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So, I'm trying to remember, I don't think we've ever had an extended series just on the Lord's Supper. We've certainly had some sermons and we try to do some exposition at the table every week. So we've had a couple of hundred many sermons and yet in most churches today, most congregations today, the idea of church member only communion is just not understood.

Just never been heard of. Part of that is because the Covenantal nature of the visible church on earth and membership in it and Christ's leadership of it. And this administration of the Covenant of grace is just not very well known in the churches.

Which is another way of saying, Presbyterianism, has receded into a minority or well, if you include under that umbrella, all of the reforms. So, three forms of unity, Westminster Standards etc. So we have some things that you've seen, and we've discovered aren't very well understood. One of the ways we know that is week after week, there are people who are not yet members of Hopewell from whom we do not receive Lord's Supper, guest cards and I don't have a Lord's Supper guest card on me, but there's a stack of them in the back there.

So the the session I decided that we would have a one-off on the Lord's Supper as a covenant meal and why is important to be a member of the church in order to take the Lord's Supper and how that works out in our practice at Hopewell. So the first thing to notice is, as I've already said the Lord suffers a covenantal meal.

It's not just to remembering, it's not just memorial. We are to take and remembrance. We'll Lord willing. Well, here, what that means or a little bit of what that means in a few moments. But it is a covenantal meal. Covenant meals are not new by the time the Lord Jesus comes.

You are all probably familiar with the Passover. Lord willing by 168 plus 674 hours from. Now we will all be familiar with the covenant ratification meal on the top of Mount Sinai, in Exodus 24, which is as much a, a looking forward to and harbinger of the, the Lord's Supper as even the Passover is, but the Lord Jesus, when he is instituting, when he starting the Lord's Supper, at that last Passover.

He identifies it as the last and great, covenant meal. The, the covenant meal that belongs to the new covenant, which has been promised. So we have that in Matthew, Mark and Luke and we have that in first Corinthians 11, which we hear now? Ordinarily. It being the most complete and cohesive place to read of our Lord's institution of the supper.

So Matthew 26, verse 28. For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. And then, Mark, 14 verse 24.

And he said to them. This is my blood of the new covenant and Luke. 22 verse 20. Incidentally on several of these the critical texts which and go back over that entire conversation right now. But the critical text is missing the word new in several of these instances. Luke 22, verse 20 it does it is here and in first Corinthians 11.

Likewise he also took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you. And then first Corinthians 11, verse 25. In the same manner, he also took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant. In my blood, this do is often as you drink it.

And remembrance of me Now it's important when we hear the language new covenant that we remember that. These are different administrations of the Covenant of Griggs. These are covenants that God is in with his corporate visible body on earth. The covenant of grace is not new. When Jesus comes The Covenant of grace is new in Genesis chapter 3 and even then it is a covenant that stretches back into the decree of God, because the representative of his people in the Covenant of grace is Jesus and that is true all the way from Genesis 3 to all eternity in the administrations of the Covenant of grace, God's people on earth have different federal representatives.

And so we'll see next Lord's day afternoon. Lord willing that Moses is functioning as covenant. Mediator and that that is what is referred to as the old covenant. And when the Mosaic administration is replaced Jesus as covenant, mediator of the church on earth of the visible church is what's called the new covenant.

And this was promised to to Israel in Jeremiah and other places but especially in Jeremiah and they were looking forward to the Covenant administration of Jesus Christ. When Jesus comes The church on earth is now under His administration and no longer under Moses's administration. This is one of the reasons why it's very important to recognize that the Jews are no longer, the covenant people of God.

On the earth, there are two all of trees, those who are in the covenant and those who are out of the covenant will maybe get to Romans 11 that I, no, not here in the sermon Lord willing, or helping us. But you see that, even in Hebrews chapter 8, for the first covenant had been faultless, then the place would have been sought for the second because finding fault with them.

He says, behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day, when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt because they did not continue in my covenant and I disregarded them says the Lord.

