

Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. A few of weeks ago we began considering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This morning we will pick up where we left off. Before we get into our text, I think it is helpful to have a reminder of that principle which has been the foundation for everything we have considered in this sermon series. Whatever is not commanded by God to be done in worship is forbidden. This principle must be our foundation, else we tend toward traditions and man-made inventions which pollute, corrupt, and pervert the worship of God. We must look to what Jehovah says concerning His worship, and we must seek to obey what He commands. And if this means reformed our practices to be in conformity with the Word of God, then we must be willing to do the hard work of reform. To not do so could be deadly; just as Nadab and Abihu. So with that in mind turn your attention now to the reading of God's holy Word from 1 Corinthians chapter 10 beginning at verse 14.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-21

Pray

When it comes to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we must approach it in the very same way in which we approach every other element of worship. We must go to the Scriptures to see what the Lord has commanded concerning this sacrament, and we must seek to obey those commands. Three weeks ago we considered the mode of baptism, looking at what the Word of God says concerning the sacrament, what the sacrament signifies and seals unto us, and how the sacrament is administered conveys those spiritual truths through sensible signs. Yet, when it comes to the Lord's Supper I very rarely hear anyone speak of the need for a proper administration of the sacrament according to the mode set out by the Lord in Scripture. In fact, if you were to ask someone what the proper mode of communion is they would likely look at you in utter confusion. It's just not something we talk about. But the Scripture is actually more explicit concerning the right mode of administer the Lord's Supper than it is about baptism, and we saw that it is very clear concerning

that sacrament. Why then is there such a vast difference from congregation to congregation in how the Supper is administered? I would argue that it is because we live in a very individualistic society, and that has bled over into the church. Remember what we saw concerning what is signified and sealed in the Supper, that in this meal we have signified and sealed unto us communion with Christ and with one another. The Lord's Supper is not an individualistic sacrament, but is a communal meal. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ instituted it in the manner in which He did. Just as we saw concerning baptism, the sacramental actions of the Lord's Supper are integral to the nature of the Supper itself, and we are not free to depart from those actions. The actions and the elements of this sacrament serve to show forth the spiritual realities which are essential to the sacrament. And so we will consider the mode of administration of the Lord's Supper this morning by considering that Christ instituted this sacrament with one loaf, one cup, and at one table.

Let us consider first that within the Supper there is to be one loaf. Look with me at the end of verse 16 and on into verse 17, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Notice here that the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. We are given a twofold meaning of this, that the one loaf is the one body of Christ which was broken for you. When you break the bread and partake of it you are communing with the body of Christ broken for you. This is what is meant by Christ's words, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." You are communing with the Lord in His suffering. But there is another meaning as well. Not only is the bread we break communion with the body of Christ broken for you, but it is also communion with the body of Christ which you are a part of. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." This bread represents the corporate body of Christ as well. Just as we all here are unique, different, individual parts which make up

the broader body of Christ, so too is the bread made up of the unique, different, individual parts and grains which make up the whole loaf. And so this symbolizes what is true of the Supper, that you are communing with one another. There is a unifying aspect to the Supper that is shown forth in this loaf of bread. That is why we each break off a piece of that loaf to partake of, because we are each a piece of that spiritual loaf, that body of Christ. And so we condemn the use of individual wafers in the Supper, because it completely does away with this crucial aspect of what the sacrament is. We cannot lose this vital aspect found in the one loaf.

And it is one loaf. This is very clear from our text. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” It is one bread. Notice that it is ‘the bread.’ Both ‘the bread’ and the pronoun ‘it’ are singular both here in our English translation as well as in the original Greek. It is most certainly one loaf. But there seems to arise within the church a controversy over what type of bread must be used. Are we to use unleavened bread or leavened bread? If we look at the context in which Christ instituted this sacrament we see that it took place following the Passover meal. This would mean that in order for Christ to keep the law of the Lord concerning Passover, the bread He used in the institution of the sacrament would have been unleavened. So does that mean we ought to do so as well? Scripture would seem to argue no. It’s interesting that the Lord used the Greek word *arton* when speaking of the bread. This is the word for common bread, that which would be your normal everyday bread. He didn’t use the word *azumon* which means unleavened bread. It seems clear that what Christ Jesus instituted to be the element used in the Supper was a common loaf of bread, and that circumstantially the common loaf of bread He had at the time of instituting the Supper was unleavened. And so we used common table bread, which contains leaven, because it is what is common to our society. While there are some great men who have insisted upon the need for communion bread to be unleavened, we must agree with our

