



JESUS GAVE US COMMUNION

Part 7 of Jesus Loves His Church

Pastor Mark Driscoll | August 05, 2012

THE GREATEST YEAR IN THE HISTORY OF MARS HILL CHURCH

Well, Mars Hill, Jesus loves us. Amen? And we see it. We see the evidences of Jesus' love all over Mars Hill Church, and I have a great joy today that I get to present to you some of the fruit of this past year. And what we see in the New Testament, as Paul, and John, and others write letters to churches, they give specific updates. How's it going, what is God doing, and where is there more opportunity?

And in that same spirit, we like to notify the church of how things are going. That includes monthly updates for all of Mars Hill. In one sense, we're one church, in another sense, we're fourteen local churches scattered across four different states, and pregnant with five more churches, hopefully to be birthed in about a year. And what we like to do is give a global update for how Mars Hill is doing, and then also allow the lead pastors of each local church to give a local update for how things are going at that particular location.

Our fiscal year, our budget year, runs from July through June, so we just finished our fiscal year, and those who are administratively gifted and allow us to steward the resources that God has given us, have put together a final year-end report, and I'm really excited to share it with you.

Before I get into the details, let me just say, we have just completed the greatest year in the history of Mars Hill Church, any single way you measure it: number of people, number of baptisms, number of Community Groups, number of people in Community Groups, number of Redemption Groups, number of people in Redemption Groups, number of weddings, number of children, number of services, number of locations. Whatever variable you would take a look at, it's the highest it's ever been.

In the fifteen years of Mars Hill Church, we've just completed the greatest year we've ever had, and I can say with full confidence, it's firstfruits and there's much, much more to come. So, I want to start by saying thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving Mars Hill Church. And I want to thank you who love Mars Hill Church, and some of Jesus' love is coming through you as you give, as you serve, as you pray, as you care.

I'll give you some of the particular updates. Here are some of the evidences, most recently, of God's grace. In the month of July, we had our first ever Mars Hill student retreat. A couple hundred students went up to Malibu, Canada, eighty-plus students made a profession of faith and gave their lives to Jesus Christ, and we rejoice in that. Pastor Tim Gaydos, our lead pastor at Mars Hill Downtown, preached, the band Citizens from Mars Hill U-District led worship, it was a combined, collaborated effort among all of our churches.

I think what meant, perhaps, the most to me was the fact that some of our more affluent churches gave to help some of our more urban and poorer churches, which is exactly how it's supposed to go. And what we saw was there were a number of students who, quite frankly, couldn't afford to go, many of them from Mars Hill Rainier Valley, which is the most diverse zip code in America. And a number of those students, they don't have fathers, and some of them are living at the shelter of the Union Gospel Mission along with their mother, and they didn't have the means to attend the retreat, and so people from other Mars Hill churches gave above and beyond to scholarship every single student that applied to attend but could not afford to attend, and so no one got left out, and many of those are the kids who met Jesus. And though they don't have a father, they have God as their Heavenly Father, and, in addition to their mom and perhaps siblings, now they have Mars Hill Church as their family, and we praise God and rejoice that we had a part to play in that, and thank you who gave and served.

It was our strongest giving year ever. You were more generous than you have ever been, and we want to rejoice in the fact that we did have a very strong giving year. We met our budget projections and we also made some significant cutbacks to live within our means and to live lean so we can give generously toward the work of the gospel and the expansion of the church.

And a church is a family, but like every family, a church needs a home, and so a church building doesn't, in and of itself, constitute a family, but a family does need a home, and for us, we're praying for more real estate, because our families are growing and we have other families that we want to start, other Mars Hill churches. So, if you would join me in prayer, around your meals, with your family, in your Community Groups.

Just off the top of my head, I know that Pastor Sutton Turner, your executive pastor, is negotiating deals for Mars Hill Everett, as they've outgrown their kid's space, Mars Hill Downtown, as they're at five services having outgrown their facility as well, in negotiations for Mars Hill Orange County, also in negotiations for Mars Hill Federal Way, also hoping, trusting, praying that we'll be able to open Mars Hill Tacoma, Mars Hill Renton, Mars Hill Kirkland/Bothell-ish, and so lots of real estate negotiations in play, in addition to others that I'm sure that I've forgotten. But, just be in prayer for that, that we would have the space to see more people come to church and come to Jesus.

Other things you could pray for: as a church, we have a number of community neighborhood events, barbecues, people getting together, loving their community, getting to know their neighbors. There are still a number of those forthcoming, as well as baptisms scattered throughout the various cities.

We have sixteen church planters through Mars Hill Global that are being funded and sent out this summer to plant churches throughout Ethiopia. We're also funding church planters in India, as well as elsewhere.

And we've got our first National Resurgence Conference coming up in October. The Resurgence website is now one of the most trafficked, if not the most trafficked Christian website there is, and we have a big event, particularly focused on equipping leaders and helping raise up more leaders for Mars Hill. It will be in Orange County, California. Who doesn't want to go there in October? October 9 and 10. We're praying for three-plus thousand people.

I have the joy of teaching and welcoming men like Pastor Rick Warren, Pastor Craig Groeschel, who's probably got the largest church in America, as well as Pastor James MacDonald, a dear friend of mine from Chicago, Pastor Greg Laurie, whose Harvest crusades have ministered to 4.5 million people. We're talking about some of the most significant Bible teachers and pastors on the earth today, and we're really honored to welcome them along with others, and a guy named Lecrae, who's a great musician and artist, and he's actually an elder candidate in one of our Acts 29 churches, and my wife and I have gotten time with he and his wife. They're great, we love them, and so we're bringing together a bunch of world-class experts to help others increase their influence and fruitfulness for the Lord Jesus, so pray for that.

Here's the financial update, June versus May. What tends to happen is, in the summer, things go down, at least if you're in the Northwest. This mysterious ball of joy and heat shows up in the sky occasionally, and so people just run outside to look at this magnificent, unique, never-before-seen object. And what happens, then, is they tend not to go to church, they tend not to go to work, they tend to just sort of shut down for a few months. And so for us, the summer months tend to be sort of downtime: attendance is down, giving is down. Not this year. God is doing something unusual and unexpected. So, I guess Jesus is cooler than the sun. That's awesome.

So, in May, the percentage of adults who gave any amount to Mars Hill Church was 47 percent. In June it went up to 49 percent. Thank you to those of you who are giving. The average dollar amount per adult attendee a week went from \$35 to \$41, which meant people who were giving got more generous, and we're very glad for those of you who are helping to support Mars Hill Church. Jesus loves the church, and his love comes through your generosity. The number of giving households from May to June went up from 4,800 to 5,300.

