

# Communing with Christ: A New Covenant in His Blood

*Luke 22:1-23*

Halifax: 4 April 2004

## **Introduction**

Today we take up the fourth message in our first-Sunday-of-the-month series on The Lord's Supper from Luke 22.

1. We began this series in January with a message entitled:
  - "Communion with Christ, His Earnest Desire."
  - At that time,
    - I spoke to you about the strong desire our Saviour has to meet with us at His table that He might bless us.
    - How great is His love for us!
      - that on the very night He was to be betrayed...
      - He gave thanks for His body that was about to be offered and His blood that was about to be shed for us.
  - And now that He has offered that sacrifice,
    - He calls us to come to His table to remember Him—
    - To hear the good news of our salvation proclaimed...
    - and to praise and give thanks to God for this salvation.
  - What comfort it is to see Him, with fervent desires for us!
    - Let us come and meet His desire with our own desire to commune with Him.
2. Then in February, we moved into Part 2 of the series entitled:
  - "Communing with Christ, A Fulfilment of the Passover."
  - In that message, I showed you that Jesus is our Passover.
  - At the communion table we stand before two great events just the way Israel did when they ate the Passover in Egypt.
    - We look back at the event of His sacrifice, when the lamb was slain for us...
    - And we look ahead to the day of judgement, when God promises that He will pass over us and not visit us with His wrath and judgement.
    - At the Supper we remember what God has done and we look ahead to what He has promised to do.

3. In March, we looked at “Communion with Christ, Feeding on Him.”
  - In this sermon I concentrated on the actions and words of Jesus in Luke 22:19:
    - And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”
  - a. I showed you that eating the bread is not an empty sign—
    - It is a sign that points to something that Jesus truly does...
      - He nourishes us into the fullness of human life,
        - feeding us spiritually with His own human flesh.
    - Because we cannot see the nourishment occurring,
      - He has given us an outward sign (the eating of bread) to show that He truly nourishes us.
      - This does not mean that the bread turns into His body (as the Roman Catholic Church teaches), but neither does it mean that it is a bare memorial as many evangelicals teach.
      - It is a sign that points to a real communion with Christ—
        - a real nourishment that takes place spiritually and truly.
  - b. What this means is that day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year,
    - We are to look to Christ to nourish us little by little into the fullness of human life.
      - We do not look for lightening bolts that will suddenly change us...
      - But for nourishment that makes us grow like an oak tree.
    - We were created in God’s image—that is, we were a true reflection of God—
      - But the fall marred the image of God in us...
        - Instead of displaying Him in truth, we tell lies about Him.
      - But Jesus, in His human flesh,
        - perfectly displayed God’s image in human flesh...
        - And His promise is that He gives Himself to us to nourish us into the fullness of that perfect human life.
  - c. We need this sign of nourishment to keep us looking to Jesus for life.
    - We need to look at every sermon as a call to come to Jesus Christ and feed upon Him.
      - If the sermon sets forth our duty,

- we should not go away discouraged and without hope,
- but we should come to Christ, looking to Him to feed us!
- If the sermon tells us of the great things He has done for us,
  - we should likewise come looking to Christ to feed us—
    - to enable to obtain the benefit of all the promises.
- The Lord's Supper is given to you to keep you looking to Christ for all that you need.

TRANS> But the nourishment of Christ's **body** is not the only thing we need as we make our pilgrimage through this world...

- We also need to see that His blood is given to us.
  - Jesus not only gives us His flesh to eat,
    - He also gives us His blood to drink.
  - Luke 22:20 says:
    - Likewise He **also** *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.
- In today's sermon, I want to focus on this second element of the Lord's Supper.

**I. What is Jesus talking about with these words: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you"?**

A. By speaking of **shed blood** Jesus refers to His sacrificial death to atone for sin.

1. In the law, God made it clear that the penalty for sin is death.
  - In Ezekiel 18:4, He said,
    - "the soul that sins, it shall die."
  - In Romans 6:23, he says,
    - "The wages of sin (or the penalty of sin) is death."
2. But in His grace,
  - God ordained that the blood of another could be shed to atone for sin.
    - a. In Lev. 17:11, God said concerning blood:
      - Lev. 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul."

