

Mark 8: 34-38; “The Dining Room of Christian Discipleship” (Part 3), Sermon # 57
in the series – “Astonished at His teaching”, Delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 1st, 2016
in the Morning Worship Service.

Having looked at the Dining Room of Christian Discipleship from the vantage point of individual Christians dining with Christ, the family dining with Christ, and the members of a church dining with one another; I now want to preach to you a sermon about the church dining with Christ. The gathering of the church for worship is the place where Christians corporately dine together with Christ in a formal way. It is where the discipleship of learning to listen well, takes place. If we take care how we listen and what we listen to; we will be in a good position to grow as a Christian disciple. It ought to be apparent to us that simply listening to sermons will not be enough to make you a disciple. It is very apparent from the Word of God that everyone who would make progress as a disciple must also take what they have heard from the Word of God and become doer of it. That applying of what we have listened to, is found first, in the Living Room of self-denial, and it is applied further as time goes on, in the Exercise Room of Christian discipleship. This is learning to practice what we are taught. It is learning to train our senses to discern the difference between good and evil.

But the truth that I want us to focus on in this final sermon on the Dining Room of Christian Discipleship is related to “the Table” in this room. There is a spiritual table prepared for you every Sunday, here, in the local church that you attend. Coming to church regularly each Lord’s Day is the way that Christ feeds and builds up His people corporately. Your regular attendance upon the worship services of the church helps keep this local expression of Christ’s Church alive, and flourishing, in this area. This glorifies God. The person who is a committed disciple of the Lord comes to this Dining Room table each and every Sunday. If you love Christ you are not ashamed of Him or of His words, as verse 38 says. You are ready and willing to take up your cross in respect to denying yourself the pleasures and activities which the rest of the World engages in, instead of coming to church. One day in the week, you joyfully give that day to God.

What it means to come to the “table” in the Dining Room of Christian Discipleship is a concept which I am afraid has not been developed very extensively in our generation except in the Reformed Churches; those churches who are truly trying to be Biblical in their worship services. What is being called worship in our generation has largely deteriorated into entertainment and a very self-pleasing, man-centered experience where meeting with God is a very casual thing. Both the music that is played and the casual atmosphere in worship, lead many who attend those churches, to think that God approves of their making up their own way of worshiping him. But I want to try to show you that this is not right. 1st of all – I want to show you how the Old Covenant Table was a type of the New Covenant worship. 2nd – I want to show you how this table glorifies God in His Worship. And then, 3rd – I want to make an application as to how I believe the Lord would have us to worship Him now, in New Covenant times.

1st of all - I would like to show you how the Old Covenant Table was a type of the New Covenant Worship.

Turn with me to Hebrews Chapter 9, verse 1. The Apostle Paul, who I believe wrote this letter, is talking about some of the similarities and differences between the Old Covenant worship and the New. He says in verse 1: “Then, indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.” “For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary, and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.” “Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.” “Now when

these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services." "But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing." "It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to conscience – concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation." "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation." "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."

Now there are several observations that I would like to make concerning these words. First of all, I would like to point out to you that the first few words of Chapter 9 show us that there are certain definable similarities between the Old Covenant worship and the New. They both were designed by God to have ordinances or regulations of worship. It says, "even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service". The word "even" indicates that in both covenants God had ordained ordinances, or regulations that the priests in both Covenants were to observe and do in their worship. Both were to have a priesthood and both were to have a sanctuary. The priesthood of the Old was Levitical. The priesthood of New, which is based upon Christ's ministry, is that of Melchizedek. Through Christ's High Priestly mediation, every believer is a priest in the New Covenant worship. The priests in the Old Testament times interacted with God and with the people in their worship on a regular basis; both on a daily basis, and on a weekly basis on the Sabbath. This worship under the Old Covenant was specifically designed by God for the nation and the people of physical Old Testament Israel, and it was a type of the good things to come for worship in the Church under the New Covenant. The things which God commanded them to observe we, as believers, would find the greater reality of, after the Lord Jesus died, rose again, and returned to heaven.

The Lord Jesus is the High Priest of our faith. He has brought the good things of grace to us. He is the bread of life. We then take the ingredients of the grace and truth which He gives to us, and in our worship of God we make spiritual bread out of them; just as the Old Testament priests did in the loaves of presentation. In other words we present our lives to Him in our worship of Him. We do this as one body. The pastor preaches the Word, and the people receive it in order to better glorify Him with their lives. This is the New Testament table. 1st Corinthians 10: 16 – "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." That is what the priests in the Old Testament times did. They made the showbread and set it out before the Lord. They made 12 loaves to represent the 12 tribes of the people of Israel. John Bunyan says, and I agree with him, "These twelve loaves to me do seem to be a type of the twelve tribes under the law, and of the children of God under the gospel, as they present themselves before God, in and by his ordinances through Christ." "Hence the apostle says, 'For we being many are one bread,' and etc." "For so were the twelve cakes, though twelve; and so are the gospel saints, though many; for 'we, being many are one body in Christ.'" (Works Vol. 3, P. 488 – Solomon's Temple Spiritualized)

Now turn with me to Leviticus Chapter 24 and you will see how this bread was baked and how it was presented before the Lord. Verse 5 says, "And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it." "Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake." "You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the Lord." "And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the Lord." "Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant." "And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat

it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire, by a perpetual statute.” The priests were to take the flour and make twelve cakes of bread, and after they had baked them, they were to set them in two rows on the table on the Sabbath Day. The bread is representative of Jesus Christ Himself who is the bread of life. And it is also representative of the teaching and preaching of the Word of God; that which would feed and strengthen God's people.