And this is what's particularly unusual: weekly attendance went up by six hundred from May to June, and again, that tends to be a downtime for us, and we're growing. As we get ready for Esther in the fall, we'll be in the Book of Esther, and then we're gonna get into the Book of Ephesians in January with a major trade book and a full campaign forthcoming in the new year.

So, we're loving the Jesus Loves His Church series. It's an effort to get you plugged in, Community Groups, leaders, deacons, elders, members, everybody on board as we get ready for the fall, which tends to be our real growth period: September, October, November, sort of levels off for the holidays, and then we have a major growth surge, historically, in January.

But, this is the strongest we've ever been. We have six hundred Community Groups, eight thousand people in them, the services are full, people are meeting Jesus. This past year alone, we had thirteen hundred people baptized, as many people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. I want to say thank you Jesus and thank you Mars Hill, and God loves a cheerful giver, and as you give, give cheerfully, right? God's doing great things and we're greatly honored to be a part of that.

Lastly, how to give. During the offering portion of our service, which will be at the end of the sermon, you're welcome to give. You can give cash, you can give by check, you can fill out the giving envelope and it will give you some ways that you can give as well. You can go online to MarsHill.com and you can give through debit card, credit card. You can set up a recurring gift through ACH, kind of like you would when you pay other bills or fees. You can set it up so that it regularly deducts so that you don't miss any of your tithes and offerings. As well, you're welcome to take the envelope home and send in your gift in addition to the collection of the offering.

If you're new, or you're not a Christian, you say, "What do I give?" Here's what we want you to give. Give us your information so we can know who you are, so we can love you, pray for you, follow up with you, and get you plugged into the church and talk to you about Jesus. If you're new and/or not a Christian, ultimately that's what we want. More than your money, we want to give you a loving relationship with the church through the love of Jesus Christ. And so, if you let us know who you are, then we can welcome you into our family.

For those of you who are Christian and Mars Hill Church is home, give generously, cheerfully, sacrificially, as we get ready for, I believe, what will be the biggest year we've ever had, starting this fall, and I'm really excited. So, that being said, I'm going to go ahead and pray, and we'll get into the sermon today, but I hope that encourages you. Does it not? Does that encourage you? I mean, I don't know about you. You look at the political landscape, you look at the financial landscape, you look at your personal finances, you look at corporations, and it's not, "Hey! It's the best it's ever been!" It is here, because Jesus is alive. Amen? And so we're pretty fired up. If you're not, we're glad to have you anyway. Alright.

Father God, thank you, thank you, thank you for the best year in the history of Mars Hill Church. Lord Jesus, you love your church. You love this church, and we see your grace on us, and we say thank you and we love you, and we want to see more people meet you. We want to see more churches get planted, we want to see more lives get changed. We want to see those who know you come to know you better and enjoy you more fully. Lord Jesus, thank you that I have an opportunity to teach the Bible. I've got the best job on earth. Thank you that I don't need to create truth, I only need to communicate the truth that you have already revealed. So, Father, as I open the Scriptures, please send the Holy Spirit to anoint my words and to open

our ears so that we can hear from Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

THE BEST MEAL YOU'VE EVER HAD

Alright. Here's what I want you to do: think with me about the best meal you've ever had. And not too long. Eventually you gotta come back and hear the rest of the sermon, but think about it. Okay? I asked this question to my family, because meals at the Driscoll house are a big thing. My wife, Grace, our oldest daughter Ashley, amazing cooks. I know looking at me, you're saying, "I can't tell." I know. I know you can't, but they are amazing cooks. They are amazing cooks. World-class. I don't even like to go to restaurants anymore because the food at my house is better. It's better.

And sitting down at the table with my family, it's a sacred moment, it's a big deal. And so, sometimes, too, when we travel, we get the real grace of God to travel sometimes, we'll go out for a big meal and try to create a great memory around a meal. What's your best meal memory?

I was asking the kids and Grace recently, and I think for us, it was in Turkey. We were in Turkey together, and our Turkish tour guide said, "I'm going to take you to the best meal of ever! The best meal of ever!" And he took us to the best meal of ever. It was amazing. It was, like, at this lady's house out in the middle of nowhere. She grew everything on property, cooked it. She just set it out family style. You didn't get to order. She cooked whatever she wanted to cook, and everything she cooked was amazing.

What's your best meal of ever? And usually, there are three variables: the space, the physical location. Like, if you're in a place with a clown outside, and high school kids in uniforms are cooking it and serving it with a spork while you sit in a booth that is nailed to the floor, that's not the best meal of ever, right? Because the atmosphere is not right. So, there's atmosphere and then there's company, who you eat it with. Was it a holiday meal, was it at your grandma's house, your mom's house? Where was it? And then, perhaps, most important, for the best meal of ever, is who you eat it with. Family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, maybe it was the first date and that friendship started.

What's your most memorable meal ever? And here's why I want you to emotionally connect with this. Two things happen when we have a meal. Number one, we're enjoying our friends, and number two, we're welcoming people to become our friends. Right? This is why the Bible talks about fellowship. That's where God's people eat meals and do life together as friends. The Bible also talks about hospitality. That literally means the welcoming of the stranger, so you're taking people you don't know yet and you're having a meal with them because that's an act of friendship. That's saying, "Come to my house, sit at my table, and we'll start to build a friendship."

So, when we eat meals, what we're really doing is making friends. That's why, even in Corinthians, Paul says there's one guy, he's in habitual, unrepentant, sexual sin. They called it tolerance, diversity, had a parade, there was rainbows involved. It was all very complicated, but it was nasty. So, what Paul said was, "Don't eat with that man. Don't eat with that man."

Why? Because he says he's a Christian, but he's not repenting of sin, he's living in open, defiant rebellion, so let's not pretend like he's a good friend of God or a good friend of yours. Let's have him eat some meals alone for a while and see if he doesn't come to his senses, come to repentance, come back to the Lord, and come back to the church. Christians should eat with non-Christians and should eat with Christians who are repentant, but eating with Christians who are unrepentant who want the benefits of Christianity while living in open rebellion, that's intolerable to the Lord.

MEALS IN THE BIBLE

And so, as we look at the Bible, there are a lot of meals, feasts, and festivals. A lot gets done. Jesus' first miracle is a meal and it's at a wedding. And over, and over, and over in the Bible, you're going to see meals eaten. Some are eaten with God; some are eaten without God.

There are multiple ways that people will encourage and exhort you to examine Scripture. Some will say as we read the story line of the Bible, we should do so with the lens of covenants. Others would say we should look at it with the lens of dispensations or epochs, periods of time.

One way to examine the Scriptures is to look at the meals, a series of meals eaten with and without God, and that culminates in the Christian meal of Communion, also called the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, the Eucharist. It goes by different names according to your tradition and heritage, but it's about a meal being eaten with God and his people.

