

A Place at the Table: Rediscovering the Wonder of the Lord's Supper (Part 4)

Introduction

The Text

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹ But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²² For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" ²³ And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

²⁸ "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:14–30)

Part 4

- A. We're going to be focusing in on [vv. 24-30](#) now this morning, in particular. I originally thought I would just tag this onto the end of the last sermon, but it turns out there was just too much to say and draw out here.
1. Nonetheless, I still wanted us to see these verses connected to the larger context and this meal that Jesus is having with His disciples—the Lord's Supper that He is establishing here and passing onto the church.
- B. This meal, as we've noted, as far as it pertains to us, stands for at least three things: Fellowship, Food, and Fuel.
1. This meal signifies our Fellowship with Jesus and the reality that we are welcomed into intimate communion with Him around the table;
 2. This meal is also quite literally our Food, we eat the gospel here, as it were. And in this we get at the idea that just as we need our daily bread so too we need to feast on daily grace;

3. And finally it's our Fuel. Contrary to popular notion, grace is not opposed to works, it establishes them, fuels them. Those who fellowship with Jesus around the table and feed upon His grace are thereby fueled, propelled outward in love for neighbor.
- C. That was last week. And all of this is important background to the matter at hand.
1. For we see that Jesus, around this table with His disciples, is trying desperately here to get them on new footing in the gospel. He's trying to get them to take grace into themselves like one takes in bread and wine. He wants it to settle in at the very center of their being—so that everything is filtered through it and flows out from it.
- D. But, as we'll soon see, there's resistance. Though Jesus is attempting to set these guys in the flow of the new way of grace, they're still stuck in the old way of legalism and self-reliance.
1. And I dare say, I imagine it's the same way with many of us as well. We get grace with our heads perhaps, but have we really taken it in? Has it really penetrated, and disrupted even, the normal everyday turnings of our hearts?
- E. So that's what we're going to look at in more detail this morning.
1. I've got three main headings under which I'll be organizing my thoughts: (1) Old Habits; (2) Ironic Insecurities; and (3) Surprising Destinies. And, when we're done with these, I'll come out at the end and attempt to really apply it all to us personally.

(1) Old Habits

New Covenant . . . Old Habits

- A. Jesus, up in [v. 20](#) says explicitly that what He's doing around the table with the bread and the wine, the body and the blood, is establishing a new covenant—a covenant of grace: [“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”](#)
1. And all I want do here under this heading is just flesh out a bit more what I've been saying already in the introduction: namely, though Jesus is doing something new, they've still got the old operating system. They don't get grace.
 - a. They're not impressed with Christ. They're still trying to impress God and others with themselves.
- B. As we come to [vv. 24ff](#) we see what it looks like when people don't feed daily on grace, when they aren't taking the gospel into the center of their being like food and drink.
1. In the verses just prior, Jesus had spoken of one who would betray Him. Now, He doesn't identify explicitly the culprit and the disciples proceed to discuss among themselves which one of them it could be who would ever do such a thing.

2. Well, it seems to me, then, that the conversation naturally starts to turn from who would be the worst among them to who would be considered the greatest.
 - a. You can see it play out, can't you? "Who is this who would betray? Well, it certainly could not be me. I mean look at what I've accomplished to this point in the name of Jesus. Do you remember those conversions or those miracles? Do you remember that time I walked on water, or cast out that demon, or got all the Bible trivia questions right? When it's all said, I think the argument could be fitly made that, far from the worst, I'm actually the greatest of the bunch." And on it goes.
- C. So Luke tells us, in context of this discussion about who would be the betrayer that "[a] dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (v. 24).
 1. It's tragic really. The self-centeredness on display here. At a time when they should be concerned for Jesus and all that's coming for Him, they're still only concerned with themselves.
- D. Now, you should know, the Greek word for "dispute," here [*philoneikia*] occurs only here in the NT, and it's a compound word literally meaning "love of victory" [*philos + neikos*].
 1. It's a telling etymology. You see what's driving the dispute, don't you? Behind the conflict and contention is "love of victory": "I want to be number one. I'm better than you." That sort of thing.
 - a. I wonder if we look at our own disputes and the areas of conflict in our lives right now, is it not this very same thing that we find underneath them—this "love of victory," this need to be right, to be noticed, to be respected and adored?
- E. You see these disciples, clearly then, are men who have not yet truly gotten grace. They're still trying to justify themselves, to show how their own works set them apart from and above the rest. They're desperate to be valued, to be loved, to be counted worthy—as we all are. And they think they're going to get it on the basis of their performance.