So The Jewish nation being led on earth by mere men and you see both in their constitution as a state and their kings and their constitution, as a church and their priests that they were a very faithless and unbelieving people and that the Lord in carrying out his demands or the the terms of the covenant with Israel was very very patient and he was patient because he intended to give them a new covenant head.

Who would be a man but who would not set merely on the earth? But who sits on the throne of heaven. And in the new covenant heaven and earth are bridged because our mediator who died and rose again sits not on the earth. But in the heavens, he is our great High Priest who does not sit on the earth or stand in a temple on the earth, but he is in the heavens.

He is our king and he sits on a throne That is in the heavens. Moreover, He is the one who preserves for himself, a church on the earth. He says, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And so this continuity of the visible church on earth from Genesis 3 to to Revelation 22.

I guess that's a new heavens and new earth at that point. This continuity is very important for us to understand the discontinuity between old covenant, and new covenant because the New

Covenant is for Israel and Judah. He says, in Hebrews age verse 8 and he's these quoting there. Of course, Jeremiah 31, but it's not just for Israel and Judah.

It's for those who He grafts in from the other all of tree using to use the language of Revelation chapter 11. And so Here's people on earth, have a membership. They they have since he constituted them. You remember in Exodus chapter 12 when they were having the passover, even before they get to Sinai.

Only those who have membership in Israel or able to take to participate and the covenant meal. There. And it is Covenant membership that admits to the table. Not profession of faith. Now, because in order to take well in order to eat and drink in a way that does not in the way in which you do not eat and drink judgment to yourself.

It is necessary for you to profess faith in order to in order to eat and drink. If you're under shepherds care for you and our practicing according to scripture and what we are hoping to see in, in the next few minutes, it isn't necessary for them to hear. You profess your faith and affirm that, the profession is credible.

Otherwise they would not be caring for or watching over your souls inward and sacrament. But because we have that, that mechanism of you, coming to the elders and professing, your faith, and having that profession of faith, a firm does as credible before before, you can eat and drink at the table, Many make the mistake of thinking that it's profession of faith that admits you to the table.

Now, it's profession of faith. That gives your undershepherds under Christ a clear conscience that they are not harming. You by administering the Lord's Supper to you, It's actually covenant membership that admits to the table because it is a covenant meal. It belongs to a particular people with a particular membership.

This is one of the reasons why baptism which is the sign of covenant membership is necessary in order to protect of the Lord's Supper. And that too, is prefigured on Sinai. In Exodus chapter 24 with the pouring of the blood of the sacrifice. Not only on the people who are identified by their 70 elders in and then they're the three priestly representatives.

And then the covenant, mediator Moses but more who are identified. The blood is also poured on the altar, identifying God, with His people, in the pouring of the blood. And when that is done, Then they sit down before. God and they see him and they eat and they drink.

So membership is covenant membership is what admits to the table. Although it is credible profession which upon which you are permitted to eat and to drink, Maybe you have heard me make that distinction. I understand a lot of things are implied and some some of you may and feel like I explain everything, but there are a lot of things that are implied.

When I say, if you are a member of a church, come up and if you have a credible profession that faith eat and drink because really, you ought to be a member to stand at the table because it is a covenant meal, and the perfect credible profession of faith is for the eating and drinking so that you eat and remembrance and drink and remembrance and don't eat and drink judgment to yourself.

So that brings us to the necessity to take by faith. This is one of the reasons why there is a union between word and sacrament. We see that in Matthew 28 with baptism. Baptism is first commanded or Christian baptism in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit is first commanded to the 11 on in Matthew 28.

And it is tied to teaching those who are baptized to keep all that, Christ has commanded independence upon Christ, The necessity of eating and drinking in remembrance of Christ, also joins word and sacrament. Because It is necessarily theological to eat in remembrance of Him and drink and remembrance of him.

