

Communion Service - The Lord's Supper

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Preacher: Rev Malcolm Maclean

- [0 : 00] Lord, we give thanks that we are gathered here together. We thank you, Lord, for your own promise to be where two or three are met in your name.
- And we realize that that promise has been fulfilled in countless places all over the world today. A reminder to us of the growth in your own kingdom.
- And yet today we are also, in a sense, gathered to remember where it all began. And when the Saviour met with his disciples on the night when he was betrayed by Judas and when he was arrested and then condemned.
- And if we had been present on that first occasion, we might have wondered what the future would be. But here we are today and we see some parts of the outcomes of what Jesus accomplished on that occasion.
- And we also realize that much more is yet to occur as a consequence of what Jesus did on the cross. So we thank you, Lord, that we have this opportunity of reflecting upon what took place at Calvary.
- [1 : 22] And of thinking together about what your word says about it. We pray that you would be moving in our hearts. And that we would be very conscious that we are really meant to be here out of gratitude.
- That we are coming to express our thankfulness to the Saviour for what he did. And as we know, he is present here.
- Although we cannot see him yet by the Holy Spirit, he is as really here. As he was on the night when it all began. We pray that then that you would speak to each one of us.
- And that we would be conscious of the great privilege we have. You know the various thoughts are going through our minds. And there may be apprehension.
- And there may be confusion. There may be temptations occurring in our minds that others don't see. But we thank you, Lord, that you know what's going through our mind.
- [2 : 29] And we pray that you would speak to us according to our circumstances. And that we would be given instruction from above that would help us to profit from this occasion.
- So, Lord, remember us and be with us. And bless us together. For your own name's sake. Amen. We can read from the book of Psalms.
- And Psalm 40. Book of Psalms and Psalm 40. I waited patiently for the Lord.
- He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction. Out with a mighty bog. And set my feet upon a rock. Making my steps secure.
- He put a new song in my mouth. A song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear. And put their trust in the Lord. Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust.
- [3 : 36] Who does not turn to the proud. To those who go astray after a lie. You have multiplied, O Lord my God. Your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us.
- None can compare with you. I will proclaim and tell of them. Yet they are more than can be told. In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted.

But you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, Behold I have come. In the scroll of the book it is written of me.

I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart. I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation.

Behold I have not restrained my lips as you know, O Lord. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart. I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation.

[4 : 37] I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me.

Your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me. For evils have encompassed me beyond number. My iniquities have overtaken me and I cannot see.

They are more than the hairs of my head. My heart fails me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me. Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life.

Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my heart. Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, Aha, aha. Let me all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

May those who love your salvation say continually, Great is the Lord. As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer.

[5 : 47] Do not delay, O my God. And may the Lord bless that reading through us. We can turn back to Psalm 40.

And we can read verses 6 to 8. And sacrifice and offering you have not delighted.

For you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, Behold, I have come. In the scroll of the book it is written of me.

I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart. And also from the book of Hebrews. And chapter 10.

Hebrews chapter 10. I just want to read verses 5 to 7.

[6 : 59] Because they tell us when the verses from Psalm 40 were fulfilled. Hebrews 10 and verse 5.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God. As is written of me in the scroll of the book. With regard to verses 6 to 8 of Psalm 40, Spurgeon once said that, Here we enter upon one of the most wonderful passages in the Old Testament.

A passage in which the Son of God is seen not through a glass darkly, but as it were, face to face. That was a great man's estimation.

And no doubt he got great spiritual benefit from these verses. One of the benefits, if it's a benefit, of travelling on British Rail, is that if you're bored, you can listen to lots of one-sided conversations.

[8 : 42] You have people on their mobile phones talking to somebody, or we assume they're talking to somebody, but you only hear one side of the conversation.

And that's what we actually hear in these verses, isn't it? Because in verses 6 to 8, Jesus is speaking, and he's speaking to his Father, but we only hear one side of the conversation.

We have to imagine what the Father is thinking as the Son speaks to him. Just as we try and imagine what the person on the other end of the telephone line is thinking when the person we hear on the train is speaking.

And it's obviously a very personal conversation because it tells us that the Son is speaking to the Father about what the Father thinks.

And therefore we are given insight into their secrets. In the Psalms, there's different kinds of Psalms that speak about Jesus.

[10 : 06] There are some Psalms in which the entire Psalm is about him. Like for example, Psalm 22 or Psalm 110.