And when we eat, we are to eat as Christians, as friends of the Lord and friends of others, friends with those who know the Lord, and friends who we are inviting to get to know the Lord Jesus. So, what we're going to do, we're going to look from Genesis to Revelation. We'll do so before breakfast. We're not going to go all night, but we're going to look at five meals.

MEAL #1 – FORBIDDEN FRUIT

The first meal is forbidden fruit, and it is the first meal eaten without God in Genesis 3. So, most of you are likely familiar with the story. God creates our first parents, Adam and Eve, in his image and likeness. He puts them in this perfect, amazing garden. How many of you not only love good meals, you love to cook, and the ideal situation would be your own organic, fantastic garden? That's where he puts them. He puts them in a garden. That means it has all of the fruits, and the vegetables, and the herbs. Everything you could imagine for just feasting and celebration.

And what God tells them is, "You can eat anything you want in this magnificent garden, with one exception, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Do not eat from that tree. Do not partake of that forbidden fruit." That's what God says. Now, some people's view of God is that God essentially creates life as a law garden with a grace tree, meaning, the answer's no to everything, and there's only a thing or two that you really get to do. The way God created the world, it was a grace garden with a law tree in the middle. Tons of freedom and joy with one thing that was forbidden.

And what happens is Eve has a conversation with Satan. He's the serpent; he's the enemy. Revelation 12 and Revelation 20 say that this serpent, this dragon who comes to have a conversation with her, it's Satan. It's the enemy of God. It's a rebellious angel. And what he invites her to do is to partake of forbidden fruit. And the Bible says that Adam, her husband, was a passive coward. He was there with her, complicit to the whole thing, and they partook of the fruit, the forbidden fruit.

As a result, they received a sin nature. God came searching for them; they hid from one another and God. They blamed each other. God had to clothe their nakedness. They were kicked out of the garden, they were separated from eternal life, they experienced death. By the next chapter, their two sons are fighting and one kills the other.

We inherit a sin nature, Romans 5:12–21 says, and 1 Corinthians 15:45 says, "from Adam." Because of their rebellion, we all die. Does it seem like a lot, that eating fruit would result in that? You say, really? You took the wrong thing out of the fridge and every human being in the history of the world has a sin nature, is hell-bound, and dies?

It's not just about eating a meal, it's about picking a friend. What Adam and Eve were doing is saying, "We choose not to be friends with God. We choose to be friends with Satan. We choose to disobey God and obey Satan. We're pushing God out of our lives and we're inviting Satan in." We don't just eat meals, we worship, and sometimes eating is worshiping. That's why Paul says in the New Testament, "For some people, their God is their stomach."

Eating is a form of worshiping, and when we eat a meal, we're not just choosing a food, we're picking a relationship. That's why Christians pray before their meals. "Lord Jesus, thank you. We welcome you." That's why some Christian traditions, they pray after the meal, specifically thanking God for the things they enjoyed most about the meal. Eating is a very sacred thing. It's a worshipful thing.

And what happens in Genesis 3 is that a meal is eaten without God, and a friendship is forged in rebellion against God, and then the promise is made that Jesus will come and he will make all things new and better. What happens then is they are kicked out of the Garden of Eden and they're cast away from the tree of life, because had they partaken of the tree of life, they would have lived forever in sin, separated from God. So, it was an act of grace that God kicked them out.

MEAL #2 – PASSOVER

Well, this family grew to be the nation of Israel, the story continues, and from one of the descendants, Abraham, comes a nation called Israel. And the nation of Israel, under famine—again, a lot of the Bible centers around this idea and theme of meals, and feasting, and eating. Famine hit and there was no food, so God's people took refuge in Egypt.

There they were for about 440 years, and there was a succession, a series of pharaohs. These are kings that are worshiped as gods. Some of the pharaohs were kind to God's people, some were cruel. Well, it culminated with a most cruel pharaoh. He was abusive and harsh to God's people, he mistreated them, he abused them. He did not want them to worship their God, he wanted them to worship him as God.

And so that brings us to meal number two, the Passover. We read of this in the next book of the Bible, Exodus, also written by Moses. And if you want to study this further and discuss this in your Community Group, go to Exodus 12 and investigate it for yourself this week. For purposes of time, let me give you a summary.

What happened was God raised up a guy named Moses to confront this king named Pharaoh, and Moses came on behalf of the Lord. So the Lord would tell him, "Go to the Pharaoh and tell him this," and what we see over, and over, and over is that God is, through Moses, very gracious to the Pharaoh, and every time that Moses comes to him, in some varying way, he says, "You're not the real God. You're just a man. The real God, the God who made the heavens and the earth, he's displeased with your behavior. You're mistreating, abusing people. You've enslaved them and taken away their dignity. Those are God's people and he loves his people, and so God wants you to stop pretending that you're God and to release his people to be free to worship him." And this is a few million people, massive economic loss for the Egyptians and the Pharaoh.

Repeatedly, the Pharaoh says, "No, I will not release God's people from slavery and bondage. They're mine, not his people." And every time, God sends Moses, promising a succession of plagues. "Let them go or the river's going to turn to blood. Let them go or you're going to have a serious bug problem. Let them go or there's going to be some sort of consequence. Your crops are all going to die in the field. You're going to see."

And over, and over, and over, God tells Moses, "Okay, I'm upping—" You look at it like a dimmer switch. "I'm upping the consequences." Right? "It's gonna get worse, it's gonna get worse, it's gonna get worse," and another opportunity. Every single time, Pharaoh says no.

What you see in the Exodus is sometimes it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Sometimes it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. And the truth is, both happened. God was nice, loving, gracious, patient, and kind to Pharaoh, and that only made him more angry, more bitter, more self-righteous, more stubborn. You ever met somebody like that? You ever been somebody like that?

Pharaoh says no and Egypt starts to suffer judgment from God, and then it culminates with the final plague. "If you don't let God's people go, death will come to every home in Egypt, and the firstborn son in every household will die in a night." Pharaoh hardens his heart. God's being so patient, so gracious. Pharaoh's being so stubborn, so hard-hearted. When we read the story, we've got to see that we're all like Pharaoh. We need a heart change.

Death comes to Egypt. God's Word comes to pass. It says you could hear the mourning in the nation. Imagine tomorrow—alright, I'm a firstborn son. My son Zac is a firstborn son. Some of you are firstborn sons and you have firstborn sons. Imagine tomorrow we wake up and every firstborn son in

our nation is dead. It's a massive day of national mourning. The funeral parlors can't handle the body count. They can't dig enough holes to get rid of the sons, because the wage for sin is death, and there's one exception. Through Moses, God allows a provision that life would be spared, but it requires faith.

