

A Prepared Table

A Communion Message

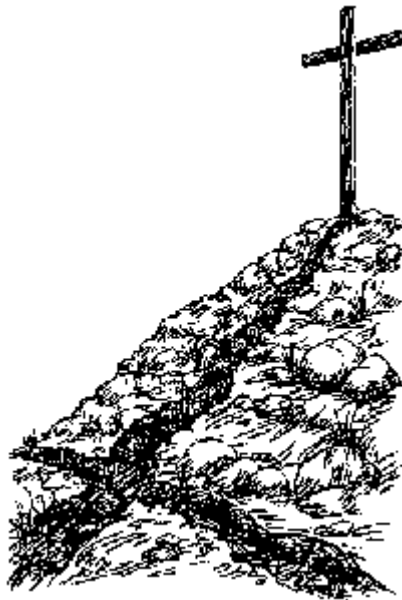
Psalm 23:5

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Psalm 23:5 (KJV) "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

This beloved Psalm has been used to comfort believers in times of grief and loss. I have heard this Psalm used at more funerals – and it does have a wonderful use there. As Children of God, Christians by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord, we do not hopelessly sorrow at the passing of a loved one (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The heathen, the mock or incidental Christian, the person who never considers God except in times of need – these people sorrow without hope. But we have hope, even in the darkest of circumstances.

The Lord's Table reminds us that we have hope, for our Shepherd is God, our Savior is God, our Salvation is of God.

The Table that we will partake of today reminds each Christian of three things:

1. The Table is shared by sheep.
2. The Table is shared by peculiar people.
3. The Table is shared by blessed people.

1. The Table Is Shared By Sheep

The Psalmist said:

Thou preparest¹ a table before me in the presence of mine enemies

¹ The Qal Imperfect of arak {pronounced aw-rak} means “to arrange or lay in order, set in place. To create order from confusion”.

This is a wonderful statement! Jesus our Shepherd lays in order the table for the believer. Life is hard, Beloved. I know of no person who is without enemies. In fact, the Bible never assumes that we are without enemies. Everyone has someone they have rubbed the wrong way. Everyone has someone who just doesn't like them. Our Lord Jesus, on the very night that He gave us the Lord's Table, looked across that Table at the face of Judas Iscariot – and prior to the first Communion showed us something about enemies. At the end of the Feast of the Passover, and just prior to the first Lord's Table, the Devil came into Judas' heart:

John 13:2-4 (KJV) "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; {3} Jesus knowing that the Father had given all

things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; {4} He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself."

Jesus knew that Judas was about to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver – He knew that this man would choose the world over fellowship with Christ. Even so, Jesus knelt and washed his feet along with the rest. Beloved, we all have our enemies – we all have people who have done us wrong. Our Savior was despitefully used by one unbeliever who sat at His feet and heard every precious teaching that He spoke on the earth. Jesus never did anything but good to Judas. Yet Judas was Christ's enemy in spite of the good that our Master did.

I cannot imagine betraying Jesus after He knelt and washed my feet. I cannot imagine looking at those precious hands – hands that would soon be terribly wounded with rusty spikes – as they held my dirty feet and tenderly washed them. Yet Judas, Christ's enemy, sat patiently and watched as the Messiah washed his feet and dried them with a clean towel. As this enemy of God sat being blessed by God he plotted, thinking within himself “how can I get money out of this Jesus?”

How can I profit by betraying Him?"

We all have enemies. Christ has enemies. We must endeavor, though our hearts may break at the thought of it, to do as Jesus did. The enemies of God are not welcome at the Table, though the Table is prepared and enemies may be in the midst. Just as Jesus did we must, in our hearts, wash the feet of our Judas'. Our betrayers, the enemies that we have – we must forgive and do good to them in spite of their evil. The Scripture says:

Matthew 5:44-48 (KJV) "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; {45} That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. {46} For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? {47} And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? {48} Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Just as Jesus did good to Judas and left his

punishment in the hands of God, just as Jesus treated Judas' feet with the same care ... and even later gave him the best portion of the Passover meal:

John 13:26-27 (KJV) "... And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. {27} And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."

The Lord's Table is not a place for enemies, but a place for friends, for the Beloved of God, for those Whom Jesus has saved. Judas would leave and go to betray Jesus *before* the Lord's Table started. He would go quickly to do his evil satanic deed, and set in motion a series of events that would lead to Jesus' torture and crucifixion.