There's nothing else in these Psalms except what applies to Christ. And the second kind of Psalm that speaks about Jesus and that's a Psalm that's a picture of him.

like for example, Psalm 72 which is really a bit Solomon. But it's obviously a picture of the greater than Solomon who's going to be the ultimate king.

Or even Psalm 1 which describes a perfect man. That's ultimately about Jesus because he's the one who knew God's word perfectly.

but then there's a third kind of Psalm in which only a couple of verses in it apply to Jesus. And these are the ones that we probably find hardest to understand.

[11 : 24] And even here in Psalm 40 we there it's obvious that verses 6 to 8 apply to Christ because the book of Hebrews tells us that.

But there's other verses in the Psalm that can't apply to them. Like for example down in verse 12 where he the the Psalmist speaks about his iniquities that have overtaken him.

So it's almost in this Psalm there's I suppose a kind of interruption in verses 6 to 9 because the Psalmist is basically concerned about his sins.

We can see that in verses 1 to 4. He's thankful to God for the deliverance he's had from whatever experience he was in.

And he's looking back at that and that's helping him in his current situation which he describes in verse 12. He is he knows in the past God helped him and now he's facing problems with his sins and he just wants God as it were to deliver him again.

[12 : 54] And in the middle of that contemplation the Psalm is basically a contemplation it's a kind of written prayer and in the midst of that this set of unusual verses verses 6 to 8 appear.

Now obviously we don't know if David at the time realised what he was saying. but the author of Hebrews tells us that he was speaking about Jesus in verses 6 to 8 and that he was speaking about Jesus at the moment he came into the world.

So there's different ways of looking at what happened when Jesus was born. you can either look at it from the side of earth and as it were just join the shepherds and marvel at this arrival of a child about which the angels are singing.

I mean that's one way to look at it and when it's obviously a correct way of doing so when we look at him from that angle all we are seeing in a sense is a baby that cannot speak but at the same time we know he's God and he hasn't although he's become a baby he hasn't ceased to be God and at that moment he's been doing what he's always been doing which was speaking to his father so as he lies in the manger can't be exact about the time but just picture it as he lies in the manger what does he say to God and we get the answer here in verses 6 to 8 because when he was coming into the world the writer of

Hebrews tells us he said these verses and as we look at them we can see there's something God doesn't like and we might be surprised at what he doesn't like because there in verse 6 we're told in sacrifice and offering you have not delighted here's Jesus speaking to his father and he knows his father's assessment of things and almost in a sense he summarizes the entire Old Testament worship and just says about it all in sacrifice and offering you have not delighted and when we think of all the numbers of times worship took place at the temple in the tabernacle and the great gatherings that occurred where people met and praised

[16 : 26] God for all the amazing deliverances he had given to his people down the centuries here's a verse that summarizes what God thought about all that in sacrifice and offering you have not delighted so when Moses and Aaron appeared at the tabernacle with their sacrifices God did not get the real pleasure from it even when David the author of this psalm turned up with his sacrifices he realized to some extent that God was not getting pleasure if we have read the book of Leviticus we will know it was a very full program that a person had to go through when they turned up to worship if you wanted to worship properly you had to have a burnt offering and then you also had to have a sin offering and then you had to have a peace offering and there were other offerings that you could offer as well one animal didn't do for the three that

I've just mentioned if you're wealthy enough you had to get a cow for the burnt offering and another one for the sin offering another one for the peace offering and the same went if you were not so well off and you just offered a lamb or a goat but it was a lot of ritual wasn't it and there's not just one person turning up to do this there's thousands and thousands of them so all these animals are being offered and the divine estimation of it all is as Jesus says to his father as he comes into the world in all these sacrifices and offerings you have not delighted and they didn't just do it on one day in their lives every Israelite had to go up to Jerusalem three times a year and there were lots of voluntary ones in addition to that and the fact that God didn't delight in it does not mean that he was not pleased with the devotion that was expressed by the worshippers obviously he wanted them to worship wholeheartedly and when somebody did that