And sometimes in the Bible, faith is an inward conviction, sometimes it's an outward action. Sometimes you can tell who has faith by what they do. So, what happens in the Exodus, God says, "Demonstrate your faith in me by taking a lamb without defects, spot, or blemish, showing sinless perfection, and this lamb is going to be a substitute, because the wage for sin is death. Without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sin. And every family needs to gather, and in faith, slaughter that innocent, clean animal, take the blood, go outside, and literally paint the entryway to the home, showing, "We trust in the God of the Bible. We know that everybody's a hard-hearted sinner. We know that sin results in death, and we know that apart from the grace of God, we too shall suffer just condemnation."

And God says, "As death comes through the nation, we'll see the homes that, in faith, had a substitute die for their sin, that those homes are covered by that blood, and that the wrath of God—" What we're talking about friends, is the wrath of God. Some of you are in unrepentance, rebellion, and sin. You're living in the path of the wrath of God, and many in that day did, and they didn't think that God would deal swiftly or justly with them, and he did. And some of you are dangerously close to experiencing the wrath of God. You live in the path of the wrath of God.

But I want you to hear this: there was a way for them to escape the wrath of God, as there is a way for you to escape the wrath of God. In faith, that blood could be shed by a sinless substitute, and through faith, God's wrath would literally pass over you. That's where we get Passover.

So, in the homes that had faith in the God of the Bible as demonstrated with the act of the sacrifice, death didn't come. Life came. There wasn't mourning. There was rejoicing. There wasn't a funeral. There was a party. And from that time on, in a month called Nisan—it's around March or April if memory serves me correct, depending upon how the calendar was established year to year—every year, God's people celebrated the feast of Passover. You ever heard of it? That's what it is, that's what it was, because God did liberate them. Pharaoh did let them go. He eventually tried to track them down and God closed the Red Sea, and drowned the soldiers, and spared his people.

And then they eventually did get to their promised land back home, and every year, God said, "Don't forget how I save you. You're powerless. You're in slavery. Your sin is like a pharaoh that rules over you. You're hard-hearted and stubborn. You deserve to die. But I've made a provision that through faith, and the substitute, and the shedding of blood, the wrath can be passed over, poured out on someone else, and you can be spared."

So every year, God's people would gather for Passover. And you can read it in the Exodus, but God gave specific instructions. It's a bit of a manual. Do this, don't do that. Say this, don't say that. Here's how it's to go. If memory serves me correct, they did this every year for 1,440-some years. Let's just say over one thousand years, every year, every Jewish family. It's like Christmas or Thanksgiving. It's a huge feast, it's a big meal, and it's theological in nature. They're saying, "How does our God save us?" By substitution, by shedding of blood, by a lamb, and our faith in a slaughtered lamb.

And then comes Jesus. You ready for this? Jesus shows up, he's beginning his public ministry. His cousin John looks at Jesus. Here's what he says, John 1:29: ". . . the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Early on in Jesus' ministry, it's publicly declared: "There he is! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Here's the true Passover. Here's the true Israel. Here's the true substitute. No sin. He's without spot or blemish. He's going to be our substitute. He's going to die in our place. He's going to shed his blood. Through faith in him, the wrath of God will pass over us."

If you're here or hearing this and you're Jewish, Passover is about Jesus. Passover is preparatory, anticipatory. It's a sign pointing to a greater reality, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. You may eat Passover but if you don't do so in faith, all you're doing is Genesis 3 again, a meal without God.

In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul says: "For Christ," our what? "Our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." This is all about the cross of Jesus. Without spot or blemish, without sin or defect, Jesus goes to the cross, substitutes himself, dies in our place for our sins. That's why, today, friends, we didn't have you bring a sacrifice. The sacrifice has been given, Hebrews says, "once for all." It's not about signs and symbols. It's about Jesus, our substitute and Savior. We don't need to offer sacrifices. Jesus has died once for all. He's our Passover Lamb. He's the fulfillment of over one thousand years of meals.

So, in Revelation 5:12, at the end of history, the culmination, the apex, the eternal entry point, what happens? God's people, every tribe, language, tongue, nation, "all peoples," it says in Revelations 5. Here's what they sing: "Worthy is the Lamb," and that's Jesus, "who was slain." Jesus is our Passover. Do you get that? Jesus is our Passover.

MEAL #3 – THE LAST SUPPER

Now, let's keep going. Jesus lives his sinless life. He's preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons, and then it comes time for the Passover. Jesus, obeying the Scriptures, Jesus says this in Matthew 5, "Don't think that I've come to abolish the Scriptures, the Law, and the Prophets. I've come to fulfill them." Jesus fulfills everything that was promised, prophesied, predicted in the Old Testament regarding him.

It's Passover season, so Jesus is going to celebrate Passover, as the fulfillment of the expectation. So, that leads us to meal number three, the Last Supper. Matthew 26:26–28. "Now as they were," what? They're eating. It's a meal. Again, we eat our meals with God or without God. Here's Jesus, as God, eating a meal with his disciples. "Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

Okay, now, you and I, reading this, because we're not Jewish, because we've not been celebrating Passover our whole lives with our parents and our grandparents, most of us are Gentiles, our mind ceases to be absolutely exploded at this point. But what Jesus is doing here is changing over one thousand years of history. No one ever said this. This was altogether new. In the history of God's people, no one ever—you didn't say this at Passover! Jesus did.

And let me say this before I explain the significance of what he's articulating. Some of you would say, "I like Jesus. I think he's a nice guy, a moral teacher." Don't reduce Jesus into someone he's not. Receive him as he is or reject him as he is, but he is who he is. And here's what he's saying: "I'm God. I'm the fulfillment of prophecy. The whole Old Testament's about me. Passover's about me. Everybody who's gathering in all their homes across the nation today, and they're all celebrating, it's about me and I'm here."

He takes the bread and he says, "This is my body." Here's what I want you to remember, Mars Hill. Every time you have a piece of bread, remember Jesus' body, broken for me. Jesus' body broken for me. He went to the cross, substituted himself. He suffered. God became a man, suffered physically in his body for me. That's what Jesus is saying.

No one ever said that. You weren't supposed to say that. God wrote a book. In the book he said what to say, he didn't say to say that, but now here, God comes and God fulfills Passover. Do you understand the significance of this?

The story continues. "He took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my,' what? "Blood." Who says this? Who says this? Well, why should we drink? He says, "Well, it's poured out for many for the," what? "The forgiveness of sins."

Here's the bottom line. We're sinners. You're a sinner, I'm a sinner. We're all like Pharaoh, hard-hearted, want to be our own God, disagree, let me do what I want, don't impose on my life, this is my perspective, my values, my kingdom, I'm in charge. Jesus comes, says, "No, you're a sinner. You got a hard heart and you need a new heart. You need your sins forgiven."