Nudged towards Grace

- A. And so Jesus, because He loves these guys, is going to push against this. He's going to nudge them here away from a works-based worldview towards one marked by grace.
 1. And the essence of what He says, amazingly, is this: "Stop trying to serve Me. And let Me serve you."
 - a. It's a novel thought and one that natural man bucks against. Let's take [vv. 25-27](#) bit by bit here and I'll show you what I mean . . .
- B. Jesus here is going to contrast the way of the world and the flesh with the way of His kingdom and grace. So He begins: "[The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors](#)" (v. 25).

1. Now, there's an ambiguity in the Greek here that I think is significant. The way the Greek verbs work, this could be equally rendered those in authority "call themselves benefactors"—and many commentators, in fact, lean this way.
 - a. It gets at the idea of these kings and their self-identity, what they call themselves. The point is this:
 - i. The worldly, natural instinct, whether inside or outside the church, is to refuse to see yourself as needy, as a beneficiary, or even a beggar.
 - ii. Instead you must do all you can to set yourself up as the benefactor. "I don't receive handouts from anyone. Are you kidding me? I overflow. I hand out. I am the fountainhead. You depend upon me. I depend upon no one. I love to be called and to call myself 'benefactor.'" Do you see? As far as the world is concerned, that's the place of superiority, of greatness.

- C. But Jesus goes on, making now a statement of identity Himself, when He says, v. 26 now: "But not so with you."
 1. He's talking about who these disciples are now in Him, by grace. The literal Greek rendering here is "But you [are] not that." This should likely be understood both as an imperative (command) and an indicative (statement of what they are as an identity). "You are not that. This is not how the people of the kingdom, people of the cross, will operate. There's a different principle at work in their hearts, a principle of grace."
 - a. So He goes on: "Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (v. 26b).
 - i. We say: "Why?! How?! Everything in me is running in the opposite direction."

- D. Well it comes back to how I summed it up at the beginning. "Stop trying to serve Me. And let Me serve you." That's what He says, v. 27: "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."
 1. That's quite literally what He's doing here, isn't it? He's playing the Host at this dinner party. He's washing the feet. He's serving the food. More than that, He says I am the food, the meal is an emblem of my body broken, my blood poured out for you.
 - a. "You are washed by Me, fed by Me, served by Me. I am among you as the one who serves. So disciples . . . let me serve you! I know it hurts your pride, but you don't get to be the benefactor here, you're the beneficiary. That's how grace works."
 - i. You receive freely from Me, not because of your impressive resume but because of my abundant mercy, and then, in the overflow of all that, you are set free to go out and serve others. You don't need the recognition, the admiration, the applause. You have the acceptance and approval of God!"

E. And this leads me to the second heading . . .

(2) Ironic Insecurities

“I’m Great . . . Aren’t I?”

A. You see, there’s an irony tucked within the hearts of these disputing disciples and any of us when we are like them.

1. Think about it. Why do you need to know you’re great as compared to another? Isn’t it because there’s a fundamental insecurity, a sense, ironically, that you’re not that great? So you’ve always got to try to convince yourself and others otherwise.
 - a. When you succeed, you’ve got to tell everyone else about it. When you blow it, you’ve got to cover it up and downplay it.
 - b. And, of course, it’s the inverse for others, for your opponents (that’s how human beings made in the image of God are seen when you operate from a works-based framework for justification and identity—they are opponents to be overcome and defeated, not people to be loved and served)—so their successes are downplayed and undermined and their losses and struggles are what you focus on and exaggerate.
 - i. And all this because you are trying to trying to prove your worth and things and you’re worried about it.