Perhaps you've run into people who say say silly and foolish things like Well I don't I'm not really into all that theology. I just love Jesus, or if their theology is a little bit better. Jesus just loved me and died for me. Well, that's fine. But who is Jesus and what kind of death did he die?

And what did that accomplish and why was it necessary? And what should it produce in your life and as he accomplishes his purpose in your life, what difference does that make in the way you think? And the what you desire and your motivations and how you speak, and the nitty-gritty details of how you live, You see, there's no such thing as no creed but Christ, no creed.

But Christ is at self accreed and it is one of the worst ones that you could have because Christ has given us its word. And so Christ expects us to have his word as our Creed. Not some undefined idea of Jesus, as we like to think of him, but a defined doctrine of Jesus, as he has told us about Himself.

And so the ministry of the word is necessarily tied to the ministry of the sacrament. The Lord gives us those who teach us and shepherd us because he is also given us apostles and prophets and evangelists by whom. He caused his word to be written and then he gives us Pastor teachers who teach us and lead us in following the word that he has caused to be written.

This is how the great shepherd Shepherds his people and he, but he one of the ways that he identifies his sheep are as the ones who hear his voice and recognize it as his. So someone says I follow Jesus but I don't follow the Bible isn't following Jesus and someone says I follow Jesus but I don't do church.

Membership isn't following Jesus. And someone says I follow Jesus but I don't do submission to the elders isn't following Jesus. When we eat and drink and remembrance of Christ, We are not merely eating and drinking in remembrance of an event We eat. When we eat and drink, it shows forth his death until he comes.

Because his death is that, by which he has secured the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and his death is that, by which he has initiated his administration of the Covenant of grace, the new covenant in his blood and that new covenant in his blood that administration continues until he comes.

And so the covenant meal shows forth his death until he comes. But he doesn't say.

This is my body broken for you. Do this and remembrance of my death does he, What does he say? Kids, You hear it every Lord's day. Don't you? This is my body broken for you. Do this. And remembrance of me, It's Remembrance of a person, not an event, not one isolated action, and therefore, there is interaction with that person and there is interaction with his body on earth and recognition that those who are members of the congregation on earth are to be treated as body parts of Jesus.

That was the problem in First Corinthians 11, They were mistreating and neglecting one another, And Jesus confronts them by his apostle, by the Holy Spirit, saying, you cannot possibly be eating and drinking. And remembrance of me, if you are not honoring the membership in Christ, that is displayed upon all the other members of the church, right?

So failure to follow through on church membership. In our love for one another, in our preference, for one another, in our Treasuring, one another not merely as those with whom we walk now but as those who are literally united to the one whom we're supposed to be remembering at the table, that's how we end up with the instruction.

In first Corinthians chapter 11 to remembrance of a person and our ongoing covenant of connection with him, which means we're not just remembering that all our brothers and sisters. Our body parts of Jesus were remembering that we are body parts of Jesus that he is the head and that we follow the commandments of the head.

We're obligated both covenantally as members of his church who are taught to keep all that. He has commanded and by virtue of our union with him, as body parts that are supposed to be slaves to the head who is Christ for righteousness, that we are obligated to walk in a Christian way in our life to follow all of his commandments to study his word and learn it as well as we can.

A non-theological. Christian is one who is rejecting Jesus's plan for Christians. It's a nonsensical term, isn't it? Now as the Lord Jesus leads us and teaches us, He has assigned particular elders to particular congregations. First Corinthians 12, which is the very next chapter and it's not Coincidental. I guess that should be obvious in the Bible, but in our popcorn Bible, study age, the connections of things are often missed, aren't they?

The body life of first Corinthians, 12 flows out of the corrective for the Lord's Supper, in first Corinthians 11. Now, there's this wonderful statement in verse 18 of 1st Corinthians. 12, he's been talking about, not saying that you are not part of of the body and he's about to talk about not saying that someone else is in part of the body.

