



# THE LORD'S SUPPER, UNTIL WE COME TOGETHER AGAIN

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## THE LONGING TO COME TOGETHER

We have been meeting on the digital platform for worship for the last couple of weeks. Through the video conferencing platform, we see one another while we are at home in different parts of Singapore. On one hand, it was comforting to see one another doing well from our screens. On the other, we long to see one another in person again. We now have lost something precious to us.

I suspect that this longing for the presence of another, in a most personal and profound way, is built into our being. Adam and Eve were created in God's image. Before the Fall of Adam and Eve, they were able to meet God face-to-face. After the Fall, they hid away from God in their Sin. They lost the precious fellowship with God in His presence. Since then, mankind has felt a void and deep yearning for the presence of an ultimate person in their lives. That ultimate person is God. In God's gracious love, God became Man in Christ Jesus. He came to redeem us out of God's wrath into His loving presence again. He restores the fellowship between Man and God. Jesus has face-to-face time with His disciples on earth and in the heavens.

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To remind us of Christ's restoration of our fellowship with God, He re-instituted The Lord's Supper for the disciples on top of God's institution of the Passover (Exodus 12) meal as a celebration feast to commemorate God's deliverance and victory over death. Paul, as a Jew, knowing the deep significance of the partaking of The Lord's Supper meal instructed the Corinthians in his letter. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, he especially instructed that The Lord's Supper should only be taken in very specific terms because some were doing it wrongly. He especially emphasized that the church members must **come together** (1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33, and 34); out of their homes, in the presence of one another to partake The Lord's Supper. At the end of the Gospel of John, the apostle made special mention of Jesus who took the bread and gave it to the disciples (John 21:14) in their presence to remind them of The Lord's Supper. Then the Apostles and disciples began to have the Lord's Supper together as the church was birthing at the beginning of the book of Acts (Acts 2:42).

After that, when the elders and the disciples were separated due to persecution, they were praying, and possibly fasting, for the return of their elders and the congregation to come together again. When they finally came together in the presence of another, they would partake in the Lord's Supper for celebration! How strange and inappropriate, therefore it would be to have a feasting meal via video live-streaming in our present circumstances if the Christians back then were praying and fasting when they were under lock-down by their enemies!

## THE SCATTERED PEOPLE OF GOD

The Psalmist said, "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob" (Psalm 87:2). That means the Lord loved Jerusalem more than all the rest of Israel. Why? Because the Temple was in Zion and only there could his children gather to fully worship him. No wonder his people wept when God sent them to Babylon. Later, in the book of Hebrews, the Spirit tells us that believers have, "come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22). When we gather as a people, we are manifesting all that Jerusalem was and will be. Perhaps that's why Paul used the phrase "when you come together" five times while urging the Corinthians to honor the Table.

For all these reasons, Providence began celebrating the Lord's Supper once a month regularly only when I was installed as Providence's pastor. Those reasons are also why we cannot partake of the Lord's Supper now. Paul said, "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Corinthians 10:17). In God's providence, the Body is not together now. He scattered us by a life-threatening virus. That is sorrowful, even tragic, but God's hard ways are also tender. Our displacement from the church can stir our souls for what we likely took for granted. It is good to be reminded of the unique and glorious gathering we casually call "going to church." That's a fitting phrase during our

scattering in the current stay-at-home order. The Church is alive, but we must not assume technology or even the promise of God's presence in each of us means things are alright. Things would not be alright until we can physically gather as a church again and feast at the family table.

## WHAT DO WE DO UNTIL WE COME TOGETHER AGAIN?

### 1. We need to fast and pray rather than feast the Lord's Supper.

I have provided the link to a helpful article by one of the Reformed Theological Seminary systematic theology professors and pastors of PCA, "[Should we live stream The Lord's Supper](#)".

### 2. Let ourselves be uncomfortable in our displacements.

Embrace rather than dismiss the feeling that something is not quite right doing church live streaming. Then turn that feeling into longing. Even with excellent sermons and beautiful music online, this cannot be compared to our full inheritance in coming together as the body of Christ. Be thankful for the manna on your screen, but do not lose your taste for the full feast that we are promised. Godly discontentment is a useful skill if it makes us want more of coming together, not less.

### 3. Do daily devotion and get Sunday nourishment.

When the exiled Israelites could not worship at the Temple, they met in synagogues. They

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were humbled and wanted whatever spiritual nourishment they could get in their exile. So, it should be with us. Be present and prepared to worship in the manner God has provided during the scattering. Do not click the link just to "watch church." Prayerfully engage the moment and ask God to meet you despite the strangeness of the setting.

### 4. Tell the gospel to our covenant children.

When they ask, "Why can't we take the Lord's Supper?", pause, and give thanks that they know it's important and miss it. Affirm their instinct but tell them that the Lord's Supper is the Church's family meal and the Church is away from God's house right now. When God allows us to go back to His house, we will have that feast again and it will be great. For now, it's okay to be sad about not getting to taste it. In fact, it's good for our soul.

The Lord's Supper, as a Sacrament, is a family meal for the whole community. That community has biblical structure and appointed shepherds and the Sacraments' physical reality requires us to be present to partake properly. For these reasons and more, a genuine attempt to honor its importance by delivering the Supper to everyone's home would dishonor it. So, we would do well longing for the Lord's Supper, until we come together again.

