

Title: Look Out 2022!  
Date: January 2, 2022  
Subject: Five ways we should look when approaching communion and life.  
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23 - 28

## Call

This morning we'll discover five ways communion encourages us to look, not just at communion, but at the New Year...the approach we take for each day of our lives. We could call it "Outlook 2022" but that sounds like something from a business report or a computer update. Let's change it to "Look Out 2022!"

Jesus established communion/the Lord's Supper with its symbols as the ceremony of the new covenant, the fulfillment of what God had promised (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Cong – He is Lord

Family time

Prayer

Worship through giving

Scripture – 1 Corinthians 11:23 - 28

## Look backward

The biblical instructions about communion are framed by the context. The Scripture that was read summarizes the background: "on the night he was betrayed." There's more to the story. There was a lot going on in the room where Jesus met with the disciples the night before he's going to die on the cross. They'd gathered to eat the Passover which celebrated God delivering the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. The Lord transformed the meal into what we call the Lord's Supper or communion.

The disciples were uneasy about the future and had questions. Jesus spoke into their fear and reassured them he would be with them through the Holy Spirit. He washed their feet to teach them how they were to serve one another. He spoke about his love for them and how they were to love one another. He bluntly told them one of them was going to betray him and another was going to deny him. He prayed what is known as the high priestly prayer.

The predicted betrayal by Judas and denial by Peter are vivid reminders of why Jesus went to the cross. People are sinners who commit moral crimes against the God of the universe and deserve to be punished. Jesus is betrayed by people. The whole planet, every person who has ever lived, by virtue of being sinners, conspired together to kill him. They, we, are in need of rescue.

Each of Gospel account and what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians provide more details...like witnesses do at a trial. In Luke's record, Jesus says, "this is my body given for you" (Luke 22:19) and "blood which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). Matthew's account expands: "my blood...is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The impact of Christ goes beyond the disciples. It's for many. Aren't you glad it wasn't just for those in the room at that time? Christ's blood, pouring out his life, was for the forgiveness of sins. This was his purpose in coming to earth.

Jesus asked his followers to remember what he's done through the symbols of the bread and cup. "Do this in remembrance of me." The central focus is the cross, but it includes all of Christ's life and work. We understand if Christ didn't leave heaven and come to earth, live a perfect life, and die...we would still be in our sins.

Therefore, we celebrate God's love and grace and mercy and kindness and undeserved favor. Jesus Christ gave his life so we could live. It is the means through which we gain hope, peace, joy and heaven.

Family Life Today radio from Wednesday (12/29/21, [familylife.com/podcast/familylife-today/when-doing-more-isnt-always-better](http://familylife.com/podcast/familylife-today/when-doing-more-isnt-always-better)) Dane Ortlund author of a book called *Deeper*, subtitled *Real Change for Real Sinners* which is about: "How does a follower of Christ *grow* in his relationship with Christ?" In the interview: "We *grow* by going *deeper* into the *Lord Jesus* and what was true of us at our *conversion*, not by graduating on to other tricks, tips, and strategies... I've come to believe the way that we grow and get traction in the Christian life is by sinking more deeply into *who* Jesus—in all His multifaceted wonder—is as our Lord, Savior, Friend and Deliverer... You are now a son or a daughter of God, justified, adopted and reconciled. *Live in light of it!*...If you want to grow in Christ, and you're frustrated because you're *not*, that's a sign that God is in you. That, itself, is hope-giving... We don't change by focusing on change. We change by focusing on Christ, and change comes in the back door. We don't mainly grow by thinking about: "Oh, am I growing or not?"—that becomes what Dave (the co-host) was saying, to [be] really self-reflective, like we're holding up a mirror to ourselves all the time—but what if, instead of a mirror, we were holding up a window, looking at Christ? That's actually what changes us, *beholding* Him."