Only God can forgive our sins. I think it's in Psalm 51, David says, "Against you only, Lord God, have I sinned." Our sin is against God, so only God can forgive us, and here's what Jesus says: "I forgive sin." This is a claim to be God. On another occasion, I think it's in Mark's gospel, they say, "This man commits blasphemy. He claims he can forgive sin. Who can forgive sin but God alone?" The answer is nobody. Here Jesus says, "I'm God, I forgive sin. The Old Testament's about me, Passover's about me, the bread's about me, the wine's about me. Broken body, shed blood. I am the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Let me say this: that's true or false. He's God without sin who takes away the sins of the world, or he's not. At Mars Hill Church, we deeply, continually, sincerely, passionately believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, that he's our Passover, that he's without spot or blemish, that he's our substitute, that he's God among us, that his body was broken and his blood was shed, and in him, through him, for him, by him alone is there forgiveness of sin. That's what we believe.

"This is my body, this is my blood."

So, when we take Communion, it's about who? Jesus! And I need you to know this 'cause at so many churches, they either don't take Communion, or they take it and don't tell you what it's about.

Now, Jesus says some things here that are hard to understand. He says, "This is my body, this is my blood." Here's the question, and I'm gonna see if we can get the toothpaste back in the tube theologically on this, right, because what happens is, Jesus says this, and then all these interpretations come out. And the question is, did he mean that literally?

How many of you have heard you can't take the Bible literally? Every time somebody says that, I ask them, "Do you want me to take you literally or—?" I mean, I had a debate in college with one guy, and this was kind of a public thing. And he was like, "You can't take the Bible literally." I said, "So, you don't like ponies?" He said, "That's not what I said." I said, "Well, that was my interpretation." The whole point was you want to be taken literally. You want to be taken literally and so does God. Okay.

So, at Mars Hill, do we believe you should take the Bible literally? Yes or no? Yes. But, there are two kinds of literal. Okay. So, I know it's summertime, you're not supposed to be in class, and you're like, "Oh no." Okay. No, no, just listen. There's plain literal and figurative literal. We do this in the Bible and all other literature and conversation.

So, if I tell you, "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse," yes or no, I want a horse? No. If you bring me a horse, I'll say, "That's—no, I wanted a cheeseburger." You know? But you'll say, "Oh! You're a hypocrite." "No, I'm using a metaphor, you know? And you're being religious and no fun at all and—" Okay. So, we use metaphors, right? We use analogies and similes and modes of talk, and it doesn't mean we're not communicating a literal truth. A figurative communication can still articulate a literal truth in a poetic way.

I'll give an example. I've used it before, but my daughter, Alexie, she's amazing, and sweet, and I totally adore her. And she's sort of poetic and gets arty with her words sometimes. So, she looked at me one day with her big blue eyes. She looks just like Tinkerbell, or she says, "Tinkerbell looks like me." And she said, "Poppa Daddy, I love you as big as the sky and as deep as the ocean." What I didn't say was, "7.4 billion cubic feet?" See? I don't know how big it is. I've never really measured it. I understood she loves me with everything. You get that? So it is in the Scriptures.

So, our view is, assume it's plain literal. "Jesus died." You know what that means? Dead. Okay? What about in the Greek? Dead. When it says something in a poetic way, it's still literal, but it's articulated in a creative fashion to articulate a literal truth. So, we assume plain literal, and if it doesn't

make sense, we go to figurative literal.

Okay, here's the big theological war. How literally do we take Jesus' words? Because how many of you were raised Catholic? Okay. Glad to have you. Okay. I was raised Catholic and I was an altar boy, and I assisted the priest in serving Communion. And I didn't fully understand it and I don't blame anybody but myself. I didn't do my homework, I guess. But, the Catholic Church teaches, basically, a position called *transubstantiation*, and that is that the elements literally, actually become the body and blood of Christ, and so Jesus is, in some sense, getting recrucified every Mass by the priest. Okay?

What that means is if you eat the elements, I guess you're eating Jesus, and so in the early church, the word got out, "They're all cannibals! Yeah, they get a guy and they eat his body and drink his blood. It's like a zombie horror film. It's just—it's Scooby Doo spooky, that whole Christian thing. Whatever you do, don't go. They're gonna put barbecue sauce on you and your mom will never see you again. It's a horrible place to be." You know?

Then there's another position held by Lutherans, Anglicans, and others. It's *consubstantiation*. They would use the language of real presence. And it's not that the elements of bread and wine literally become the physical body of Christ, but—I'll use the language to make sure I get it right—Jesus is really present, quote, "in, with, and under the forms of bread and wine." So, there's sort of a mysterious presence of Jesus surrounding the elements, though it's not his actual, physical body and blood.

Third position, from a guy named Huldrych Zwingli. Kindergarten was probably horrible for that guy. "Okay, write your name!" So, Huldrych Zwingli, he came up with the position basically called memorial feast, where he says, "You know, it's not Jesus' literal body and blood. He's not physically or even spiritually present. It's a memorial feast. It's a remembrance. It's a looking back."

So, in the Catholic Church, it's hugely important that you take Communion every week. In the Lutheran/Anglican Church, it's really important you take Communion every week. If you're in a church that's from the tradition of the interpretation of Huldrych Zwingli, it's not that big of a deal. Those of you who were raised Baptist, you're like, "Yeah, we took Communion once, I think. They gave us a little thing with juice and a cracker that was older than me, and I don't why we did it, but it definitely wasn't filling or satisfying." Or if you come from a more Charismatic/Pentecostal tradition, you do Communion once a month or once a year, or once every presidential election. I mean, it's not a big deal. It doesn't happen a lot.

Now, for those of you who have a church background, what was it? You say, "Yeah, we never took Communion, or I don't remember it, or we took it every week, but it was, you know, a little bit more of a mysterious supernatural—or it was, you know, Catholic, and it was for the forgiveness of sins and we're killing Jesus again, and it's like a funeral. You're supposed to be sad." What was it?

At Mars Hill Church, we believe this is to be interpreted figuratively. Okay? I'll give you some other examples. Jesus says, "I'm the vine. You're the branches." Does he have leaves? Do you think if you looked at him, you're like, "Dude's got a lot of leaves"? No, because that's a figure of speech, right? A great one. Jesus says, "I am the door." If you lifted up his toga, would you see hinges? Yes or no? No, there are no hinges. He's hinge-free. Figurative literal, Mark was right, okay? You get my point though, right? So, when he says, "This is my body. This is my blood," figure of speech.

But our position falls in the line of interpretation of a guy named John Calvin, who my second son is named after. And Calvin's view is that God's people should regularly partake of Communion, so we do every week. Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me," so we do. And that when we partake, it's not literally Jesus' body and blood, but he is present, not so much in the elements, but in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

That when God's people are filled with the Holy Spirit and they gather as God's family, and Jesus is honored, and remembered, and celebrated, and sin is repented of, and the cross of Jesus Christ is adored, the Holy Spirit is really present with God's people, and it's a sacred moment for the family to honor our big brother, Jesus. That's what we believe.