Thou preparest¹ a table before me in the presence of mine enemies

Jesus prepared the Table for all but Judas. He prepared it for His Sheep, for those who love Him. Right after Judas left to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, our Lord said:

John 13:34-35 (KJV) "A new commandment I

give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. {35} By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The Table is for the faithful. The Table may be prepared in the presence of the enemies of God, and may even be prepared in the presence of our enemies – but only those who love Jesus and who love one another are invited to the Table. Only those who are under the care of the Good Shepherd:

John 10:11 (KJV) "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

John 10:14 (KJV) "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

can share this Table and the sharing have meaning. For the enemies of God, for the strangers who do not know Jesus as Savior, for the Judas' who have no true relationship with God in Christ they are without the fold and without the Table. They may eat, but their eating has no value, no more value than the sop (a biscuit covered with gravy) that Jesus gave Judas.

This table is shared by Christ's Sheep!

2. The Table Is Shared By Peculiar People

thou anointest² my head with oil

² Piel Perfect dashen {pronounced daw-shane²}

I heard Adrian Rogers preaching the other day, and he was preaching about peculiar people. He said that he told someone about a dear old saint that faithfully attended church, and said “she has a peculiar face”. He went on to explain what he meant by “a peculiar face”.

Christians are peculiar people. We are “peculiar” to the world, oddities, strangers and foreigners in a world that we are just passing through. To the world what we do today is eat crackers and drink grape juice. That's what the world sees when they look at the Lord's Table, but when we look at the Table we see symbols that mean so much to us. We see in the “crackers” the broken Body of Christ. We see in the “grape juice” the spilled Blood of our Savior.

The Table only has meaning to you if you are God's anointed, if you are saved by faith in Christ.

We are no longer blind and in a sinful union with the world. Our eyes have been opened, like Saul's eyes were opened on Damascus Road:

Acts 26:18 (KJV) "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

and we have turned from darkness and fear to light and blessing. We are a society of *forgiven people*, and have been made kings and priests unto our God:

Revelation 1:5-6 (KJV) "... Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, {6} And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Oil in the Scripture represents the Holy Spirit of God. It also represents blessing, for oil was made by pressing the fatty liquid out of olives. We sit at this symbolic Table today because God the Holy Spirit caused us to be "born again". We sit at this symbolic Table today because we are:

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV) "... His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

This simple ceremony emphasizes that we have *merely accepted what Christ has done for us*. There is no merit in our taking of this Table. Jesus provided His Body and His Blood for us, and we eat – our very eating symbolizing an act that all can do. We are God's anointed:

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (KJV) "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; {22} Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

and have neither earned nor deserved what we now enjoy. We, the anointed, sit at this Table because of the Grace of God!

3. The Table Is Shared By Blessed People

my cup runneth³ over

³ revayah {pronounced rev-aw-yaw'}, saturated, filled to overflowing

Finally, the Lord's Table is shared by blessed people. Kind David said, “my cup is running over”. Have I failed God? Have I played the part of the prodigal son? God is still faithful though I be faithless (**1 Corinthians 1:9**). Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, but he was not the only one who betrayed Jesus. All those who sat at the Table with Jesus betrayed Him, though not for money. Peter denied Jesus three times (**Luke 22:61**), yet Jesus forgave him and empowered him to preach on the Day of Pentecost. Thomas denied Jesus even after the resurrection, though he eventually called Him both Lord and God (**John 20:28**). Our cup runneth over!

When my enemy seeks to destroy me Jesus is at my right hand. My cup runneth over. When I lay sick, nigh unto death in the hospital, Jesus is at my side. My cup runneth over. When my loved ones perish Jesus holds me in His loving embrace. My cup runneth over.

It is interesting to note that Psalm 23 comes right after Psalm 22, which starts out:

Psalms 22:1 (KJV) "... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"

The Cross had to come before “my cup runneth over”. In Psalm 22 King David prophecies of that terrible day when Jesus, in the midst of raging agony, cries out:

Matthew 27:46 (KJV) "... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Psalm 22 had to come *before* Psalm 23, because Jesus' suffering had to come so our cup could run over. My cup in life runs over because Jesus filled the cup of the wrath of God with His own Blood. Jesus made payment for my sins so I can praise God and say, “my cup runneth over”.

Does your cup run over? If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior then it certainly does run over. No matter what trials you may be under, you have a Friend Who is always at your side. The Table that we are about to share reminds you of God's great Grace, and that that Grace will never cease. Your cup runs over if you have a relationship with God by believing in Jesus Christ our Savior.

Prepare now your hearts to receive the Lord's Table.

Rock Hill Baptist Church is located on highway 412 (east if you head toward Parsons, Tennessee, west if you are heading toward Lexington, Tennessee). Rock Hill is a growing Bible teaching church committed to prayer and the ministry of God's holy Word. We welcome all seekers to come and experience our services. We worship on Sunday starting at 10:00 AM (Bible class), 11:00 AM (Worship service), 6:00 PM (Prayer services), and on Wednesday night at 7:00 PM (Prayer, Bible, Team Kids, Youth Services). Contact Brother David Buffaloe (our Pastor) at 731-845-6104 for more details.

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