Christ is the High Priest of our faith. He is currently dwelling on High, at the right hand of the Father, in the greater and more perfect tabernacle of heaven. And all of our worship is directed to Him, and through Him to the Father. He is in the Holy of Holies, and we are in the sanctuary. The table and the showbread were in the sanctuary; the holy place, in the Old Testament. They were not in the Holy of Holies. But I hope that you can see that the bread was intended for Aaron and his sons and that they would eat this bread in a “holy place”. We know from the teaching of our Lord that God is to be worshiped in every place in New Covenant times, but you and I need to understand that this partaking of bread in the Sanctuary of the Lord was special; just as the Lord’s Supper, also, is special. In New Testament times it takes place when the Church is gathered. The spiritual fulfillment in the New Covenant is to be found in the pastor’s regular presentation of the bread of the Word of God on the “table” around which the local church sits. This is what is taking place right now, in what we are doing right now, in this service of worship.

Secondly - I would like to show you how this Table glorifies God in His worship.

The difference between the Old and the New is that in the Old there were these earthly representations of spiritual realities. In the New Testament worship there is found the substance of these realities. In the Old, they were that physical “furniture”, if you will, of this tabernacle. The table of showbread and the lampstand. These were made by men, and they were placed in an earthly sanctuary, this beautiful tent, which was designed by God, and called – the Tabernacle. In the New Testament worship, the Sanctuary in which our high priest ministers, is heaven. And we who believe in Him, as priests, offer up spiritual sacrifices in worship. One of the greatest of those sacrifices is that we listen to the sermons of truth concerning Christ who is the fulfillment of all these Old Covenant types. It is the offering up of our ears and our hearts unto God. I would like you to consider that these things are more important than people are giving them credit for, in our day. In the Old Covenant, worship was related to the duties of the table, the making and baking and displaying of the showbread, in the worship and service of the priests in Tabernacle. There was great carefulness and great reverence. There was nothing casual about it. If the priests were casual or if they made up their own way of doing things in relation to God's worship, they died. Even the moving of the tabernacle and all the instruments related to the worship had to be carefully covered when they were being moved. (Numbers 4: 4-20)

The Tabernacle was designed by God as a movable place of worship, to be used during the Wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel, and it was used in that way and moved about to various places until Solomon built the temple; the more permanent place of Old Covenant worship. Everything which was made to be used in the worship, was made according to the pattern showed to Moses on the mount. This included the table that we are now studying. Turn with me to Exodus Chapter 25 and I will attempt to give you a sample of how carefully the children of Israel had to follow God’s instructions. It says in verse 1, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering.’ “From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.” By the way, this is still how we ought to bring our offerings of worship to the Lord; willingly with our heart. Do you see what you do when you come to church with an offering? You praise Him for your salvation which you have received by faith. You praise Him for His Word which you receive as spiritual food to your souls. You willingly and joyfully come to the “tabernacle”, to the “sanctuary” of the New

Testament gathered church; the place where God in all His glory dwells, and you are participating as a New Testament priest in the placing of the showbread on the table before the Lord.

The placing of the showbread on the table in this New Testament time is the preaching of the Word concerning Christ; the making and construction of the bread of sermons; the hearing and listening to them; in which Christ is preached, and through which God is glorified. This ministry; this service; of preaching Christ the bread of life, and His word as the Word of life, is something which was intended by God to be set on "the table" always. That is; that God would always have, in every generation on every Sabbath day, a people who would glorify Him by listening to the preaching of the Word, and participating in the Lord's Supper as oft as it would be done. Look at verse 6. "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." "According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it." Then the Lord describes how He wants the Ark to be made. (Verses 10-16) And then He describes how the mercy seat should be made. (Verses 17-22)

And starting in verse 23 He mentions the table. "You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height." "And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around." "You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around." "And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that are at its four legs." "The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table." "And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them." "You shall make its dishes, its pans its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring." "You shall make them of pure gold." "And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always." This table is a pictorial representation of Christ and His Church having holy fellowship and partaking of the spiritual food of the bread of life, together, in God's very presence. Everyone who comes to public worship should therefore realize that all public worship is done for God's sake primarily. We come to church to honor Him, not to please ourselves. But we are pleased when He is pleased. Worship is a solemn responsibility, but it is also our joy and our delight.