It's more than just a looking back and a memorial feast, but we're not gonna recrucify Christ every Sunday, because Hebrews says, "Once for all, his blood was shed, his life was given."

MEAL #4 – COMMUNION

So, the way we do it at Mars Hill, it's two different ways. On Sundays, every service, or Saturday, or whatever time we may be gathering for church service, we take Communion every week. And we put it in the middle of the service so that God's Word is proclaimed, and then there's a response. And that's where, if you're not a Christian, you turn from sin, trust in Jesus by faith, and you partake of Communion as an act of faith, as a demonstration of faith. And we get out of our seats and we do it together, remembering Jesus got out of his grave and one day we'll get out of our graves, and together we'll be with him forever.

And we take Communion every week in that form, in addition to Community Groups. And there are over six hundred groups with over eight thousand people. We'd love you to get into one! And what Community Groups do, they study the Bible, pray, they do missions, reaching their community, they do service, helping those in need and the poor, and they often times also have a meal together, and that's a Communion meal. That's a Communion meal.

We also serve wine and juice because of conscience. Some people struggle with alcoholism in their backgrounds, so we'll offer both so that you can live according to conscience. And we'll have bread, and we're—I think we even have gluten-free bread. I mean, it's the day we live in. You know? I guess some people, if they have gluten, they blow up like a puffer fish and we got to rush them to the hospital, and it's a thing. So what we do is we have gluten-free bread, and I'm sorry, I know your sandwiches are terrible. One day, you'll get a resurrected body and an awesome sandwich and it'll be all better. Until then—until then—Jesus is not the gluten-free bread of life, but you do what you gotta do. Right? So, you do what you gotta do.

So, we allow you to partake according to conscience and conviction, and that's all following the Last Supper of Jesus, and the early church started this

kind of Communion, meal number four.

And let me say this: as God's people take Communion, what we're showing is, "I'm friends with Jesus and his people." You can't be a Christian and not connected to the church. I don't get this. This is like a dad with five kids who adopts a kid, and that kid says, "He's my dad, but I don't have any siblings and I'm not part of the family." It's all together. God's a Father, adopts you, you're now part of a family. You got brothers and sisters. I don't get this solo, independent, me-Jesus, podcasting and rebelling Christianity. It doesn't make sense. The Bible knows nothing of it. If you're connected to God, you're connected to his people.

And when we partake in Communion in service or in homes together, what we're doing is we're doing it together saying, "I'm friends with Jesus, and I'm friends with you, and I'm part of the family." And this happened in early Christianity. It says in Acts 2 that when the Christians started gathering, they would meet from the temple courts, big meetings like we do for services, and from house to house, which is like our Community Groups. We're just trying to do it biblically.

And here's what we read in Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves." So, this is ongoing. It's habitual, it's common, it's regular. "To the apostles' teaching." First thing, what's the Bible say? "Fellowship." This is where Christians hang out and get to know each other.

And you know what? You're going to drive each other crazy, right? Some of you come in here, and let me just tell you, this isn't heaven. This is Mars Hill Church. In heaven, Mars Hill Church is gonna be so much better. Until then, you're gonna annoy each other because now you're in a family.

Any of you come from a family? What did your family do? Annoy you. What did you do? Annoyed your family. Okay? So think of it this way: we're all going to Dad's house for a big party, feast, and in the way, we're all in a station wagon annoying each other, okay? That's called life. Okay?

So let me reduce your expectations for Christianity. You say, "They're annoying me. They drive me crazy and they're just booger-flickers, and annoyers, and wedgie-givers." Welcome to the family of God. Welcome to it. And that's fellowship. When the Bible says fellowship, it doesn't mean perfect, reconciled relationship, we wear matching sweatshirts, we ride a tandem bike on the way to Bible study while quoting Leviticus to one another and singing songs from *The Sound of Music*. That's not what it means. What it means is you're gonna annoy me, I'm gonna annoy you. If we kill each other, we'll see each other in heaven. That's fellowship. Okay?

"And to the," what? "Breaking of bread, having meals together and praying." I'll tell you the easiest way to build a friendship with somebody: have a meal and pray together. Eat together, pray together. Like, let's say you're here, you're married, you're not getting along. Eat together, pray together, your friendship will grow because God always blesses those kinds of connecting moments. You're struggling with your friends, try to resolve it over a meal. Start it, end it, bathe it in prayer. That's how things get worked out relationally.

But, what do they do? They break bread. And so, for us, here's what we would say to you: if you're a Christian, take Communion on Sunday. If not, become a Christian, take Communion on Sunday. Get in a Community Group. If you're not in a Community Group, let us know and we'd love to plug you in to a group.

And for those of you who are in Community Groups . . . eat something. Okay? We're not big on legalism and rules. I don't know where the legalism committee is, right? No dancing, no fun, no smiling. Whoever's on the legalism committee, I wish they'd make rules like this: eat. Okay? If you're gonna pick a rule, pick a good one, like grill, barbecue, something awesome, four desserts, because dessert's awesome.

And what I would encourage you is this: this week, think about, who do I need to invite over for a meal? Family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, enemies. How many of you, you don't even know your neighbors? Invite them over for a meal. When they ask why, say, "You know what? This is what the kingdom of God is like. It's like a big meal, and Jesus loves us, and he loves you, and we love you, and what would you like to eat?" If they're vegan, cook vegan. If they like steak, kill something. Whatever it is, love them, serve them, welcome them, practice hospitality.

For those of you who are in Community Groups, great time of year. Barbecue, have people over, go to the park, make it awesome. Make it awesome. And it's an act of worship. It's to the glory of God and the good of others. It's showing that God is loving and good to us like a Father who loves a family and brings them together for dinner, and we want other people to meet our Dad and to join our family. Amen?

So, as we partake, we look back as we eat. And every time you eat, I want you to remember the meal in Genesis 3 that was eaten without God. I want you to remember Passover. God's people, every year for over one thousand years, waiting for Jesus. I want you to then think about the Last Supper. Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus died. We get to dine with him. I want you to think about the early church. It grew and flourished through meals, friendship with God and friendship with one another.

A Worthy and an Unworthy Way

Here's a scary word of caution: there's a church in Corinth. It's not a great church. They're getting drunk, they're suing each other, they're sleeping together, they're hiring prostitutes. One guy's sleeping with his mother or mother-in-law. Heads or tails, nasty. They call it pluralism, diversity, openness, tolerance, they had a parade, a magazine, a website, a whole Facebook group, and, you know, they had shirts. I mean, it looked very official, but God was very unhappy, and he said, "You're not repenting. You're claiming to love me and then you're disobeying everything I say. You're a bunch of rebellious, bratty kids." My translation.

