

ACU Outline  
Sunday Dinner  
Williams Performing Arts Center, Recital Hall, 8:30a

**Pinch and Sip in Silence**

- I. General review
  - A. Day 1: Theology of eating, OT texts
    - 1. Wine and Bread
    - 2. General eating
    - 3. Covenants
    - 4. Marriage Banquet & End time banquet
    - 5. Passover
    - 6. Thanksgiving banquets
  - B. Day 2: NT texts
    - 1. Food in life of Jesus, significance of meals as a setting
    - 2. Banquets as parables and metaphors for Jesus
    - 3. Last Supper Texts
    - 4. Lord's Supper texts
    - 5. Significance of table fellowship in light of dietary laws.
- II. Lord's Supper emphasis:
  - A. Community event
  - B. Centerpiece of Sunday assembly
  - C. Full meal
  - D. Responded to the whole gospel event.
  - E. Appetizer promise of the heavenly meal.
  - F. Joyous celebration.
- III. What happened in early church (Excellent resource: William Willimon: *Word, Water, Wine and Bread.*)
  - A. For the first 100+ years, the church continued as a home cell movement with a full common meal.
    - 1. Supper included
      - a. Taking bread
      - b. Thanking God
      - c. Breaking bread
      - d. Giving bread
      - e. Eating the meal
      - f. Taking wine after the meal
      - g. Thanking God
      - h. Giving the wine.
    - 2. Problems arose over:
      - a. Larger crowds
      - b. Abuses
        - i. 1 Cor. 11: individualizing the supper, selfishness.
        - ii. 1 Cor 5, 8; 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12: false teachers and others who sin all day and then come to the supper.
        - iii. 1 Cor. 10, Pluralism: eat at pagan temples and with church.

3. Justin's Apologia (AD. 150) describes worship in the church at Rome as a gathering on Sunday, led by a "president." The meal began with readings from the apostles or the writings of the prophet "as long as time permits" followed by a sermon by the president "urgently admonishing his hearers to practice these beautiful teachings in their lives." "Then all stand up together and recite prayers." Then bread and wine mixed with water are brought, the president offers prayers of thanksgiving "as much as in him lies," and the people respond with , "Amen." The Eucharistic meal is then eaten, and the leftovers are gathered by the deacons to take to orphans, widows, and others who are not present.
  4. Prior to 200 there was much diversity in worship and no set forms.
- B. 200s
1. By the early 200s, the **supper was no longer a part of the meal**. Some churches continued an *agape* meal (love feast) as an occasion to care for the poor - a soup kitchen. Generally the supper was a formal ceremonial meal.
  2. The 200s mark the formation of **structured liturgy and uniformity** in the church. The early church, in an attempt to do things right, came up with forms that were orthodox - correct - and people were instructed to repeat these correct forms. The apostles and eyewitnesses were not gone, so the practices needed to be frozen so that they would not be destroyed by "mindless innovators."
  3. Hippolytus wrote a book known as the *Apostolic Traditions*. This details the standard forms that were being adopted.
    - a. **Only the baptized could eat of it.**
    - b. By this time the **Eucharist, as it became known**, was the highest ceremony of the church, **controlled by the bishop**. It was heavenly food, and those who did not eat it, were destined to hell.
    - c. It could only be offered when the bishop was present to oversee it.
    - d. Deacons were the ones who served it.
    - e. Prayer: "We give you thanks, O God, through your dear Child, Jesus Christ, whom you sent us in these last days to save us, redeem us, and inform us of your plan. He is your Word, inseparable from you, through whom you created all things and whom, being well pleased with him, you sent from heaven to a virgin's womb. He was conceived and took flesh and was manifested as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin. And he, accomplishing your will and acquiring a holy people for you, stretched out his hands as he suffered to free from suffering those who trust in you."
  4. Note that there is **little emphasis on the Passion** and suffering of Christ. The emphasis at this time was on Christ as the victor, on his saving work. The church is rejoicing over the triumph of Christ. **The idea of focusing on the crucifixion and substitutionary atonement will come much later**. For Hippolytus, "Christians are participating in a resurrection meal, not a wake for a departed hero" (Willimon, p. 37).
  5. Another emphasis of Hippolytus is on remembering.
    - a. We tend to think of remembering as bringing to mind something from the past which is finished, i.e. remember my graduation from high school.