- The idea is that the life of the sacrificial victim is poured out instead of the blood of the worshipper for whom the sacrifice is made.
- b. In Hebrews 9:22 we are given a nice summary about the importance of the shedding of blood:
- Heb 9:22: And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.
- c. In Matthew, Jesus mentions that His blood was shed for this very purpose of remission...
- He says,
    - Matthew 26:28: “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many **for the remission of sins.**”
    - “**Remission**” refers to sending something away, getting rid of it...
      - So remission of sin refers to the removal of sin from our record...
      - Our sin is taken away by the shedding of Christ’s blood.
- B. But notice that Jesus also speaks of the cup as the “**new covenant**” in His blood.
1. By speaking of this as the blood of the New Covenant,
    - Jesus distinguishes it from the blood of the Old Covenant.
  2. There are two administrations of God’s covenant of grace.
    - a. The blood of the old covenant was the blood of bulls of goats...
      - It was not able to truly atone for sin...
        - The shedding of an animal’s blood could not substitute for the shedding of our blood.
      - And so the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could not truly take away sin.
        - They served as a temporary provision to point to the coming of Christ whose blood would truly atone for sin.
        - Because they were only types, these sacrifices were offered over and over in an earthly tabernacle.
          - Thus there were Levites and priests and altars and incense and musical instruments and temples and all sorts of ceremonies and regulations which were to serve until Jesus came.
    - b. But now He has come and has offered Himself as a sacrifice in the heavenly tabernacle.
      - The result is that there is a new sacrifice and so a new covenant...

- there is a whole new way of approaching God.
- The new covenant way is not by the blood of bulls and goats that sanctify only to the purifying of flesh...
  - But by the blood of Jesus Christ.
  - There are no more priests offering sacrifices each day in an earthly temple...
  - The blood of Jesus was shed once...when He died on the cross.
  - And that sacrifice is the one that takes away our sin.
    - It is by virtue of that one sacrifice that we are truly forgiven...
    - It is by that one sacrifice that the penalty of sin is truly paid.

### 3. The new covenant is prophesied in Jeremiah 31:

- 31 "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— 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.
  - They were given all these sacrifices and ceremonies to perform, but they did not carry them out as God had commanded.
  - That is why Jeremiah says that they **broke** the covenant.
    - But the New covenant will be different...
- 33 "But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
  - This new covenant will be one that effectively brings them into new life as God's people.
  - It will no longer be by outward ceremonies (washings and sacrifices performed with our bodies);
    - but by faith...
      - by believing the story of Jesus Christ.
    - Jeremiah goes on...
- 34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

- The great change is that the LORD Himself will be revealed to us for our salvation.
- He will actually pay the penalty for sin...
  - something that the Old Covenant sacrifices could not do.
- This doesn't mean that the Old Testament saints were not saved—
  - but it means that they had to approach God as those who were waiting for the promise...
  - In the New covenant we look back at the fulfilment that came by the shedding of Christ's blood.
    - Our worship is about remembering what Christ did...
    - Preaching has replaced ceremonies—preaching that tells the story of what Jesus did to atone for our sins.
    - Preaching that declares that we are forgiven through His blood.

**II. By giving you this cup to drink, Jesus is attesting to you that you have communion in His blood.**

A. He is showing you that you are intimately connected to His shed blood that continually cleanses you from all your sins.

1. His blood never loses its power to cleanse you from your sin.
  - In your effectual calling,
    - God has joined you to Jesus and His saving benefits forever by faith.
    - It is a permanent union.
  - You have received Him and are resting upon Him alone for salvation...
    - You have no other place to go for the forgiveness of sin.
    - Some of you may have been joined to Him from your earliest days.
      - Others of you may have trusted Him when you were older...
2. But from the moment you first began to trust in Him, you were immediately justified...
  - a. To be justified in this sense is to be declared righteous by God...
    - When God justifies you, He declares that you have fulfilled all the requirements of His law for eternal life!
    - You did not do this yourself, but Jesus did it for you!