Reformed forefathers that an insistence upon unleavened bread is a form of Judaizing because it insists on maintaining Old Covenant ceremonial aspects which have no New Covenant warrant.

Friends, I pray that this is not controversial for you. I thank the Lord that we already embrace and practice the Biblical example of a common loaf in the Supper. This is one real tangible way in which we can show forth that spiritual reality of communion with the body of Christ broken for you. And just as a quick aside, His body was broken for you. This is why we ought not pre-cut the bread. Christ's body was not cut for you, but it was broken for you. And so the sacramental action of breaking the bread is so important to this as well. When you come to partake of the sacrament, remember these things. Remember what the bread signifies. Remember that you are not partaking of this covenantal meal as merely an individual, but that you are communing with Christ and with one another. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." So partake of that one bread, Christ's one body broken for you, and His one body assembled together to feast in this meal. Show forth the union and communion you have by eating of the one loaf.

And just as Christ instituted the Supper with one loaf, so too did He institute it with one cup. We read in Luke 22:20, "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Christ took the cup, the singular cup. In Mark 14: 23 we read, "And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it." They all drank of *it*, singular. In Luke 22:17 we see Christ telling His disciples to divide the singular cup amongst themselves, meaning that they are to partake of the cup and then pass it on to the next person. The Lord did not leave the decision up to the disciples as to whether they should use the common cup which He had blessed, or whether they should use their own individual cup from which they most likely had been drinking at the ordinary supper just prior to the Lord's Supper. The Lord did not suggest that the disciples drink

from the common cup, but rather commanded His disciples to divide among themselves the wine within the one common cup which He had blessed. This point cannot be disputed, because just as it is plain to see in the institution of the Supper that Christ instituted a common loaf, it is just as plain to see that He instituted a common cup. That is why when speaking of perverting the sacrament in our 1 Corinthians 10 text, Paul says in verse 21, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils.” Because it is a single common cup which shows unity with those who are partaking of it and communion with the one whose cup it is. And really quickly, there is another aspect to the one cup which must be remembered. What does Christ say of the cup? “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” To divide the singular cup of the Lord is to show forth a division in that which it signifies. No longer do we show in our sacramental actions the one New Testament which is the means by which Christ died for His people, but instead we show forth that each person has their own individual testament which is just for them. Friends, I know this is not the intention of having individual cups, but this borders very close to blasphemy. When a Church gives to its communicants many different cups at the Lord’s Table, it destroys that symbol of oneness which is to be so precious to the Church of Christ. But I don’t want to belabor that point.

So what is it that is in this one cup? We saw that the first element in the Supper is the one loaf of common bread. Here we see that the other element is the one cup of wine. I know this is probably one of the most controversial aspects of worship in the modern Church, but for almost 1900 years this was a non-issue. Until 1869 there was no other option than to use wine in communion, because it wasn’t until then that the pasteurization process for grape juice was discovered. It is evident that the Lord instituted the cup with wine, and that it wasn’t some freshly pressed “new wine” as some like to argue. If that were the case the Apostle Paul would have corrected the Corinthians for their use of alcoholic wine in 1 Corinthians 11, but instead all we see is his rebuke for their getting drunk on it.