- b. For the Jews, as demonstrated in the Passover, remembering was a reliving in the present, a proclamation of the present power of the event.
      - i. That is why the Jews talk about the God who brought us, the current generation, out of Egypt.
    - c. It is this second type of remembering that Hippolytus mentions. He saw the supper as a **proclamation and participation in the salvation of Jesus.**
- C. In 313 the emperor Constantine made peace with the church and shortly thereafter Christianity became the state religion of Rome. **Everything changed.**
  - 1. **321 Sunday became a day of rest**, a day for church. Prior to that time Sunday was a work day, sunup to sundown.
  - 2. **Church buildings:** often modeled after Roman public buildings. Prior to this time an underground house church religion.
  - 3. With Latin as a universal language, **books of common prayer** and worship liturgy became standard.
  - 4. Church polity became like Roman polity with a Bishop, group of presbyters, and powerful deacons. Often the Bishop and his deacons ran things. Processionals became common along with robes, shepherd's crooks, altars, candlesticks, incense, and praying to the east- all taken from the Roman law courts and ceremonial life.
  - 5. The clergy - laity distinction became significant
  - 6. The Eucharist was gradually **transformed from commonplace to something of awe, mystery, and distance.** Chrysostom would speak of the Eucharist as the "shuddering hour" and the "terrible and awful table."
- D. By the time of Pope Leo the Great (440-461), "Mass" was the name by which the Eucharist was known. It comes from the Latin for "You are dismissed."
  - 1. With Leo the Eucharist was taking on the flavor of a **sacrifice.**
  - 2. "We offer you this immaculate sacrifice, this reasonable sacrifice, this bloodless sacrifice, this holy bread and cup of eternal life, and we pray and beseech you to take up this offering by the hands of your angels to your altar on high, as you deigned to receive the gifts of our just servant Abel and the sacrifice of our father Abraham, and that offered to you by Melchisedech the high priest."
  - 3. We now see the development of the concept of "priest" and the Supper as **"sacrifice for sin."**
- E. Gregory the Great (590-604)
  - 1. There was a loss of joyful thanksgiving.
  - 2. The Mass was now a solemn priestly sacrifice with almost no congregational participation. The church watched as the priests ate.
  - 3. This was the time of the introduction of the choir and special and technically difficult music. Again this reduced congregational participation.
- F. In the 600s the altar was moved from being between the priest and the people to the east wall. Now the **priest performed virtually all of the worship with his back to the people.**
  - 1. The church members were totally spectators to whatever they could see.
- G. The Monastic period developed around the 8<sup>th</sup> century

1. The monastery elevated passive, individualized worship.
  2. Daily private masses became widespread.
  3. Also at this time attending Mass became a "means of grace," i.e. the way one assured one's personal salvation and the salvation of the dead.
  4. Most monasteries and larger churches had numerous smaller chapels where priests could do mass (take the Lord's Supper) on behalf of wealthy donors.
  5. By this time many Masses were **Lord's Supper only without sermon, music, or lengthy readings.**
  6. By this time, the **worshipper no longer needed to even participate.** The priest could do it all for you.
  7. Also by this time the Supper became **focused only on the Passion and crucifixion of Christ.** It became a work to achieve salvation rather than a celebration of the salvation already accomplished by Christ.
- H. In 831, a monk named Radbertus suggested that the body of Christ is present in the mass by virtue of a miraculous transformation of the elements. Thus began the debate of what we now call **transubstantiation**. It took nearly 400 years for it to become church law in Rome.
1. This made the communion even more solemn and awe-full. Because of this, the **cup was now denied of the people** - only the bread was given.
  2. The **bread also changed around AD 1000.**
    - a. Up until this time regular leavened bread was the norm.
    - b. Later, as the Mass became more mysterious and **more exclusively identified with Passover**, special unleavened bread was created.
    - c. Christian priests developed to mimic Jewish priests, and therefore the ritual Levitical bread was adopted.
    - d. Therefore special, holy bread was called for, pure **white unleavened bread** specially baked by sanctified hands. The Kosher Jewish laws were restored in a Christian context.
  3. Needless to say, since the congregation no longer participated, church attendance had dropped to nearly nothing.
    - a. The Mass was in Latin, a language many did not understand.
    - b. The congregation was totally spectator.
    - c. So the Lateran Council of 1215 decreed that every Christian ought to receive the Holy Communion at least once a year.
    - d. However it was still a very personal, private, and individualized experience, not a corporate one.
  4. It was also around this time, AD 900-1200, that the celebration of confirmation and first communion began.
    - a. Infant baptism had begun back in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.
    - b. This tended to separate baptism from communion.
- I. It was in 1517 that an Augustinian monk named **Martin Luther** began what we now call the Protestant Reformation.
1. Luther emphasized that the Lord Supper was not a sacrifice by man to God, but it was God's gift to humanity. We are saved by grace, not by good works, not even the good work of the Eucharist.
  2. Luther also denied transubstantiation.