And it's based on this doctrine about the providence of what church, you're a member of what congregation you're a member of Now, God has set the members. Each one of them in the body just as He pleased. So the family you were born into or the place you ended up moving and God's providence.

And, and you look for the congregation that is missed suitable to your understanding of his word and join yourself to them, or the congregation from which the Lord sent out the word and brought you to faith through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it's quite natural. That that is that ends up being the congregation.

You join at first and sometimes you outgrow the doctrine of the congregation you join at first. And that too, is in the provenance of God. You find another one, But whatever congregation you end up, being a member of that is the providence of God to you. The pictures of God, arranging the members that belong to one another.

The if the foot should say because I'm not a hand, I'm not of the body, is there? It, therefore not of the body that that section and then, well, the in verse 21 and the eye cannot say to the hand. I have no need of you and etc and that section.

Those are very personal practical applications to how we think of ourself and our own congregation and how we think of others in our own congregation. It's flowing out of something. That was that was very personal and practical very concrete in chapter 11. Do you not think that the Corinthians knew who were the ones, who are going ahead and eating before everybody else and getting full and drunk?

And who are the ones, who perhaps because of financial poverty, or whatever. Other reason were being left without any and some likely to be the ones who are saying, I have no need of them and others likely to be the ones saying, Yes I'm not part of the body.

So the doctrine of the providence of God in local church membership that. However else you can you you say well, I chose that church. Well, Be careful with how you talk about choosing Because you also in a sense chose to believe in Jesus. But if you have good scriptural doctrine, you know why you chose to believe in Jesus?

Is because He chose to love you and give you life and give you faith to believe in Jesus. All right, so there is a providential doctrine of church membership know. And this is tied to the ministry of those whom. He gives us to teach us and then our ministry to one another.

There's a connection here for end of first Corinthians. 12 going into first Corinthians 13. There's a connection here that is similar to the connection in what I hope for by now, is for also, very familiar passage and Ephesians chapter 4. So, first Corinthians 12, not at the end of the chapter verse 27.

Now, you are the body of Christ and members individually and God has appointed these in the church. First apostles, second prophets third teachers. After that miracles and gifts of healings helps administrations varieties of tongues are all apostles are all prophets or all teachers. They're all workers of miracles to all have gifts of healings to all speak with tongues, do all interpret.

Now, there's only one of those offices that really continues today. The office of the teacher, the pastor teacher and the answer to the are all questions is, of course, no, not all are. But early earnestly desire, the best gifts. And yet, I will show you, I show you a more excellent way and he goes on to do what in first Corinthians 13?

Most of, you know, it or many of you know, it as the what chapter, The love chapter because the apostles and prophets and teachers, they teach us the word of God so that we are enabled to love God. According to His definition of what it looks like to love him and to love one another.

According to God's definition, what it looks like to love one another. And so you have a similar thing in Ephesians chapter 4, and again the idea of God. And this time, the resurrected Christ very specifically assigning us to each other Ephesians 4. I'll begin in verse 7 but to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men and God's marvelous providence. We actually have that verse at the end of our call to worship passage this morning. Now this he ascended, what does it mean? But that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth, using the language of Psalm 139 to talk about incarnation in the womb, He who descended is also the one who asks ended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things and he himself, gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some of endless and some pastors and teachers Four, The equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man to the full measure of the, stature of the fullness of Christ that we should no longer.

Be children post two and fro carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the coming craftiness of deceitful plotting. But speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into him. Who is the head Christ from whom the whole body joined and knit together by whatever joint supplies According to the effective working by which every part.

And some of you may have the translation there which is a good translation. Every member does its share causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. And so you were assigned to particular body parts by Christ who has given you particular, shepherd, teachers to teach you the Word of God.

So that as you love one another it will be the truth of Scripture that you speak to one another and it will be according to that. Truth that we all serve one another or minister to one another, to use the translation that appears here. Now Hebrews maybe we should do.