When we look at Jesus we see his death and his life and teachings. As we read the Gospels, we see him act with compassion by healing lepers and the blind, feeding the hungry multitude, taking a child into his arms. We hear him speak with authority about being The I AM but also with tenderness of love and comfort. He proclaims "blessed" are those who follow him. He proclaims he would give his life for you, for me. We see in the Bible that that is what he did. We are said to participate in the sacrifice of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:15 - 20). It's a recognition that since Christ died, we also died with him, since he died for all (Romans 6:8).

We look backward to see Jesus in his entirety.

## Look inward

Some other things happened when Jesus initiated the Lord's Supper. There was a dispute among the disciples as to who was the greatest, who was the best (Luke 22:24 - 27). There was also a discussion about who was the worst. This came about when Jesus told them one of them would betray him. The disciples "stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant" (John 13:22) and "began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this" (Luke 22:23). What would our stares and questions have conveyed? Accusations, disapproval and hatred. The one who would betray would certainly have to come from one of them. Who else would do something so vile and reprehensible?

The disciples focused on themselves...Peter on Peter, Andrew on Andrew. They wanted to see how they measured up against the competition. They used position, power and judgmentalism. They needed to use a different standard. Jesus told them they needed to serve and then showed them how it's done by serving them by washing their feet.

The call is given to examine ourselves before eating the bread and drinking the cup (1 Corinthians 11:28). We do this to prepare ourselves for taking communion. We need to review the condition of our souls to see if there is sin that needs to be dealt with.

The original people to whom this directive was given were far from perfect. They were guilty of sinning even in their observance of the Lord's Supper. Some in the church continued to worship idols, trying to mix that with worshipping Jesus. They didn't see any problem in keeping their feet in both worlds.

The Lord's Supper was part of a larger celebration where they met for a fellowship meal. Some people brought a lot of food and others weren't able to bring any. Some gorged themselves on what they brought and even got drunk. Others went away hungry. They were guilty of being selfish, self-centered, discriminating, and gluttonous. They were inconsiderate and ignored the connection they had with others.

The "good church folks" were irreverent and nonchalant in their attitude towards Christ's death and the Lord's Supper. They failed to understand that participating in communion is worshipping Christ, a way of approaching God. They failed to consider what the Lord had done and the benefits God has for us through Christ's death on the cross.

They were sinning. The Bible tells us, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18). We need to be sensitive to sin and ready to deal with it through confessing and repenting. Keep short accounts with God. Don't let things build up. We don't need to confess the same thing again and again and again.

Sometimes looking inward meshes with looking backward in an improper way. It becomes constant introspection. The person looks at their past with their sin and dwells on it. We aren't to keep staring in the rearview mirror to check out the sins that have been confessed.

Looking inward is more than checking to see if there's sin. We need to think about what we're doing, the attitude and approach with which we approach communion. Do we treat it as just another routine? Do we use it as a way to remember what Christ has done and seek to honor him?

It's good to have a checkup of our spiritual lives – trust in and dependence on Christ, love for him, relationship with God and people, obedience. It's not to check to see if we're worthy... because who is worthy? No one. It's about coming to Christ and thanking him. Therefore, we look inward.

Private prayer

The Bread

Cong – Here I Am to Worship

Look outward

We've already seen how we participate with Christ and that the divine doesn't leave us alone. Sometimes we need to zero in on us -- proclaim the truth for ourselves and to ourselves so we recall and remember what Christ has done for us. That is a high priority. However, there's an equally high priority. We don't focus only on ourselves, what we get out of partaking in communion. We need to get out of ourselves.

Two related words to communion are community and communication. The Lord's Supper is an event for the community of believers. We do it with others who've placed their trust in Jesus Christ to take away their sins and give them eternal life. It's sharing what we have in common, another related word. We align ourselves with those of similar trust in Christ. We have connections with others.

Communicate. We communicate the message of communion to those who are part of the community of believers. We speak to others. We participate with others to remind them we aren't alone, they aren't alone all by themselves all by their lonesome. There are others in the same boat, partners who share in fellowship around the table.