The purpose of the sanctuary was that God might dwell among the people. The question that we should ask ourselves as a church, concerning these things is this; are we making this place a sanctuary for God to dwell in? Is God with us so that we sense His presence, His approval, and His blessing upon our worship services. Is God with us of a truth? Is He with our hearts? The church is not the building, but rather the people. Our worship is His showbread. The word "showbread" in the original means "the bread of faces". We have faces which are looking up to Him in faith while they worship; faces that are looking to Him spiritually to be satisfied. God does not dwell in temples made with human hands in the New Testament worship, but it is very important to God that His glory be seen in the way that we handle the truth as a gathered church; the way that we present and receive the bread of life in the preaching of His Word. God is dwelling in us and He is walking among us; His New Testament gathered church. "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" "What part has a believer with an unbeliever?" "You are the temple of the living God." "As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them.'" (2 Corinthians 6: 16)

It is important to God that we see the value of the holy ordinances that He has given to us. It is very important to Him how our hearts behave in worship, and what we present to Him upon this table. The table in Israel's day was made of acacia wood; a wood that would not easily rot. The table was covered with pure gold. The golden table represents Christ. All that we offer in worship unto God is offered upon His finished work for us. His offering of Himself gave us the golden table. In His offering of Himself upon the cross He was perfect humanity, represented by

the acacia wood. And all that He did in His perfect humanity was rendered meritorious by His also being Deity, represented by the pure gold. He died upon the cross for our sins, but He did not see corruption. And being raised from the dead He ever lives to make intercession for us. How warm the devotion of our hearts ought to be toward Him in worship, even as the fresh and hot bread would be baked and then stacked in 2 rows of six and placed on the golden table. And that bread would stand on that table that way for the whole week.

In Revelation Chapter 5 and verse 8, when John saw the vision of what the worship of God was to be like in New Testament times in light of the Lord Jesus Christ being the only one worthy to open the scroll and to loose the seven seals which would unlock how the Kingdom of God and Christ would advance upon the earth in this age in which we presently live, it says this: "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Prayer is an integral part of the worship of God. Prayer that God would be glorified and that His kingdom would advance in our hearts and upon the earth, this is the frankincense on the bread. The four living creatures are the hieroglyphic representation of the ministers in the Church. The four and twenty elders are the picture of those who are wise in the church. And they fall down before the Lamb, praising Him and offering their prayers. They sing the New Song of redemption.

Beloved, this is just how the presentation of the Word of God, the preaching of the Word and the hearts of God's people ought to be. The preacher's heart ought to be hot for God; just like an oven is for baking bread. And the people's hearts ought to be warm to the truth of the word of God seeing as that bread is designed by God to last them all that week. It will stand for that week and then fresh bread will be again baked and the loaves of presentation replaced. Their prayers ought to be running down on the bread like frankincense; praying that they would through the means of the Word preached and the presence of the glory of God working in their hearts, that they would be a people would together be able to glorify Him. Oh, how I hope that you catch a glimpse of this vision. Worship is so much more than being entertained or showing off your gifts.

And then 3rd - I want to close this sermon by making one application to ourselves.

The local church is extremely important to the fulfillment of God's purposes in the world in every generation. The "One Body" of Jesus Christ is "the one Bread", made up of all the believers worldwide in any given generation. In fact it is the whole family in heaven and earth. We are One Bread, but we are many loaves; many churches. This church is one of those local expressions of the one Body of Christ. I believe that it is very important to God, from the things that we have studied today, that His people not only be individually nourished on the words of sound doctrine in their private devotions; but it is important to Him that each person and every family come to the gathered "body" of the local church and learn what sound doctrine is. It is important that we believe this, and it is important that we try to convince other people of this truth. It is important that we are convinced ourselves, and it is important to tell others that they should be able to submit to God's authority in His Word, in a Biblical faithful church context. The way that an individual person, or a family, are showing that they are submitting to God's authority is by regular Sunday by Sunday submission of their heart to hear His Word. It is very important to God that any disciple of Jesus be confronted with sins that they may not be aware that they have, so that they can repent of them.

The table in the sanctuary of the tabernacle was the piece of furniture upon which the showbread was placed. It represents Christ's finished work as the High Priest of our faith. It represents His righteous life and His offering up of Himself in death on the cross; His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven. Christ's entrance into the holy of holies, into heaven itself, has opened up for us a new and living way that we may come and together worship Him. Will you not resolve to join with this church and become a member of

this church if you have not done so, so that you can help us to uphold the worship of God? Will you come regularly and help us as priests to place the hot and fresh showbread on the table that Christ has made. He is the gold table. Ultimately He also is the bread. But we and our worship are the 12 loaves on the table. See how important it is to God that you and your family regularly participate in the corporate worship of the people of God. Come to the table in the Dining Room of Christian Discipleship. And then you will see that all the worship that you conduct in your heart and in your family during the week, all flow from your also having come to worship God here, with the church gathered.