

Sermon on Matthew 26:26-30 for Advent prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Christmas is a feast of joy as we wait for our King.

“As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take and eat it; this is my body.” 27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” 30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” -- **Matthew 26:26-30** (CSB)

Christmas is a feast of joy as we wait for our King.

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n, and heav’n, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove

The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.” Isaac Watts

We love this carol at Christmas time... but I am always given an extra dash of joy when I realize that it is more about Christ’s second coming than his first!

This is Christian Advent, experiencing the light of Christ’s first coming, the undoing of sin and separation from God as he dwells among us. That which engenders hope for his final coming when all things are made new.

In this season we have been acquainted with the dark, the cold, the despair of our broken world. And along the way we have determined to be kept through all of it by Jesus.

Now, the light has come. The feasting has happened - the presents are opened - and before we box up all the decorations I want us to set our minds on the next feast.

Christmas is a feast of joy as we wait for our King

We mine this thought from the culmination of Jesus’ ministry. Toward the end of Matthew’s Gospel, as Jesus gives his final exhortation to his followers and heads to the place where our atonement will be earned and the chains of sin will be permanently broken. This is what the incarnation was for.

Be reminded of the scene...

“When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he told his disciples, ² “You know that the Passover takes place after two days, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” ³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest, who was named Caiaphas, ⁴ and they conspired to arrest Jesus in a treacherous way and kill him.” -- **Matthew 26:1-4** (CSB)

Jesus is anointed by the woman with the alabaster jar and he celebrates Passover with his disciples. The vital Hebrew feast marking redemption out of slavery. And

here the Lord provides a place for the meal where betrayal is unveiled and he will institute the supper that will sustain the church until his return.

The love feast of the church, the meal of the Kingdom. Communion, holding a remembrance of Christ's work and the experience of his real presence among believers.

In this scene, Jesus tells us something vital for our lives now, for our feasting and hoping.

We Have Reason To Feast

Holidays are nice enough reasons for feasting. Having family together. Or a collection of dear friends. Here is the deal though - we still don't feast enough. We don't gather around tables with nearly the joy that is afforded us and I wonder if you would be willing to institute a culture of feasting among us?!

We let too much get in the way and cloud out celebration, the joy that comes with settled and sanctified living. Crazy schedules, misplaced priorities, the numbing agents of our days. We forget to enjoy, to taste of this newness of life we have in Christ.

Robert Farrar Capon prayer... "Give us this day our daily taste"

"O Lord,
refresh our sensibilities.
Give us this day our daily taste.
Restore to us soups that spoons will not sink in,
and sauces which are never the same twice.
Raise up among us stews with more gravy
than we have bread to blot it with,
and casseroles that put starch and substance
in our limp modernity.

Take away our fear of fat,
and make us glad of the oil
that ran upon Aaron's beard.
Give us pasta with a hundred fillings,

and rice in a thousand variations.

Above all,
give us grace to live as true people—
to fast till we come to a refreshed sense
of what we have and then to dine gratefully
on all that comes to hand.

Drive far from us,
O Most Bountiful,
all creatures of air and darkness;
cast out the demons that possess us;
deliver us from the fear of calories
and the bondage of nutrition;
and set us free once more in our own land,
where we shall serve thee as thou hast blessed us—
with the dew of heaven,
the fatness of the earth,
and plenty of corn and wine.

Amen”

This is both about food and not... let the hearer understand!

What we see at the Supper is that our lives are feast-ready because of what Jesus accomplished for us.

“Take and eat, this is my body.” A life of obedience before the Father, lived for us. A willing, perfect lamb, an offering for the sins of the world. We will never quite grasp the depth of this gift.

Instead, we live in a constant state of narcissism, some of us worse off than others. The self is ever before us and we even try to shoehorn Jesus to fit the pursuit of self... preference, passions.

But here the Creator of the universe allows his body to be broken for us. To breathe his last to give us mercy and grace. To give us that life.

And this cup. “Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

An eternal covenant of covering, of wrath-satisfying sacrifice. The very essence of life, poured out. And not generically. But for you and for a purpose.

To grant forgiveness of sins.

To repair the breach. To take the human disregard and rejection of God and deal with it once for all. Forgiveness. Absolution. Made right before God because of the blood of Christ.

A covenant to live in from here until home.

As a pastor, over the years many people have told me, usually in relation to what the church offers, what they “need.” And in my mind, and sometimes out of my mouth, I say “you need Jesus! You need foreignness!”

In David Powlison’s little book on pastoral counseling he makes the comparison of what pastors bring to counseling and what clinicians do. We love therapists and we all could benefit from it, but within the church and without are different. He quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“Worldly wisdom knows what distress and weakness and failure are, but it does not know the godlessness of man. And so it does not know that man is destroyed only by his sin and can be healed only by forgiveness. Only the Christian knows this. In the presence of a psychiatrist I can only be a sick man; in the presence of a Christian brother I can dare to be a sinner. The psychiatrist must first search my heart and yet he never plumbs its ultimate depth. The Christian brother knows when I come to him: here is a sinner like myself, a godless man who wants to confess and yearns for God’s forgiveness.” **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

We really can’t make too much of the blood because we can’t make too much of forgiveness!