B. We can do it in the church, as these disciples here. But it’s going on all over the place . . .

The Last Dance

A. When I was in that 10-day quarantine in my back room a couple weeks ago, one of the things I did was finally watch that Michael Jordan documentary *The Last Dance*. Megan’s not into basketball all that much, so I thought that was my chance. And it was fascinating. You see how driven he was to be regarded as the greatest.

1. I thought it quite interesting, that compound word I told you about—*philos + neikos*—well, what do you think *neikos* is related to: Nike = victory, referring to the goddess of victory.
 - a. And Jordan is really the brand’s poster child, right? And rightly so. He lived to dispute. He loved victory. He had to be regarded as the greatest.

B. In the documentary, one of the things that becomes plain is how Jordan was always motivated and fueled by the naysayers. He leveraged that to drive him upwards. “I’ll show you. I’ll dispute you. I’ll *philos-neikos* you. I’ll be prove myself to be greater than you.”

1. Isaiah Thomas refuses to shake his hand so he’s going to shake him up.
2. Clyde Drexler claims he was on Jordan’s level, so he’s going to have to knock him down.
3. BJ Armstrong had good game and started jawing on him so he’s going to straight up embarrass him next time around.

4. When he came back from retirement for the second time, his friends say it was because he was growing restless watching guys like Tiger Woods take his place as the world's pre-eminent athlete. He couldn't have that. He had to be regarded as the greatest.
- C. So this insatiable craving—and even this insecurity we could say—drove him to be, in my estimation, the greatest basketball player of all time.
1. But it also seems to have driven him a bit crazy as well. It's a slavery, and he says as much himself.
- D. The documentary on Netflix outlines this drive to be the greatest, but an article written by one of ESPN's senior writers that came out a few years ago really exposes how all this affected him on the inside. It's fitly titled: "[Michael Jordan Has Not Left the Building.](#)"
1. And it's all about how, though he has a whole lot of victory, he doesn't have any peace. He walked off that basketball court for the last time there in 2003 a man on top of the world . . . and yet a man in chains.
- E. Because you're never enough. There's always someone who's going to come along and do more, threaten your superiority, take everyone's eyes off of you.
1. Referring to Jordan, the author writes: "[Jordan couldn't have known that the closest he'd get to immortality was during that final walk off the court. . . . All that can happen in the days and years that follow is for the shining monument he built to be chipped away, eroded.](#)"
 2. And he talks about how Jordan's still, even after all these years, tuned into what his critics are saying. "[He needs to know,](#)" the author writes. It's like "[a needle for a hungry vein.](#)"
 3. Jordan himself says he still dreams of returning to the court though he knows his body can't do it. And it's killing him. "[It's an addiction. You ask for this special power to achieve these heights, and now you got it and you want to give it back, but you can't. If I could, then I could breathe. . . . How can I enjoy the next 20 years without so much of this consuming me? . . . How can I find peace away from the game of basketball?](#)"
- F. The quest to be the greatest, to be recognized and admired by everyone, listen, it looks appealing, but even when you get it, it's never enough.
1. It's a slavery driven ironically by insecurity. "[I've got to know I matter. I've got to know I'm worth something.](#)" So we tangle our identities up in these things and our performance and everything and it destroys us.

The World of Politics

- A. And it's the same sort of thing we see, not just in the church, or with sports, but we could talk about it with politics as well, especially these days, right?
- B. You have to be seen as right. You refuse to admit wrong. No one these days is willing to admit they made a mistake or they had a part in something. How refreshing would that be?

1. Instead it's like we're all acting like a bunch of toddlers. You ask Levi to say sorry and he like mumbles it under his breath.
 - a. It's painful for the proud human heart to admit. So we blame and we point and we excuse ourselves, because we've got to be seen as right. At the expense of others.
- C. I just read one article that I think insightfully pointed out that, because we have a culture that no longer has a sufficient doctrine of atonement, we don't know what to do when we sin or are wrong.
 1. The culture either praises you as a demigod or it cancels you as a heretic, but there's nothing really in between, no room to say sorry and find grace and grow. So we hide and blame-shift and we dispute and do anything to prove ourselves as greater.