- He not only did all that was required of Adam to obtain eternal life before the fall...
  - But He also did all that was required of us after the fall—
    - By the shedding of His blood on the cross...
    - He fully paid the full penalty for our sins.
- b. The point is that nothing more needs to be done to make you righteous...
- If you are trusting in Jesus Christ, you are perfectly righteous in God's eyes—
    - Your sins, past present and future, have all be paid for by His sacrifice.
    - His blood continues to cleanse you from all your sin all your days.
- B. This cleansing continues even though you daily continue to commit more sins.
1. In Ecclesiastes 7:20, Solomon says:
- Ec 7:20: For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.
- a. This is true of us both before and after we are justified.
- Until you get to heaven—as long as you remain on earth—you will continue to sin.
- b. You know that this is true...
- Even though Christ has given you a perfect record and clothed you with spotless robe of righteousness...
    - You keep adding one sin after another...
      - 1) There are those murderous thoughts in your heart—
        - when you try to get even with your enemy,
        - when you harbour malice and bitterness in your heart,
        - when you curse others.
      - 2) There are those sins of the tongue—
        - when you gossip and slander
        - when you tell lies and distort the truth
        - when you say things about God that are unworthy of Him.
      - 3) There are those sins of omission—
        - You neglect your wife or do not obey your husband...
        - You do not correct your children when they need correction,
          - or encourage them when they need encouragement.

- You do not obey your parents or honour them.
  - You do not worship God with your whole heart or return sincere thanks to His name.
2. For all these sins, you need cleansing!
- a. But it is not that you need to be justified again.
    - Once your are justified, you are perfectly accepted by God.
    - He will never cut you off because you are His child.
  - b. But as a child in His house,
    - you need to be cleansed as your sins continue to pop up.
    - 1) This is why Jesus taught His disciples to pray,
      - “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”
      - Asking God to forgive our sins is to be regular part of prayer.
    - 2) Jesus illustrated this need for ongoing cleansing when He washed the disciple’s feet.
      - When Peter objected, He said,
        - John 13:8: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."
        - If you belong to Jesus, He will be always washing you as you get soiled by sin.
      - Yet, this is not the total cleansing that occurred when you first believed:
        - When Peter declared:
          - "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!"
        - Jesus said to him,
          - "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean."
          - Jesus performed the deep cleansing when you first trusted in Him, and this is signified by baptism...
            - But now He spot cleans you as you sin from day to day...
            - This ongoing cleansing is signified by drinking the cup, the new covenant in His blood that was shed for you.
3. In his first epistle, John makes it clear that it is the same blood that was shed 2000 years ago that cleanses you for the sins committed after you believe.



- a. In 1 John 1:7-9, he says:
    - 1 John 1:7-9: But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  - b. There is not some other provision for the sins you commit after you have been justified,
    - but it is same blood of the covenant that continues to cleanse you.
- C. And so Jesus, by giving you the cup to drink, reminds you to keep looking to Him for the forgiveness of your sin.
1. The Lord's Supper points you away from yourself and to Him for this cleansing.
    - a. If you forget the cleansing power of His blood,
      - you will end up trying to cleanse yourself...
      - you will end up looking for something **you** can do to make up for your sin...
        - some ritual or some good deed.
    - b. By giving you this cup, Jesus says,
      - Remember me!
      - Remember my blood that was shed for the remission of sin.
      - Look to Me and what I have done, not to yourself and what you do...
    - c. It is absolute folly to look at the Supper itself as the thing that cleanses you...
      - The whole purpose of the Supper is to point you to Christ and His offering on the cross.
      - A sign is meant to attract attention, but your attention is not meant to terminate on the sign!
        - The sign is there to direct you to Christ.
  2. By giving you the cup of the new covenant in His blood again and again, Jesus renews the testimony that His blood continues to cleanse you.
    - a. In this you can see how covenant signs are **seals** of God's covenant mercies to us.
      - Like a seal that a king uses to testify that a document is from him.
      - Covenant signs are the Lord's official testimony...

- 1) Remember the rainbow after the flood?
  - God declared that the rainbow was a sign of His covenant to never destroy the earth with a flood...
  - He associated the covenant sign with the covenant promise and made it His seal.
  - And He told us that that He would look upon the rainbow and remember His promise.
  - Our confidence comes when we see the rainbow and are reminded that God sees it too and remembers His promise.
  
- 2) The same was true of the Passover blood in Egypt...
  - The commanded that the blood be put on the door frame and said,
  - “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”
  - God promises that He will see the covenant sign and remember His promise.
  
