

What Does King of Kings Teach? The Lord's Supper

(Holy Communion, The Eucharist, The Lord's Table)

A Sacrament. Earthly elements | Spiritual benefit

Strictly defined, a sacrament is a rite instituted by Jesus where earthly vessels are used to convey the gifts He won for us on the cross. In the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, God has selected certain elements in His created world to use as instruments in saving and sustaining fallen people.

While some scoff at the idea of God working through earthly elements, we must remember that God consistently has shown himself to work through earthly vessels to deliver His divine gifts and do His perfect will. And the Word and Sacraments are no different.

Just as God has chosen to use human language to bring the message of the Gospel to mankind in His Word, He has also chosen that same Word to work with simple water (Baptism) as well as bread and wine (the Lord's Supper) to grant a saving faith and constant assurance in the hearts of those who receive them. (1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-11; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Why does God work like this?

[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit... – Titus 3:5 (NIV)

So, why does God choose to instill saving faith through such earthly, tangible means? The answer is simple: love and assurance.

In a world riddled with sin, uncertainty abounds. Spirituality is no different. The inner workings of the human heart sway back and forth between devotion and disbelief. (Ps. 25:16-17) To use one's own good works or their inner sense of commitment and determination as a gauge for salvation leads one to only doubt God's love and their salvation all the more. When the emphasis is placed on our mental capacity, devotion, or deeds, our assurance of salvation becomes inherently subjective and uncertain. People find themselves wrestling with questions like, "How does one know where they stand with God? How can I be certain that He loves me? Am I good enough? Did I really mean it, when I asked Him into my heart?"

But knowing all of this, God, out of pure love, set out to give His people assurance in the midst of such uncertainty. Therefore, God centers our assurance on events that are objective and outside of ourselves.

Out of pure love and mercy God gives us tangible, experiential, and historical actions to latch on to, to remember, and to return to.

Through a real, historical Jesus crucified, died, and risen, a Word proclaimed and written in our language, and through water, bread, and wine God anchors our spirituality outside of us so that there might always be certainty within us.

The Lord's Supper: Why do we celebrate it?

...whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. – 1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV)

As with baptism, we practice the Lord's Supper because the Scriptures command us to. Specifically, Jesus Himself has told us that regular celebration of this meal is to be a part of our life together as a community of faith. In the famous moment known as the "Last Supper," Jesus broke bread and said, "This is my body given for you." Then he took the wine and said, "This cup is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." (Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20)

What happens in the Lord's Supper?

We take Jesus at His word when he says that we should receive the bread and wine given in this meal as His very own body and blood. (Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20) Holding to a high view of Scripture, we do not attempt to peer around or beyond these words and see them as purely symbolic or sentimental. Rather, by faith we believe that in this meal we receive both bread and wine and the body and blood of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus said so.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul in the New Testament tells us that there are some extraordinary things happening in this Supper. He warns the church in Corinth that to take this meal lightly or to do so in an unworthy manner is a sin against "the very body and blood of the Lord." Paul goes on to say that anyone who takes part in this meal without 'recognizing the body of the Lord' that is present there, does so to his/her judgment. If this meal were purely symbolic then why worry about spiritual harm? Indeed, Paul is saying that in this meal – through the promise of Jesus Himself – the body and blood of the Lord are present, and carry spiritual power. (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

Therefore, we – as well as the vast majority of Christians throughout history – believe that Jesus' body and blood are actually present in and with the bread and the wine. We also hold that in this meal God grants the faith which receives the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Why? Once again we go back to the words of Jesus Himself, "...this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins..." (Matt. 26:28)

G. E. Veith puts it like this, "In the sacrament, Christ gives Himself to me. All of His promises and everything that He did for my redemption and forgiveness on the cross, are made so tangible I can taste them. I am touching, in fact, the risen Christ as the first disciples did. And God's Word, ringing in my ears as I take this nourishment, tells me that His body and blood are for me."¹

Who can take the Lord's Supper?

While some who support a symbolic view of the Lord's Supper allow any and all to take part in this meal, the church family at King of Kings sees things differently. The Apostle Paul is clear in his teaching that both the ability to "examine" oneself inwardly as well as an ability to "recognize" what is happening in the meal are both essential in celebrating it in a worthy manner. (1 Cor. 11:27-30)

For us, this means that those actually receiving the Lord's Supper should be able to answer "Yes" to the following questions:

- **Are you a baptized believer in Christ?** You are making a proclamation of your faith

when you come to the Lord's Supper. You are also saying that you align to what we as a church teach about the Christian faith and the Lord's Supper.

- **Are you in a lifestyle of repentance and reliance on Christ?** Do you confess your sin and profess your faith in Christ? Do you rely on his salvation won through his life, death and resurrection for us.
- **Do you recognize that Jesus' presence is given,** his body and blood connected to the bread and wine? Jesus' own words say it and the Bible confirms it, Jesus gives us his presence in this sacred meal.

Young children and guests are always welcome to come to the Lord's Table, as we believe this meal is an important witness to how God works and to what Jesus has done for the world. For children wishing to take the meal, we offer a five week class called, "First Communion" which outlines our beliefs and prepares them for a lifetime of celebrating this powerful meal.

What are the other views of the Lord's Supper?

There are three major views of the Lord's Supper. While thousands of books have been written on each of these doctrinal positions, the three views are best (albeit simplistically) summarized on the chart below:

Denomination	Bread	Wine	Body	Blood	Explanation or Name
Roman Catholic			X	X	TRANSUBSTANTIATION
Baptists & Others	X	X			SYMBOLIC
Lutheran	X	X	X	X	REAL PRESENCE

Those who hold to transubstantiation in the Lord's Supper believe that upon consecration of the bread and wine by a pastor / priest, and the reception of the consecrated bread and wine on the tongue of the believer, the elements of the meal cease to be bread and wine and literally change substance becoming purely body and blood.

A symbolic view holds that the meal consists solely of bread and wine, and that God conveys no spiritual benefit in the meal. It is purely an act of devotion and remembrance done by Christians.

The Lutheran view, upheld by King of Kings, is known as the Real Presence. In this view we believe, by faith, that upon consecration, God offers to those who celebrate the meal both bread and wine, body and blood. We believe that all four are really present in the meal. Is the meal bread and wine? Yes. Is it also the very real body and blood of Jesus? Yes.

We are a Sacramental Church

This understanding of the sacraments is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see it embedded into King of Kings community in the following ways:

- A regular, monthly celebration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- A regular and proud call to baptism for all ages
- Regular teaching on God's grace active within the sacraments

- Living the reality that God's presence in us makes us a sacrament to our families and communities:

We believe that God is passionately in love with us and pursues us in ways that make his love real to us. Sacrament. He wants to communicate all that He has done through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in our behalf.

In summary: Jesus for us. Jesus in us. Jesus through us.

We are part of the God's sacred action, part of His sacramental life. Jesus has been given FOR US, that He might live IN US, and work THROUGH US to bring His presence to the world.