So then, through Paul, God speaks to them, and here's what he says about Communion: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner." So, let me say this: there's a worthy and an unworthy way. In our day of pluralism, tolerance, diversity, it's, "Oh, no, no,

we're all—” Nope. There's worthy and unworthy. There's right and wrong. There's obedient and disobedient. There's qualified and disqualified. God's grace doesn't just forgive our sin. God's grace empowers us to put our sin to death because Jesus died for it.

Some of you are partaking in an unworthy manner. You're in open rebellion and sin. You come to church with your girlfriend and take Communion and then go home and sleep with her. That's an unworthy manner.

“Will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” Here's what he's saying. Some of you will say this: “You can't judge me!” Then judge yourself. If you judge yourself, then no one else will have to judge you. You will see your own sin, folly, rebellion. You'll come clean with God and his people. You'll say, “You know what? I got a problem. I need help. I need God's grace and God's people to help me fix my sin.” That's humility, it's integrity, it's honesty, so that you don't have to partake in a way that is unworthy.

Before you take Communion, do you examine yourself? Do you examine your life? Do you consider your sin? Do you take a moment and ask, “Holy Spirit, your job is to convict me of sin. Let me know anything that's amiss, and I want to get this right and I'm sorry. If there's anybody here I need to reconcile with, let me go apologize. Is there anything that would keep me from partaking in a worthy manner?”

God always answers that prayer. God never looks at a humble child and willing heart and says, “Well, I won't help you or speak to you.” God never responds that way. He's a good Dad. Judge yourself. Stop judging others. Judge yourself. Stop being so frustrated with those who judge you. Judge yourself.

You say, “Well, what happens if I don't do that? My girlfriend is cute.” “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have,” what? “Died.” Plain literal or figurative literal? This is a real funeral. Imagine that on a Sunday, people are coming up for Communion, dying. You have to step over the body to take Communion. You're like, “You know what? I'm gonna pray a little more. I'll be back in a minute.”

Now, some of you here say, “That's very unloving, very unkind, very mean. That's very harsh of God.” No, it's actually very loving, very gracious, very kind, because God treats his people like he treated Pharaoh, begging, pleading, waiting, upping the consequences, and eventually you get so hard-hearted that you both know you're not gonna repent.

Now, what happens to a church that doesn't protect holiness? Well, it leads to meals being eaten like Genesis 3. “I want sin, and I want Satan.” And when we partake, we partake publicly. It's your way of saying, “I personally belong to Jesus, and I personally am part of a people that belong to Jesus.”

I'll give you an example. I was new to ministry. I was a brand-new Christian, pretty new to ministry, was interning at a church, just getting started. I mean, I didn't have any church evangelical background at all, and because I was part of the staff, I was not yet an elder. I wasn't ready for that kind of leadership. I knew, though, through staff meetings that we had a situation in the church where there was a man who was married with kids, said he was a Christian, had been in the church for years, a lot of people knew him, had been committing adultery on his wife with another woman in the church. Moved out of his wife's house, abandoned his kids, went to move in with his girlfriend, and would attend the same service as his wife and kids.

So, the mom and the kids would be in one row, and this guy sometimes would sit in front of them with his arm around his girlfriend in church. I'll never forget the Sunday where they were serving Communion. The devastated wife and the crying children came up for Communion, and this guy got up with his girlfriend to go take Communion, and the whole church was watching.

Everybody—I mean, a lot of people know what's going on. What do you do? Do you pull out the, “Oh, don't judge anybody. That's an alternative lifestyle. Who are we to judge? We believe in openness, tolerance, and diversity.” Or, do we believe in love? Loving God, loving his Word, loving that woman, loving those children, loving that man who's put himself in the path of the wrath of God, and loving that woman who's an adulterer and being used by a horrible man, and herself doing a horrible thing.

I remember standing back thinking I don't know what I'd do now. I mean, it's public, everybody's watching, it's church. What do we do? The elders did a good job, a magnificent job. As he came forward, one of the elders looked him right in the eye and said, “No way. There is no way you're taking Communion.” He set the elements aside, got the man and the woman, walked them out to the foyer, rebuked them for their sin, called them to repentance, cut them off from the Lord's table, and it was beautiful because God was honored.

The woman got her dignity back publicly, and the children learned Jesus loves you and he hates what your father is doing, and there is an authority above your father named Jesus, and he's not okay with this. I rejoice that the church did that, and I'm sure there would have been complaints. “Oh, you know, it's a cult. It's church discipline. They're over the line. They're trying to control.” I'm sure a lot of things were said, but it was beautiful. It was beautiful.

That's exactly what Paul was talking about. He's not talking about those of you with an incredibly tender conscience and you forgot to use your turn signal on the way to church and you're shaking taking Communion, thinking you're going to be kindling. What he's talking about is those of you who are like Pharaoh. You're just hard-hearted, defiant, self-righteous. You're your own little god with your own little kingdom, and you show up here and say, “The king has spoken. Serve me. I want everyone to think that I belong to Jesus while I disobey him publicly.” The answer is, “Not at Mars Hill Church.” If you come to repentance, you're welcome.

What we see in 2 Corinthians is this actually worked. The guy who was denied Communion, he came to repentance, and in 2 Corinthians, we see him restored to the church, back in fellowship, having meals with people. So, the point is never punitive. It's corrective, but if you continue to rebuke God

with your behavior, he could take your life as a consequence.

So, here's what I want you to do. Before you take Communion, judge yourself, examine yourself, repent of your sin. It's a serious and sober thing. It's also a wonderful and glorious thing.

MEAL #5 – WEDDING SUPPER OF THE LAMB

The fifth meal, the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. This is awesome! History, the Bible, it opens with a meal eaten without God, the most tragic, horrific, painful meal in the history of the world, the meal that has destroyed everything, has in every way contributed to every evil, suffering, injustice, and funeral in the history of the world.

And then the last book of the Bible, Revelation, it ends with another meal. A meal of not death, but life; not damnation, but salvation; not condemnation, but forgiveness of sin; not weeping and mourning, but laughing and rejoicing; not famine kicked away from the garden, but feasting in the presence of the garden where the tree of life appears again and we partake together forever in the presence of the Lord.

How many of you love a good party? Who doesn't love a good party? Heaven is awesome, and what it is, it's the resurrection of the dead, just like Jesus rose, and a new earth, no sin, no sickness, no death, and it's a party. Who doesn't like a good party? See, I think every person who watches the Food Network, deep down, wants to get saved. That's what I think. What they're longing for is the perfect meal, with the perfect environment, and the perfect guests, where it's all fantastic. Here it is. Here is the culmination of all of human history. Here's the Food Network dream.