- b. So, at the Lord’s table, your confidence comes from knowing that He sees you drinking the symbol of Christ’s blood...
  - He sees you drinking and remembers His promise.
  - Today when you come to the table, remember that!
    - He sees the blood of Christ applied to you and He remembers His promise to cleanse you...
    - He sees you feeding upon the bread and He remembers His promise to nourish you.
  - It is a seal of the divine promise,
    - an authoritative testimony...
    - What assurance is given to us!

### **III. You need this assurance of God’s cleansing through Jesus Christ!**

- Without this assurance, you will be hindered in serving the Lord.
- I want to look at two ways that you will be hindered.

A. First, without the assurance that Christ continues to cleanse you, you will avoid God.

1. If you think you are all polluted with sin in God’s eyes,
  - you will be afraid to draw near to Him.

- a. You will not want to come close to hear His commandments because you will feel condemned by them.
    - Rather than applying them carefully to your life,
      - You will put up barriers to try to avoid them.
    - You will apply them in a very superficial and external way like the Pharisees did.
      - For example,
        - when God says not to murder, you will look only at the outward sin of taking someone's life...
        - You won't look at murder as hating your brother in your heart.
  - b. And when God's glory is declared: when you hear His majesty and power and holiness and justice proclaimed...
    - You will stand back at a distance in terror.
      - Like Peter when he first saw the glory of Christ, you will say:
        - "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."
    - Seeing His glory will not make you rejoice and praise,
      - it will make you cower away in fear...
        - Your praise will be crippled.
        - His glory will be offensive to you.
2. Hebrews 10 gets right the heart of this matter when it says:
- Heb 10:19-22: Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
  - Only when you know you are cleansed by the blood of Christ will you dare to draw near to the true and living God!
3. There are all sorts of ways we devise to avoid the true God when we forget that we are cleansed.
- a. Some people resort to religious formalism.
    - Formalism is when you start going through the motions of following Christ and worshipping Him without really drawing near to Him.
    - You all know people like that...
      - They perform all the rituals and know all the clichés,

- but they don't really walk with Christ.
- They may even talk a lot about the Lord leading them and speaking to them,
  - but they are not really responding to Him as He is revealed in the Word.
- It doesn't really matter if they are in what we call a "formal church" or not.
  - They have their little rituals—Christian things to say and do...
  - But they do not draw near to God to sit at His feet and learn of Him...
    - To hear His word and apply it to their lives...
    - To see His glory and worship Him.
  - They keep their distance.

TRANS> That is formalism.

b. Others avoid Him by **diversion**.

- And this can be either religious diversion or non-religious.
- 1) Another word for religious diversion is idolatry.
  - a) People worship idols when they begin to adjust what they believe about God to suit their own desires.
    - They say things like:
      - "I think God is"—and then they fill in what they want.
      - Or "I think God wants us to..." and then they will in whatever they want.
    - In other words, they fashion their own gods...
      - or simply approach God in their own way as if He has not told us how to approach Him.
  - b) Sometimes, people who do this can be very religious and very devout...
    - 1. When Israel worshipped the golden calf, they freely gave their offerings and were full of enthusiasm!
      - Their worship could be heard from far away!
      - But they were not really drawing near to God—not to the true God—They were avoiding Him.

2. We can see many examples of such idolatry today...
  - One person thinks that God is a God who loves everyone and would never send anyone to Hell...
  - Another thinks He is a God who is limited in His sovereignty and power and gets off on **helping** God get things done.
  - Yet another thinks worship occurs by signing repetitive songs or praying repetitive prayers that work you up to an emotional climax.
  - Still another thinks that God's main agenda is some social agenda that they have.

TRANS> I could go on and on about this, but let me move on to non-religious diversion.