What we need to realize is that the shift away from wine to grape juice was not done out of some new insight found in Scripture, but was done out of an influence of the culture upon the Church. It was the temperance movement, which our denomination has historically been greatly involved in, which led to replacing what the Lord instituted with a substitute. G.I. Williamson does well in refuting this shift away from wine towards grape juice. He writes, “If the decision to use grape juice instead of wine is based on the influence of the Temperance Movement, we must regard this as seriously unbiblical. It is a false doctrine, a legacy from the ancient Gnostics, to locate sin or evil in material things. The cause of the sin of drunkenness was located by Christ in man’s depraved heart (Mark 7:14-23), not in wine. It is not Biblical to locate evil in the handiwork of God [Psalm 24:11] rather than in the heart of man. Nor can the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper be rightly administered on the basis of deference to such error.”

But friends, I want you to remember that there are spiritual realities which are conveyed in the sacramental actions. There are aspects to this sacrament which are not shown forth in the use of grape juice, but are only found in wine. Think of the bitterness that is found in wine due to the tannins which remind us of the bitterness of God’s wrath which Christ drank to the dregs. But balancing that bitterness is the sweetness of the grape which reminds us of the sweetness of salvation that is found through Christ drinking that bitter cup of wrath. Wine has sanitizing properties because the alcohol naturally kills bacteria. This reminds us of the cleansing effect of Christ’s blood poured out for the remission of sins. Grape juice does the opposite; it harbors bacteria and spoils. Wine is said in Scripture to be given to make the heart merry. This reminds us of the joy that we have in Christ through His sacrifice. And I don’t want to come across as mean, but wine is the drink of adults while grape juice is the drink of children. There is a spiritual maturity that is required when coming to the Table, and that is shown forth in partaking of the drink of the mature. I know we do split cup here, but think about it. Is that really that much better? What are we

conveying in our practice? Are we showing forth the unity of the body in the supper when each person can get their own little cup and some can have wine and others grape juice? If I'm being frank, what that conveys is that you can have your own little Savior however you want Him because He is yours. Do you want your Savior fermented or unfermented? Seriously, where is the unity in this?

And I know there are pastoral concerns in this. What of the brother who struggled with alcoholism and would spiral back into it if he partook of wine? First of all, if someone is that beholden to the sin of drunkenness that they would fall back into the ways of the drunkard by taking the smallest of sips, he should not be coming to the Table anyway. He is resting in his own efforts and not in Christ. Also, there has never been an example given which shows this has ever happened. And remember, there have been drunkards since the beginning. Do you not think Christ knew of this sin when He instituted wine in the Supper? But what of those who made vows not to drink alcohol or that thinking drinking alcohol would be a sin? First, those who took that vow made an unlawful vow and are not bound to uphold it. And those who think drinking alcohol would be a sin ought to be shepherded toward seeing the blessing which the Lord attaches to wine. These are all arguments of the weaker brother, and we must loving care for and shepherd the weaker brother among us. But the point of the weaker brother principle is to guide them towards strength in the Lord, not to leave them in their weakness. Unfortunately, the principle of the weaker brother has turned into the tyranny of the weaker brother, where congregations are held hostage to their weakness.

There also may be some of you who are concerned with using one cup, that you think it will spread germs, or that you think it's gross. The germ issue is the reason why in the early 1900s the RPCNA voted to allow individual cups. Friends, this issue is alleviated by the use of alcoholic wine, which we already said kills bacteria, as well as by using a cup made of precious metals, which

naturally have antimicrobial properties. In fact, several years ago the CDC did a study which showed that there is no increased risk of infection in those who partake of a common communion cup. And note that it is not in obeying the institution at Christ that you are at risk of getting sick, but in the unworthy partaking of the sacrament. And to those who think it's just gross, I want to ask you a question. If you were at that first Lord's Supper where Christ was instituting the sacrament and John partook of the cup and then Peter, and he passed it to you, would you look at your Savior in the face and tell Him you can't do it because it's gross? That would be a slap in the face of the Savior. So why would you do that if we were to use a common cup? We do not have the authority to do away with what Christ has instituted, or to change it, simply because it's not what we prefer. I love what F.M. Foster, an RP minister who is now in glory, had to say about this, "Putting in the individual cup, where Christ gave the common cup, is coming dangerously near like throwing down the altar of the Lord and each one setting up an altar for himself. The altar is not the blood of the sacrifice, but it is a part of the divinely-appointed order, and so is the common cup."