God was pleased with with their hearts and so on and we read many times in the Old Testament of God either approving or disapproving of the way they participated in in the acts of worship so why didn't God like them because after all he's the one who gave the instructions I mean the book of Leviticus with all its details was spelt out by God and in in great minute requirements are just specified there why did God not like what he himself had instituted and the answer I think is fairly obvious they didn't provide what they were picturing they were picturing salvation and deliverance but it doesn't matter how many animals a person offered it never took away one's sin and as God looked at all that you know the details and the rituals and all the features connected to the religious worship it didn't achieve anything as far as deliverance from sin was concerned and pardon and so on and therefore no pleasure no real pleasure to God from then and that's what Jesus says to him as he comes into the world conversation in Bethlehem we might say at one level the shepherds are talking to each other and Mary and Joseph are talking to each other wondering what this child is going to do at a far higher level the son is talking to the father about what he is going to do and he is going to provide something that the father is going to be pleased so that's the first point the father is disliked but then there's also we could call the father's equipping for Jesus in the second line of verse six says but you have given me an open ear and we might look at that and what does that mean you have given me an open ear there have been various suggestions as to what it means a very common one is that what's suggested here is the practice that they had in

Israel of if a slave liked his master and loved him when the time of slavery was over he could be enslaved because he was in debt or something but when the time of slavery was over if he had really enjoyed being a slave of that master he could just say to the master I would like to be your slave forever and there was a ritual connected to that which involved the slave being taken to the doorpost and his ear being an all put through his ear and it was just a symbol saying that this man now wanted to serve his master forever because his master was so good and they loved each other and that was his desire and people look at this verse and they say that's what Jesus was going to do he was going to serve his father because his father was so good and so loving and he was going to do that forever lots of people think that and

I used to think that myself but I don't really think that's what it means anymore and the main problem there is that it's the father that's giving the ear not the son so that it's something that the father provides for him it's not so much the son's response that's being described here but something the father provides other people say well God made Jesus perfect and unlike everybody everybody else Jesus' ears were always open to God everybody else's ears to some extent are closed but Jesus well his ears were always open and he loved to listen to what the father had to say about his plans and so on and several people think that's what it means here and Jesus just goes on to recite what the father had said in his ears no doubt that's true but I'm not sure that's the truth of the verse and I think we get the answer to it in the book of

[25 : 07] Hebrews because the verses we read from the book of Hebrews they don't say but you have given me an open ear instead the writer of Hebrews quotes from the Greek Old Testament and they have translated the line in a different way and in Hebrews chapter 10 we're told that this line means a body you have prepared for me so Jesus at his birth is saying to his father when he talks about the open ear the author of Hebrews says what it actually means is that the heavenly father has prepared a body for Jesus and at that moment the body of Jesus is only an infant but something is going to happen in that body that Jesus was on to speak about in verses 7 and 8 now if you speak to an equal do you use the word behold if you're speaking to somebody you can do exactly the same as you do you use the word behold if you get two people who are equally accomplished like two artists or two sculptors or or two

McCombs or two who are equal do they say to each other when they do something behold well not normally it would have to be something exceedingly unusual for one of them to say to the other behold because everything they do normally is superior and here's the father and the son who always do things are incredible and here's Jesus speaking to his father and he knows his father knows everything and he knows his father is able to assess everything to an appropriate degree and he says to his father out of all the things you can look at this moment

I want you to behold this all this Old Testament rituals that have had occurred I know says Jesus they've given you no pleasure but now behold behold I have come here's the answer it's not just the answer to human sin it's almost the answer to divine longing God the father has been wanting reality and all through these Old Testament periods and all the things that went on the tabernacle of the temple never once had there been reality but now in this infant who can't talk to other humans but who at that moment can talk wonderfully to his father and he says to his father look

I have come it's almost as if he said to him you and I have been looking forward to this from eternity this is what has been our focus this is why we have done anything and they have done lots of things together but never before has this happened never before has there even been this way an infant lying in a manger or anywhere who was sinless there's something totally unique about this birth this arrival and the one who's arrived says to the one who sent him behold

I've come from now on there's going to be something very different as far as worship of you is concerned and Jesus as it were in verse seven goes on to speak about where things are written about him in the scroll of the book it is written of me what book is he talking about I think there's two possible answers to that question there is we could call a public book or there may be a private book public book what book is that this scroll the book is written about

[31 : 54] Jesus well the public book could be the Old Testament couldn't it because what's it about what are the prophets of the book about they're about him on the two on the way to Emmaus for example as we know on the day that Jesus rose from the dead he took them through the Old Testament pointing out where it spoke about him and of course there are many passages in the Old Testament that do describe Jesus so it could be the public book the only thing perhaps that would indicate that's not the case is that when David wrote the psalm most of these prophecies had not yet been given so it doesn't look as if he was referring to the