Another Way

- A. I saw the opposite of this in a random article recently and I just had to tell you about this. It's kind of funny really, but just listen. I guess there's this Chinese restaurant in Canada and it's now famous for its ridiculously honest menu where beneath each item the owner tells you what he actually thinks about it. Let me read you some of these:
 1. Orange Beef: "Comparing to our General Tao Chicken, this one is not THAT good. Anyway, I am not a big fan of North American Chinese food and it's your call."
 2. Mouth-watering Chicken: "This dish is very well-known and we are not 100% satisfied with the flavor now and it will get better really soon. PS. I am surprised that some customers still order this plate. In my opinion, our Sichuan Pepper Chicken Salad is better than this one."
 3. Beef and Potato Stew: "This is one of my favorites in University and that version was sweet with tomato. Because of this dish, I gained at least five pounds but it gave me so much memory . . ."
- B. I saw this and I just thought this was awesome. Why? Because it's so rare, to just be honest.
 1. We're used to what we see in Elf, right, where he walks in to that dumpy coffee shop and he's like "Congratulations, world's best cup of coffee"—they had it in the window, but everyone knows it's a sham, you just pretend you're the greatest because maybe a few will believe it.
 2. But here this guys just being real. When asked why he does this, the owner said, listen: The restaurant wants to be "very honest, very true to ourselves and our customers. . . . We don't want them to come with high expectations and then feel disappointed. . . . We are not always the best food restaurant, but we try to do our best every day and to satisfy our customers and not oversell anything."
 - a. I love it. There's a certain freedom here. You don't have to be the best.
- C. And I include this here because, really, this is what the gospel does. This is what grace does. It sets you free from that never-ending dispute. You don't have to pretend you're the greatest. You can be honest. Grace, free, unmerited grace, snaps this cycle of comparison and competition, and establishes you as loved and valuable and great in Jesus.

1. And everything comes back into order in your heart and life. Now you can see yourself and others clearly and relate appropriately . . . in love.
 - a. No longer do you need to exaggerate your successes over and against others, but you give thanks to God for them because you know they come from Him, He's the One, if there is any good.
 - b. And no longer do you need to cover up your failures, because you know there's grace, and you come out of hiding, you can be honest and human, not a demigod, but a human being who needs forgiveness, knowing the only God, is full of mercy and abounding in steadfast love. You can be honest about yourself.
 - c. And the same thing happens as you approach others. Their victories aren't a threat to you if you're not in a works-based system of justification. Grace means you can celebrate what God is doing in their life as well. You can rejoice when they rejoice.
 - d. And it also means, instead of secretly savoring their failures and even spreading news of it to all your fans and things, you can cover and pray and enter into their struggles to help with love. You can weep with those who weep.
2. That's true greatness, that's what Jesus is doing with us around this table, that's where He's taking us.

D. And this really leads us to the third heading now . . .

(3) Surprising Destinies

From Sitting and Judging to Sitting and Judging?!

- A. Beginning there in v. 28, Jesus starts to talk about the destiny of these disciples, and if you're following with everything we've seen thus far, it's quite surprising.
 1. Jesus goes on to talk about how, in the coming kingdom, in the age to come, these guys are going to be judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Listen to what He says: “²⁸You are those who have stayed with me in my trials,²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
- B. And I say this is surprising because, you see, to this point, we're hearing how superficial and self-centered these guys are around the table and you're thinking: “These guys are going to be entrusted with making big decisions in the kingdom of heaven, really? Judging others?”
 1. I mean they already are judging others, right, but not in righteousness and equity, but with self-concern and things.
- C. But you see, when grace gets inside a person, I mean really gets inside, when it becomes the foundation, then, as we've said, you're eyes are cleared. And you no longer have to exaggerate your good and their bad, and cover your bad and their good, you can see.

1. And therefore you can judge righteously and appropriately. And that's the idea. It's a picture of the transformation that is going to take place in the gospel because of Jesus.
 - a. We are given positions of status and things but it no longer goes to our head. We are humble and servants even if we're seated on a throne and leading, because we sit with Jesus, because of Jesus, and we know it. Grace has gotten in our bones. And we're changed.