We don't know all that others in the body are going through. We don't understand the depths through which a fellow traveler on the road to heaven may be experiencing. We do know there are times when we've been there and it helped to have someone by our side.

Therefore, we proclaim the Lord's death, it's factuality and its meaning so people around us will remember God loves them so much he sent his one and only Son to die in their place and since he did that, he will also give everything needed so we can live for him (Romans 8:32; 2 Peter 1:3).

Communication is also intended for to those who don't know Christ as Savior. We proclaim the good news that Jesus is the one who can take away sins and grant eternal life. There is hope in the hopeless world. There is purpose in the purposelessness of life.

Look outward and proclaim the Good News.

Scripture – John 1:12, 5:24; Romans 5:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Hebrews 2:9, 9:14, 15; 1 John 4:10

The Cup

Prayer -- Cliff

Look Upward

More from Ortlund about Christ's current work: "Jesus is not twiddling His thumbs in heaven right now—He did His real job two thousand years ago and now He's exhausted His job description—no! He's in heaven, before the angels, in the court of heaven before the Father, interceding on our behalf. It doesn't mean He's making us any more saved; what it means is He is *applying* our full salvation in the court of heaven. In other words, here I am/here's Dane—stumbling his way and sinning his way through his little messy life—not only is it true that Jesus Christ died for me; and therefore, I am justified/I'm free to leave the court room—it's also true He's *interceding* for me; and therefore, He is reminding the whole host of heaven of just how justified, forgiven, and safe I am...I have been lifted out of the old age and parachuted into the new age. I still live in the old age, in the sense that the flesh is still strong in me—I still sin; I'm still fallen, yes—but my I.D. card, spiritually, says, "...*in heaven.*" I need to now live in light of what is already true of me."

We sin. We know we're going to sin. God knows we're going to sin. He doesn't abandon us. Sinning after salvation isn't a dead end. It doesn't mean we have to give in to despair because we're no longer saved, end of story. "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1).

We aren't to abuse our position like the people in the book of Romans who thought maybe they should sin more so they get more grace from God (Romans 6:1). Or like others who used their freedom in Christ to indulge their sinful nature and sin (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16).

We aren't to sin but when we do, Jesus is our Defender.

Look Forward

"We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Jesus tells us, according to the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25), he won't participate in the fellowship of eating and drinking with his followers until "my father's Kingdom...the Kingdom of God." He's waiting for when the kingdom will find its fulfillment and we'll eat together at the wedding supper of the Lamb and his bride (Revelation 19:7 - 9).

As Jesus said, "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2, 3). For the first time... we'll get to see Jesus face to face. He'll reunite us with loved ones who placed their trust in him as Savior and have died...and with all the saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18). What a grand reunion it will be!

How do we live in the remaining time we have on earth? We're to fix our eyes on Jesus and consider him, who for the joy of accomplishing our eternal salvation and being reunited with the Father to sit at the right hand of God, endured the shameful death on the cross. "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:1 – 3).

The Bible assures us heaven will be a place of perfection. Continue to draw our eyes to look toward heaven as we hear the following Scripture.

Scripture: Hebrews 7:24, 25; 9:28; 10:35 – 39; Revelation 21:1 – 4; 22:3 - 5

Can I, dare I, guarantee if you look backward, inward, outward, upward and forward that you'll have a really good 2022, that bad stuff, tough times won't happen?... No. I can guarantee that bad stuff and tough times will still happen as it has always happened and will happen. We may feel like we've been abandoned or wonder if it's worth it. And there will be good things that happen, things we'll celebrate and thoroughly enjoy.

Until we're with Jesus...The good news for whatever happens is... Immanuel... God with us...right now and then on through eternity. No one can take us out of his hands and he will never leave or forsake us.

Cong – The Power of the Cross

Because He Lives (Amen)

Prayer