Let's do first Peter 5 because Hebrews is going to be a transition from the union of or the assignment of particular elders and co-members to one another to the accountability that we will have for what we did with one another. It says two it probably should say four accountability of each for the other in number four, there on your outline and we first Peter 5, the elders who are among UI exhort I, who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also take her of the glory that will be revealed shepherd.

The flock of God which is among you serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly not for dishonest gain but eagerly nor is being lords over those entrusted to you. But being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of Gloria that does not fade away.

And so there's a recognition that Christ is the one who has put the undershepherds in the position that they are in. He is the one who's assigned that particular congregation to them and it works the other way Likewise younger people submit yourselves to your elders. Yes. All of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility for God.

Resists, the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Now, this is a difficult thing because congregations are full of sinners and sessions are also full of sinners. And so each is instructed that Jesus leads his church shepherds his church teaches his church. In this particular way as the one who is assigned particular congregations all to one another and particular, under Shepards to those particular congregations.

And so he says he doesn't say therefore humble yourselves before one. Another verse 6. He says, therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, the he may exalt you in due time, and as you do, so you don't just have the commanded humility. But you have a promised, hope.

Casting all your care upon Him for he cares for you, which is to say, if you trust Jesus, you will join a church and submit to the elders of those church. And if you are an elder who trusts Jesus, you will shepherd that church. Not lording. It over them.

But as example to them and if you are Therefore doing that, you need to have Jesus as your hope because it often gets messy and painful. And so you don't, you know, cast your care upon the fact that you are doing what he has said, You cast your care upon him.

Who is using what he has said to do. First Peter 5:7 is one of many of our favorite verses for good reason, right? Because we have lots of cares and we want to cast them all upon Christ, and we know that he didn't just care for us once at the cross.

But he is still caring for us now. Well he is the one who cares for us through church membership and through elders who are not worthy or able to bear the burden of your casting, your cares upon them, You should expect that sinners are going to wound you which is why this is tied to this particular versus tied to that particular arrangement Hebrews 13.

I know we're running over a little bit but we're almost done. Theology. Is that the main part Hebrews 13 verse 7, remember those, who rule over you, who have spoken, the Word of God to you, whose faith, followed considering the outcome of their conduct And so God. And His providence, who picked the ones from whom, you would hear the gospel and the ones from whom you continue to hear the word of God taught.

The Lord gives you an assignment to remember them verse 7, and then obey and be submissive for 17 obey. Those who rule over you and be submissive for they watch out for your souls as those who must give account. And so, there's particular elders assigned to particular people, and, and the elders give account for those who are assigned to them.

It is necessary that they know which ones they have been assigned. Not everyone who comes through the door is a member of the congregation. And so there is an accounting. We're going to have to summarize. The of Acts 20:26 through 28, Paul declares himself innocent of their blood because he is fulfilled His ministry concerning them and he and he tells the Ephesian elders that they need to take heed not to just themselves but to their flock among which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers that.

It's God, the Holy Spirit. Who is appointed them Now they were, they probably went through some sort of selection process and identification process and ordination and installation. But again you have that providential statement of the apostle, the Holy Spirit made you overseers in the church that he bought with his blood.

So word in Sacramento tied together church membership is important, What does that mean? How should we, how should we reflect those things and how we take this upper? Well, there are three options. One is open communion and fully open communion isn't really an option. If you don't, if you don't give warning, if you don't tell who it's for.

If you don't tell how to take it, that's just dereliction of duty. So open communities, some is maybe better described if you're talking about options as fenced. Communion You give a warning. You give instruction every time especially giving the warning that it's only for church members. And that they have to have a credible profession of faith, but then you leave their partaking entirely up to them.

That's like someone who goes out to a flock of sheep and the sheep have done it a hundred times and he he says, okay it's time to go now. They know the voice of the shepherd, they know what they're supposed to do, but they're sheep and they don't always do what they're supposed to do.