So we see that the Lord's Supper was instituted with one loaf and one cup, but how is it to be administered? We see that it is to be done while sitting together at one table. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." Once again, it is a singular table which is the Lord's. And sitting at this one table highlights an important truth that is found in this sacrament, that the Lord of Glory, the King of kings, has called us to come and be honored guests at His royal dining table. This is a great blessing, to be invited to sit at the King's table and to sup with Him. George Gillespie writes, "The honor of Communion, is to eat and drink at his Table in his Kingdom, and this honor (signified by their sitting, eating and drinking at his table in his last Supper) he puts upon them as believing communicants, so that it belongs to all such." The reality that is conveyed in this sacramental act, in this mode of communion, is that we have been invited to eat at the feast of the King, and to not

sit round about His table when He has summoned you to it is the height of disrespect. But instead we are more comfortable with remaining in our chosen seats in the pews and just being served so that we can partake on our own. How are you showing the world you are communing with your risen Savior when you're not even sitting at His table?

Also sitting at the table most accurately conveys the spiritual reality that we are communing with one another in this meal. To sit individually and take individually does great harm to the sensible sign of communion with one another. Gillespie again writes, "The coming to and receiving at the Table serves to set forth the Communion of Saints with Christ and among themselves, which is a principal thing intended in this Sacrament, and without such a symbol as I now plead for, is not plainly and clearly set forth in this ordinance. To eat in the same house, and of the same meat, is nothing near such a sign of fellowship or communion, as to eat at the same table." I know this imagery may be more foreign to us in our modern context, because we have lost the great act of communing with others at a table. Instead we are much more comfortable eating our meals sitting on the couch or even in our own rooms away from others. But to understand the imagery conveyed in this sacramental action we must understand that there is a bond of unity, a fellowship that is to be had with others, which can only come through sharing a meal at a common table. That is what is signified here in this sacrament. And unfortunately that is precisely what is lost when we lose the table.

Dear saints, I know that this may seem strange to some of you. I know this is not what we currently do or what most of you are accustomed to, but it is what Christ has instituted as the mode for administering this sacramental meal. And I know there may be concern about space for having a table large enough for all the communicant to sit at, but that concern ought not cause us to neglect this great practice. There truly is a blessing that is experienced when you sit at the Lord's Table with your brothers and sisters on either

side of you and you partake of this meal together as a family sitting at the King's table. I've only experienced this once, and that was during my visit in Phoenix for their communion season, but I can tell you that the Lord blesses faithfulness to His institutions. I remember talking to one lady there who said she was weirded out by the idea of partaking of communion in this way, but that through faithful obedience the Lord showed her the blessings that are found in sitting at one table and partaking of the sacrament with the body of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I want to be very clear. I am not changing any of our practices here at Westminster simply by preaching this sermon. Those decisions would have to be made as a session. All that I am doing today, just as was done three weeks ago concerning the mode of baptism, is showing that there is a proper way in which the sacrament is to be administered. The 1560 Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland says, "The Table of the Lord is then most rightly ministered when it approaches most nigh to Christ's own action. But plain it is, that at that Supper Christ Jesus sat with his disciples, and therefore do we judge that sitting at a table is most convenient to that holy action; that bread and wine ought to be there; that thanks ought to be given; distribution of the same made; and commandment given that the bread should be taken and eaten; and that all should likewise drink of the cup of wine, with declaration what both the one and the other is, we suppose no godly man will doubt." Notice it says 'most rightly'. This is because there are degrees of purity when it comes to administering the sacrament. Just as baptism by immersion is an improper mode yet valid, so too is any deviation from the mode of the Supper which Christ instituted. But we should not be okay with a less pure administration. We should not be okay with an improper administration. If Christ has commanded it be done a certain way, we ought not see how far we can stretch that and still be within bounds. We ought to be striving to conform our practice as closely as we can to that which is most pure. And that which is most pure is one loaf, one cup, and one table.