- 2) Non-religious diversion occurs when a person avoids God by distracting himself with the things of this world...
  - a) You are unsure that you are cleansed so you avoid God by filling your life with other things...
  - b) One person does it by immersing himself in his work—it doesn't matter if it is a career or housework...
    - It is a way of avoiding God.
    - You come to church and your mind is full of your work... you do not draw near to God...
      - you do not sit at his feet to learn of Him and be instructed from His word.
  - c) Other people divert themselves by giving themselves over to their lusts and pleasures.
    - One person gives himself over to drunkenness or gluttony—
      - This is a way of avoiding God.
    - Another gives himself over to fornication and soaks his mind continually in lusts and sexual fantasy...
    - Another spends all his time with the television or with novels...
    - Another with sports or some hobby.
- 3) Some of the things that are used for diversion are not wrong in themselves.
  - But they are **all** wrong when they are used as ways of avoiding God rather than as ways of serving Him, knowing Him, and giving glory to Him.

TRANS> But at the Lord's Table, Jesus assures you that you don't need such diversions.

- The blood of the covenant is continually applied to you to cleanse you!
- You can draw near to God with confidence if you will receive His testimony.
- Now lets look at a second problem that arises when you don't receive Christ's testimony...

B. Without the assurance that Christ continues to cleanse you, you will despair in keeping yourself pure.

1. If you have a white shirt that just came from the cleaners,

- your attitude about the shirt will be different than it would be about an old work-shirt that is full of stains.
- You don't care if the old work-shirt gets another stain because it's already ruined...
  - But you will think twice before going to change the oil in your car with the shirt that just came from the cleaners...

2. So it is with your spiritual cleansing...

- If your perception of yourself is that you are filthy and covered with sin...
  - what difference will another spot or two make?
- But if you perceive yourself as having been cleansed by Christ and given a fresh white garment,
  - you will want to keep yourself pure and unspotted!

3. Peter talks about this very thing in the opening of his second epistle.

- In 2 Peter 1:3, He talks about how God has called us to "glory and virtue."
  - In verse 4, he goes on to say that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust...
  - and then in verse 5 he declares:
    - 2 Peter 1:5-8: But also for this very reason, [because you have escaped corruption] giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- You grow and bear fruit because of the knowledge of Jesus Christ...
  - Because you know the salvation that He gives to us!
  - When there is failure,

- it is because you have forgotten what Jesus pledges to you in the supper—
  - that He cleanses you from your sins...
- Peter goes on in verse 9:
  - 2 Peter 1:9: For he who lacks these things [the fruitfulness that is] is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

TRANS> So you see how important it is to know that you have been cleansed!

- Unless you do, you will neither draw near to God, nor will you bear fruit for God.
- Jesus gives you the cup again and again to assure you that His blood continues to cleanse you from all your sins.
  - He does not want you to forget this!
- But there is one more thing that must be said about this...

C. Not everyone who comes to this table and receives the sign is clean.

1. Drinking the cup is not what makes you clean...

- The cup is not given to you to make you clean,
  - It is given to you to strengthen your faith in God's promise to cleanse you through the blood of Jesus Christ.
- It will do you no good to come to this table without faith.

2. In Luke 22:21-22, Jesus speaks of one who came to the table without faith!

- Judas.
- Judas was not at the table looking to Jesus Christ for salvation and to receive the assurance that Jesus cleanses all who believe...
  - He was there plotting how he might get Jesus out of his life...
  - Hear what Jesus says about him:
    - Luke 22:21-22: "But behold, the hand of My betrayer *is* with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"

3. Judas' way of dealing with his sin was not to come to Christ for forgiveness...

- but to come to Christ to see how he could get rid of him.
  - a. There are a lot of people like that today!

- They are around Christ and their conscience is continually troubled by Him...
  - But instead of looking to His blood to atone for their sins and make them clean...
    - they try to still their conscience by silencing Him, eliminating Him.
- b. This is why churches that do not believe the gospel are so popular!
- They help their members quiet their consciences without coming to Christ in humble repentance and faith.
  - They give them self-help techniques and empty promises and social programmes,
    - but they do not give them Christ as He is offered in the gospel.
- c. But there are also people like Judas who find themselves in a place where Christ is truly set forth...in a believing church...
- And still, rather than coming to Him, they devise ways to avoid Him.
  - They flatter themselves that they are at church or that they try to be the best they can...
    - and all the while Christ is holding out the cup and saying,
      - “This is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”
      - All the while He is calling us to look to His blood for cleansing.
      - The solution is not to get rid of Him and the truth about Him, but to come to Him and receive His mercy.

And so I urge all of you to look to what the cup points to!

- The blood of Jesus that cleanses you from all your sin.