They can get to be creatures of habit, but he's not being a faithful shepherd. And unless he, and probably his dog, in that case, direct direct them. The dog is using some nipping accountability and there might be erot. Accountability so forth. The other end of the spectrum is closed communion only members of that particular congregation.

If you, If you are not a member of that congregation, then then you should be with your own church taking the supper. This was a historic practice in Scott's. Presbyterianism. They ended up actually having the Lord's Supper just once or twice a year, and they would have communion season.

The communion season would start with a round of pastoral visits in which every family and every member of every family would have spiritual checkup. And they'd be given a token that if they pass their check up and they could and their token would admit them to the table. Close communion has various levels.

One is almost closed and that is congregations. That recognize one another's tokens and in Scott's Presbyterian. Practice for a time. What? That meant was the different congregation staggered. Their communion seasons and recognized one another's tokens. So you might take four times a year or six times a year, depending on how near the congregations were.

And who was recognizing whose tokens close, communion is only members of that congregation, and other like-minded congregations. That's what we practice at Hopewell and where we have fallen as far as like-minded congregations as congregations that preach. The gospel of Jesus Christ, you, it could be defined. It could have been defined as ARP congregations or Napark congregations or Westminster and three forms congregations or or whatever.

But for us, as you have often heard at the table, it is those who are members of gospel preaching congregations, that's just recognition. That the reason Hopewell does the table the way it does is because it's the Lord's table. And he's the one who decides and we recognize that we're not the only congregation of Christ's church.

And so we have close communion but also the closed loop because it is a covenant meal and there is to be accountability for teaching and for submission to elders. And what that means is, If Hopewell is not the congregation of which you are a member. We have what we have called, the Lord's, Supper guest cards, and you put what congregation you're a member of so that and yeah, and you put in the offering box.

So that on Monday morning I send to your local congregations elders that you worshiped with us and took the supper with us, That makes it hard to run from your previous church membership and take the Lord's Supper at Hopewell. It also means that if you happen to come from a church, I don't know.

Well, maybe I know of a couple in the entire North America, If you happen to come from a church, the practice is closed communion and they're elders and get a card that says you took the supper at Hopewell, you have accountability because you didn't come to Hopewell to escape the way your local congregation and your elders.

In God's set over you in their wisdom, have decided that your congregation would take the supper. Now, we recognize that because of the current weakness, the low state of the church and the weakness of believers and the weakness of understanding the importance and necessity of membership. There are people who have been members of a gospel preaching church and they have made not just profession but profession that was deemed credible by an evangelical church and they're between congregations.

Well, those may come and fill out their Lord's Supper guest card and put Hopewell as their church, They may do. So, being held accountable to work toward the more formal accountability of membership with their saying is, I understand that membership is important. And I am willing to be held accountable by Hopewell's elders for continuing to work towards membership.

And if you put Hopewell on the card for, yeah, 78 weeks. And you're still not a member, You should expect, you should expect, as sooner than that, the Lord helping us be faithful. You should expect that Hopewell's elders will say we're really stretching the definition of actively working towards membership.

Here we need to do better with recognizing the necessity of covenant membership in order to take at the Covenant table and we are not willing to help you eat and drink judgment to yourself.

So that's a lot. Thank you for bearing with us to get 10 minutes over. Be happy to to answer more questions. There are maybe a dozen doctrines that could use an entire series that we just glanced upon as we went through this today. It's bright, Our Father in heaven.

We thank you that you have for yourself a church and the earth and we pray. O. Lord that you would be glorified by your church, following your word, and doing things your way. And Lord, we do. Pray that you would help us to be gracious and not Lord over your people.

But to shepherd them, in a manner fitting into the character that you describe, and that you yourself have, and we pray, Lord, that you would bring your church into healthier better. Instructed days. Help us, Lord, as we come to worship you to come through Jesus, who is the mediator of the New Covenant, even as he sits on the throne of glory and leads our worship from there.

We ask it in his name. Amen.