other loss and suffering, Christians around the world are suffering the loss of weekly, face-to-face fellowship with one another. Compassion prompts us to mitigate that loss however we can. But we can't erase it. And so we should learn what God would teach us through the temporary loss of these embodied, tangible, necessarily face-to-face ordinances, especially the Lord's Supper. The house of feasting—together, on Christ, in his Supper—is closed for now. What will you learn in this providentially ordered visit to the house of mourning ([Eccles. 7:2, 4](#))?

The Lord's Supper itself is meant not only to satisfy our hearts with Christ's goodness, but also to stoke a desire for when we will see his face: "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" ([Matt. 26:29](#)). Let the absence of this meal make you hunger even more for that future meal.

Thank you for bearing with us and as we seek the Lord for further light on this, we realise we might have to revisit. Please continue to pray for the elders as we seek to navigate our way through all these issues.

On behalf of the elders, and with much love,
Pastor Tim