Revelation 19:6-9, "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude." There's gonna be a lot of people in heaven, a lot of people that Jesus loves, a lot of people that Jesus saves.

"Like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder." There's enthusiasm. You ever been to a concert where it's all quiet, and then the band comes on, and then it culminates and it gets loud and exciting. Or it's a sporting event, somewhere other than Seattle, where they win! And everybody's awaiting like this is gonna happen! That's not how we—anyways, it's gonna be great. And then it gets quiet, and then the athletes come out, and the place roars to life!

That's the kingdom of God. It's the resurrection of the dead. Everybody, here comes Jesus! Our faith is sight. There he is! He is alive! He is good! He is God! He does love us! He's smiling! His nail-scarred hands are out to embrace us! He's seated us at a table! It's amazing! Moses and my grandpa! Wow! Where to start? We're gonna eat! Jesus has set it all up and he's picked up the tab. They call it grace.

"Crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God Almighty reigns.'" The kingdom of God is a huge feast. It's a huge party. It's for God's people to be together, forever, with him. Forever! It's amazing! Our view of the kingdom of God is so small. That's why Christians don't have fun. We don't eat and drink well. Nobody accuses us of throwing too many parties.

Jesus got in trouble, didn't he? "He's always going to parties with the wrong kind of people that he loves. They're not like us." Yeah, they're fun. They're the kind of people, if you get them straightened out, they would actually appreciate an invitation to this kind of event. Get the lampshade off their head, find their pants, you know, get them straightened out. They actually could be fun at the real party, and the real party's a party without sin.

The story continues: "Let us rejoice and exult." That's, be happy. So, practice this at your dinner table. Eat good food, drink something nice. When your kids come up, "Dad, can we have dessert?" "Yes! Yes! Yes! Have two. Jesus is alive! We're practicing. Okay? We're practicing."

"For the marriage of the Lamb has come." What's the best wedding you've ever been to? Isn't a wedding awesome? Everybody gets together. It's, "Oh, they love each other!" and "They're smiling!" and "They're together!" and "What does God have for their future?" History ends with a wedding party. Jesus' ministry starts with a wedding party, and history ends at a wedding party. What's more beautiful than a wedding?

And the portrait here is like Jesus is like a groom and the church is like a bride, and it all ends when the groom comes to take his bride to his heavenly kingdom, and they celebrate. Like every girl who grows up reading fairy tales and princess novels, and dressing up, and waiting for a guy to come save the day, she really has biblical longings. She has the heart of the church, and she's looking for someone like Jesus. And Jesus loves his church. Ephesians 5 says, "Christ loved the church and he gave himself for her." It's beautiful.

"And his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure." Some of your translations will say she's wearing white. Why does the church wear white? Because we're sinless, spotless, we're better than everybody else? No. Because Jesus not only forgives sin, Jesus makes people clean.

See, in the Old Testament, people would sing the Psalms of Ascent, and they'd go up to the temple to worship God and they'd all wear white. Friends, we're all gonna wear white in heaven. It's going to be a crazy-looking party. Billions of people wearing white. Clean, clean, clean, clean, clean, clean, clean, clean, clean. Righteous in Christ, forgiven in Christ, made new in Christ.

I don't care who you are, I don't care what you've done. There is no kiddie table at this party. "Oh, you were dirty and you were nasty. You did that, you sit over there." There is no kiddie table. Nobody's wearing gray, kinda clean, kinda not clean. Everybody's wearing white, totally clean, because Jesus died, all of your sin was forgiven, his righteousness was traded for your condemnation, and the result is God's people wear white.

And ladies, hear me on this. I don't care what you've done, if you're in Christ and repentant, on your wedding day, wear white, because in Christ, you're what? You're clean. You're clean. There's no condemnation in Christ. There's no shame in Christ. There's no guilt in Christ. There no filth in

Christ, and you're gonna see it, you're gonna feel it, you're gonna know it, you're gonna love it, and you're gonna see Jesus face-to-face. Sounds amazing, doesn't it?

Zephaniah 3 says there'll be entertainment at this party. Don't you love it when there's a great party, awesome people, perfect food, nice setting, and then a band? What a nice surprise. Zephaniah 3 says that "the Lord himself will rejoice over us with song." At some point in this meal, Jesus is going to stand up, we're all going to stop talking, and he's going to sing. He's going to sing. There'll be times that we sing to him. There'll be a time when he sings over us.

"For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" Blessed are you, Mars Hill! Blessed are you Mr. and Mrs. Blessed are you. Blessed am I. Blessed are we. Because why? We've been invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

YOU'RE ALL INVITED

Today, the Lord Jesus gives you an invitation. He says, "Turn from your sin, trust in me. I invite you to be my friend. I invite you to eat with me. I invite you to rise with me and my people. I invite you to a seat at my table, to feast with me, to be loved by me forever. I invite you to be forgiven. I invite you to be made new. I invite you to be made clean. I invite you to wear white. Blessed are you who are invited."

You're all invited to the Lord Jesus, but like every invitation, you have to respond. You have to turn from sin and trust in him by faith, that it is his blood that covers you so that the wrath of God would pass over you, that you would get a new heart in the place of your hard heart, that you would partake, then, of Communion as an outward demonstration of faith in Jesus, that you would do so among God's people, showing that you're not just reconciled to the Father, but you're adopted into the family, and you're partaking it saying, "I am a sinner, and Jesus is my Savior, and I rejoice in his broken body and shed blood. He's alive and well, and I know one day I will see him face-to-face, and until that day, I want to eat all my meals and live all my days as his friend, with his people, so that we can rejoice together, forever." Amen? I'm going to pray.

Father God, I love preaching the Scriptures. God, this is, for me, an act of worship. I am so glad that I get to teach the Bible. God, I love the hero that Jesus is. I love the way the story of the Scriptures is told, that it's all about Jesus. God, I thank you that there's a party that is perfect and lasts forever, and we're invited. God, some of us have never been invited to anything incredible, and you invite us. Lord Jesus, I thank you that you'd pick up the tab. You forgive sin, you create the kingdom, you give righteousness, you set the table. I pray for my friends. I ask you, Holy Spirit, please give faith to those who don't have it. Please give repentance to those who fight it. Please take out the hard-hearted, stone nature and replace it with a loving heart and a new nature. And Jesus, we confess that sometimes we have eaten in sin, we have drunk in sin, we have welcomed Satan, we have tolerated evil. Lord Jesus, you have so much more and so much better. We invite you, Lord Jesus, as we now partake today, and throughout the week. Please, as we eat our meals, as we empty our cups, as we live our days, to live in light of that day when we see you face to face, when we put on white, when we sit at your table, and we rejoice in your grace, and we sing of your goodness, and then we're silenced to listen to you pour more grace on us yet again, as you sing over us. Amen.

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.