- D. How this point applies to us exactly, I don't know. I do know that Paul says to the Christians in Corinth that we'll be judging the world and the angels ([1 Cor 6:2-3](#)).
 1. So there's something to this, not just for the apostles here, but for you and I as well. Grace is going to change things and help us see clearly and discern and judge matters appropriately. We don't need to twist and dispute, because we're free in Jesus.
 - a. And we're only going to get freer.

How about Us?

Has Grace Gotten In?

- A. But are you? Free I mean? I said I'd come out here at the end and do some closing application. I'm just wondering: Has grace gotten in? Or are you still in a works-based framework? New or old?
 1. You know which framework you're operating with by looking at the way you treat other people.
 - a. Do you see them as opponents?
 - b. Do you secretly (or maybe not so secretly) take delight in others' failures.
 - c. Does it actually make you sad to see others succeed or do "better" than you?
 - d. Do you often feel the need to trumpet your own accomplishments, or defend why you're right?
 - e. Are you always disputing, competing?

- B. Don't you want out of it?! Aren't you tired?

3 Quick Suggestions

- A. So here's three quick suggestions, all taken from our text, things you can do to shift towards grace:

Suggestion #1: Remember From Where He's Taken You

- A. You know, I've mentioned already that, back up in [vv. 21-23](#), Jesus doesn't explicitly call out Judas as His betrayer, right? He could've but He doesn't.
 1. And I said a few weeks ago part of that was His last courtesy to Judas, to not shame him, and to maybe even plead with him one last time to repent and come to the table for real.

- B. But there's more to this I think as well. You see, when Jesus says this He gets the disciples talking amongst themselves. "Could it be me? Could it be me?"
 - 1. And the reason He's ambiguous, I think, is He wants them to see that the answer to that question is: "Yes!" Yes it could be you. That's the point.
- C. Now, as we've seen, they're going to go in the complete opposite direction—it couldn't be me—but that's to miss the lesson entirely.
 - 1. The point is to bring them to the realization that it could be—that the only thing that separates them from Judas is sheer grace and grace alone.
 - a. He is trying to lead them to better self-knowledge that they are not greater than anyone around this table, not even Judas. "But for the grace of God there goes I." That's the idea. That the line between good and evil doesn't run out there somewhere it runs right down the middle of each one of us.
- D. We have to feel that. So He humbles us. We're not great, we're not better than anyone else. Whatever we have we owe it to grace. We remember from where He's taken us.

Suggestion #2: Remember to Where He's Taking You

- A. You see He doesn't just humble us. He also, surprisingly again, exalts us. That's the crazy thing. He shows us we don't belong here, we're no greater than anyone else, but then He sets us up in His kingdom and shares His glory and we're "seated . . . with Him in the heavenly places"—even now, Paul says in [Eph 2:6](#). He humbles and He exalts.
 - 1. But you see now we know it's not us, not because of our strength or savvy, it's because of Him and His grace.
- B. And we need to remember to where He's taking us, how secure it is, because then we can really release the effort to justify ourselves here and now.
 - 1. It's amazing. When Jesus says there in [v. 29](#): "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom . . ." the word translated "assign" here is the same Greek word for make a covenant and it establishes a direct link back up to [v. 20](#) and the new covenant He's making with us, a covenant of grace, a covenant God makes with us not because we're awesome but because of His blood, poured out for my sins.
 - a. That's how you get in. Grace. And it's secure. He's covenanted with you.

Suggestion #3: Feast on His Grace Right Now

- A. With this last suggestion I'm just thinking about the meal Jesus gives us in the Lord's Supper. This is what He's trying to teach us here. This is what He's trying to get us to take into our lives. This meal holds together both the humbling and the exalting sides of the gospel we just looked at.

1. With it we remember that we were so sinful that Jesus had to die if we're to be saved.
2. But with it we also remember that we are so loved and valued by Him that Jesus gladly did so.
 - a. And the meal we enjoy now is just a little foretaste of the end-time banquet He describes there in [v. 30](#), when He says to His disciples: "In My kingdom, you will 'eat and drink at my table.'" Brothers and sisters, we get to take in some of that grace in even now!