It is the very thing that carries us into new life and motivates our mission in every corner of life. More than merely a covering for bad behavior, forgiveness is our spark.

Forgiveness as fuel - In Christ, we are no longer left in the pit; we possess new life, wear his righteousness, and anticipate real life with him for eternity. What a great miracle he has worked to bring us to himself! The ones incapable of living up to the standard are rescued, given a perfect record, and empowered to live the adventurous life in Christ.

Where we finally awaken to the reality of sin and our separation from God... our need for something that is beyond us - for a righteousness that is foreign to us. Produced by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Believing in him this forgiveness is applied and our hearts are made new. We enter into real life with Christ.

We become people living in the way of Jesus... citizens of his Kingdom... ambassadors of Christ and his grace to a hurting and hungry world. Hungry for forgiveness.

His grace, his forgiveness is reason to feast. To live with joy because we have received his welcome so now we can extend it to others. We can laugh more, make lots of toasts and fill our plates with celebration in Him.

We need the reminder of these reasons. That's why we share communion each week. Some of us are prone to forget, to wallow, and the Supper is an invitation back into joyful feasting.

Seeing the light and living in it.

So Christian, you have reason to feast, so get on with it! There might not be actual food, but our attitude and energy is that of feasting!

What has been done eggs us on, but there is more... a coming meal keeps us hopeful while we wait for the renewal of all things.

All Feasts Build Toward The Ultimate Feast

Some louder than others, but all of our feasts are whispers of what is to come.

Jesus hints at it here - did you see it?

“But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” -- **Matthew 26:29** (CSB)

This matches the sentiment in the Robert Capon prayer: “give us grace to live as true people—to fast till we come to a refreshed sense of what we have and then to dine gratefully on all that comes to hand.”

Don’t you, when a big meal, a feast is on the horizon, don’t you fast a bit beforehand. You just snack instead of taking in whole meals. Because you want to go big at the feast.

Where we go on feasting - because Jesus tells us to - as often as we do it in remembrance of him - Jesus is fasting in preparation for the great feast.

Until that day when he will drink it new with us in the Father’s kingdom.

Jesus won’t pour a glass until the Kingdom comes in full.

I love stories that have the “Victor’s feast” in them. Old Viking lore where a battle is won and the king throws a huge party. Or when the Avengers save the world and have schwarma! The blows have been thrown and taken. The blood and sweat have been shed. And one has risen to victory over the enemy.

Jesus is saving the fruit of vine for his victor’s feast. And there is no question of if, it is just a matter of when.

And each of our feasts, each expression of joy and celebration for the forgiveness of sin and the empowerment for new life, builds up to that meal. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Babylon will fall... and the Feast will come.

“After this I heard something like the loud voice of a vast multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God, 2 because his judgments are true and righteous, because he has judged the notorious prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality; and he has avenged the blood of his servants that was on her hands.

3 A second time they said, Hallelujah! Her smoke ascends forever and ever! 4 Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who is seated on the throne, saying, Amen! Hallelujah!

5 A voice came from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all his servants, and the ones who fear him, both small and great!

6 Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying, Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns! 7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself. 8 She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!" He also said to me, "These words of God are true." -- **Revelation 19:1-9** (CSB)

Each hallelujah, every feast that praises God for his blessing and goodness, his grace toward us points to this feast where Jesus will raise a glass and savor this wine with us. What a glorious day it will be! The journey that Christmas, the incarnation launches us on. What grace, what joy. A God who feasts with his own.

After Jesus instituted the Supper, Matthew writes: "After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

With full bellies and the potential for full hearts, they head into battle - into the worst. The manger leads here, heading to the cross.

With a heart toward this ultimate feast, owning forgiveness of sin, Jesus heads into the breach and invites us along. And we fight with a turkey leg in one hand - feasting because the King has come - steadfast because he is coming again. It is enough to keep us, to give us joy in the midst of the chaos of life. It is enough to hope us - sustain us until our help comes. Each moment building toward that supper...

Then we will raise a glass with our Savior!

Christmas is a feast of joy as we wait for our King.

Friends, receive the forgiveness of Christ - the peace between God and man his cross gives to us - the hope of newness of life by his Spirit - the gift of a place to call home for eternity.

Then feast. Run towards joy with all of who you are. Find it in Christ. Extend it to others that they too might grab a bite to eat!

We close with the same hymn that inspired Isaac Watts' hand to write Joy to the World... that it might inspire our singing and feasting for the glory of Christ.

“Sing a new song to the Lord, for he has performed wonders; his right hand and holy arm have won him victory. 2 The Lord has made his victory known; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. 3 He has remembered his love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen our God's victory. 4 Let the whole earth shout to the Lord; be jubilant, shout for joy, and sing. 5 Sing to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and melodious song. 6 With trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn shout triumphantly in the presence of the Lord, our King. 7 Let the sea and all that fills it, the world and those who live in it, resound. 8 Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains shout together for joy 9 before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world righteously and the peoples fairly.” -- **Psalms 98:1-9** (CSB)