Old Testament so what other book was he described a book that Jesus obviously knows very well because he says here in the scroll the book it is written of me what book is that and I suspect it's a private book a secret book that only certain people can read and the only ones who can read it are the father and the son and this book is the book that's written in heaven we could say it's the book of the divine decrees in which the career of Jesus when he came to earth was mapped out step by step everything he was going to do is written down there for him he didn't have as it were to decide something new his stage of his life is all written about him and he had come to fulfill what had been planned and in that scroll in that book that private book there are dark pages and as we might see in page one there's details of his birth but as you read on well things get quite bleak as we come to the cross and

Jesus knows this book perfectly and how does he react as he looks ahead to all these pages well we're told there in verse 8 what his reaction is I delight to do your will your law is within my heart I am eager even although at this particular moment it's humanity it's only an infant but as a person who's also the son of God his intention is to go whole heartedly along what each page maps out and when we read about his life that's what we see isn't it all these little snapshots were given of him for example when he's 12 years old what does he want to do as he got an occasion in it at the annual feast when he

Mary and Joseph assumed he was somewhere in the crowd but he wasn't and they went back to the city and found him in the temple and there he is interacting with the learned teachers of the law there and Mary asks him one of the strangest questions to ever ask him what are you doing his reply is don't you know I must be about my father's business what I am interested in is Jesus it's what's written in this scroll that's what I'm here to do that's what he thought when he was 12 and throughout his life all he wanted to do was do

God's will you go ahead to his baptism you know who's the baptism of John for well it's really for people who don't do God's will isn't it it's a baptism for those who have failed to do God's will but what is God's will for Jesus what's written in these pages well it was written in the pages among many things is that he'll be numbered with transgressors and where are the transgressors being numbered well there they are queuing up to get baptized by John and who's the one at the back of the queue because he does get baptized after everybody else has been baptized and it may be the case that the more serious your behavior was the further back you were in the queue because after all everybody else in the queue might know who you are baptized but at the back of the queue after everybody else has been baptized comes

[39 : 15] Jesus and John not unexpectedly he objects because he knows who Jesus is and Jesus says to him if you want to fulfill righteousness John baptize I'm here he's virtually saying to John to do God's will and God's will ultimately it's not what you're doing John although what you're doing is very important but all you're doing is pointing to something and Jesus says to John if I don't do I've come to do your pointing is a waste of time and we can read on in the book and we come to

Gethsemane let's a very confusing page and it's not just confusing for us little snippets we get of the page but it's confusing for Jesus he's a man he's now a grown man and as a grown man he's about to step in over a precipice that humans don't normally return from he realises he's going to face God's wrath he's never encountered that before the only way he's known it before is by giving it but now he's going to receive it and he's frightened what would have been if he hadn't been frightened it wouldn't have been real he's going to do everything perfectly and a perfect person is frightened of

God's wrath and there's Jesus and he reads this page which he knows by heart and he comes to it and he has to wrestle to the bottom line and at the bottom of the page is where he says not my will but yours I delight to do your will and he says to his sleeping disciples arise let us go I have to fulfill God's law God's plan it's in my heart and then he goes to the cross and lots of things happen there and he even hears people saying to him to do what's within his power in order to help himself come come down from the cross and of course he could have come down from the cross there's no nails anywhere that could force

God to stay there but what if he had come down if he had rescued himself and disobeyed his father it would be the end of everything but on the cross he goes through it all and even on the cross he doesn't understand everything as far as his humanity is concerned because that's why he says why have you forsaken me how do you explain that he's got a human mind as well as a divine mind what answer is there for him the only answer for him is to keep going and if he keeps going he'll find himself in a place where he doesn't need the answer and that's what he did he just kept going through the terrors of

Calvary not the physical pain there were two others beside him going through physical pain but they were not experiencing the pain of his heart as God's wrath came down in him a very dark page but a wonderful page in the book and that the Saviour hadn't not merely read the page but fulfilled the pain we wouldn't be here today and this book that he was referring to nobody can count the chapters in it because the chapters don't stop at the cross it's an endless book that so far has taken them to

[46 : 35] Calvary but there's lots of things yet in the book to be fulfilled involving Jesus that's what our future is as well the pages written about him but none of these future pages would ever have come to pass if he hadn't completed the page that we are remembering today so in this book of God we have this opportunity of as it were pausing at this particular page and just saying about it as we can say about every page but we do focus on this particular page today and say he did that for me and he did it for me because his father wanted him to and wrote down in great detail what it would involve we'll stop with this but at the first Lord's

Supper Jesus said to his disciples with desire I have desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer when did the desire begin he'd always had throughout his entire existence and his existence never had a beginning and throughout it all there was this intense desire in his heart that he would get to this moment when it wouldn't be said to his father in this sacrifice you have no pleasure because he's about to offer one that would give the father pleasure forever and we remember it today but it's important for us all to remember that God has never forgotten up in heaven the father and the son remember

Calvin and what it costs then and down here we remember it as we have our insights into it but there's lots to learn about what happened to the sick well we now come to what we call fencing the table in the time of the reformation afterwards there when people gathered in church they had no seats and they just stood there was a section of the building fenced off and inside that fenced area was a table and in order to get to that fenced area you had to go through a gate and I think that's where fencing of a table comes from it's basically asking who can go through the gate and sit at the table and to me the answer is fairly straightforward those who can go through the gate are those who love the Lord it's not those who love him strongly because we've all got different strengths of love depending on where we are the qualification is not how strong we love but if we love there may be different reasons for loving him at any given time we may love him for what he's doing in Providence because things are going well for us we may love him because we've fallen and we've gone to him and asked him to forgive us and nobody else we know about you we may love him because we've opened the Bible and something marvellous has just come out of him but the test is do we love him we may want to love him more and one way it's guaranteed to love him more is to go through the gate certainly won't increase our love at this particular moment if we don't go through the gate how about those who shouldn't come there it's where your heart is that tells you might be very religious but if you don't love him why would you want to come through we're not there to show that we're religious we're there to show that we're grateful to him for going to the cross and paying the penalty for our sins it's impossible to benefit from coming to the meal if we're

not grateful we don't come to get some brownie points rather we come to say we're thankful so if we do that he will meet with us and bless us we can read the institution of the Lord's Supper from 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 23 read but I receive from the Lord but I also deliver to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is a new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me but as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the

Lord's death until he comes and after his own example we'll give thanks Lord we are here at your table we thank you Lord that you are present that these emblems of bread and wine they don't point to your absence they point to the fact that you are here and in a sense here in a way that wasn't the case when you instituted the meal on that occasion you had not yet suffered and your body had not been broken and your blood had not been shed but now we know that has occurred occurred a long time ago as far as the passing of time is concerned as far as our needs are concerned we are thankful that its efficacy of your death continues now and will continue forever we thank you lord for the simplicity of your meal bread and wine we thank you too that your meal is a sweet one because we don't remember a martyr we remember one who rescued us and who not only rescued us at the cross but who rescued us in our own experience from that day when we met you we thank you lord that you are the redeemer and what you ask from us is that we live a life of gratitude and one expression of that gratitude is coming together and remembering the death that saves all your people so lord help us to do it at the moment as we take the bread and the wine in our hearts there would be same with

[57 : 38] Paul thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift so lord bless us as we are here for your own name stay amen we read in the night in which he was betrayed the lord jesus took bread and when he had given thanks he said take eat same manner also he took the cup and after he thanks he drank you all of it another time where jesus uses the word behold is mentioned in hebrews chapter 2 and in verse 13 of hebrews chapter 2 we have jesus saying behold i and the children god has given me that particular verse is a quotation from isaiah chapter 8 and in the original reference in isaiah chapter 8 it's a statement by isaiah about his own literal children who are signs to the nation of israel that god was going to do certain things so the children of isaiah were visible signs that god was going to yet do certain things and the writer of hebrews takes that verse and applies it to jesus and he has jesus saying that the children god has given him are signs that he's yet going to do something so we are signs we are signs to one another and we are signs to those who are not yet at the table and i suppose we are signs to the children as well what is god going to do that we are signs of well the obvious one is that he's going to bring in a new world a new heavens and new earth and each of us are the residents of it so therefore we are signs that we're going to be residents of it so we are signs that it is coming we meet people every day and they're hoping to go somewhere maybe they're planning holidays or whatever and they're signs of that future event we are signs of an incredible event we are the people that are going to appear to be in god's presence for them and to enjoy the life of the new heavens and new earth of the earth

Jesus himself when he originated the feast it's only to happen until he comes because when he comes the new world will come and whatever else we can say about it today we are closer to it than we ever were before so here are signs signs of god's grace in the present and signs of god's glory that's yet to come and we owe it all to the saviour