3. Luther made several reforms that still effect us today.
  - a. He **brought congregational music back** to the worship. The tradition of his time was for the choir to sing and the congregation to listen.
  - b. It was also Luther who **brought the sermon into prominence**. Prior to Luther, The Lord's Supper was the center of the service and any preaching or teaching was an appendage. Luther condensed the supper and elevated the sermon probably in his attempts to espouse correct teaching.
  - c. Luther **restored the congregation to taking communion**, not just the clergy.
  - d. He tried to restore weekly communion, but the **people objected** to both "c" and "d." Old habits are hard to break.
  - e. He struggled over infant baptism and infant communion. He finally **rejected confirmation** as a requirement, but kept communion away from baptized children.
- J. Huldreich **Zwingli** is often known for the **Swiss Reformation**. Contemporary of Luther.
  1. For him the Lord's Supper was a visual aid, like baptism was a visual aid. Both were **unnecessary** in the literal sense.
  2. He celebrated the Eucharist only 4 times a year with the preaching service being the predominate model.
  3. He also **eliminated all music** from worship and focused on preaching and teaching as the major event. He had a near total lack of involvement by the congregation.
- K. A third Reformer was **John Calvin**.
  1. For Calvin Christ was really and fully present in the Lord's Supper through the Holy Spirit.
  2. He wanted the Supper to be the central emphasis of worship, but his followers did not want to follow.
  3. He did celebrate the supper at tables, not in pews.
- L. In 1547, Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, made several changes that were monumental.
  1. All scripture was to be read in English, not Latin
  2. Both wine and bread should be given to the congregants. The cup had been withheld for nearly 400 years.
  3. In conjunction with the newly invented printing press, the first Book of Common prayer was published to put the liturgy into the hands of the people (1549)
    - a. Priest must be present to offer communion.
    - b. Any good wheat bread could be used.
    - c. Bread must be put in individuals mouths. This insured that they did not take it home and use as a good luck charm or other superstitious use.
  4. Weekly communion was emphasized, but never followed.
- M. The Wesley's came on the scene in the mid 1700s and they sought to further reform the Church of England.
  1. John Wesley agreed with the stated but unpracticed weekly communion. He claimed to have communed on the average of twice weekly.

2. He also saw the communion as an evangelistic occasion. He welcomed Earnest seekers in hopes that they would find faith in the communion.
- IV. Alexander Campbell and Communion
- A. Alexander Campbell was a member of a splinter group of Scotch Presbyterians.
    1. They observed communion once a year.
    2. It was a very solemn ceremony.
    3. Prior to communion, members were examined to insure that they lived a life of the highest standards. Only those who passed the test were given a communion token, a small coin which signified that they could be admitted to the annual communion service.
    4. This practice was one of the things that young Alexander Campbell studied earnestly and finally led him to leave that group.
  - B. **Video clip from *Wrestling With God*, Stone-Campbell Film Project, 1990, 4:30.**
  - C. Campbell wrote, "All Christians are members of the house or family of God, are called and constituted a holy and a royal priesthood, and may, therefore bless God for the Lord's table, its loaf and cup – approach it without fear and partake of it with joy as often as they please, in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Savior." (*The Christian System*)
  - D. Campbell's design for a "meeting house" included a table but no pulpit.
  - E. William Willimon, p. 103, "One of the most interesting of a number of new Protestant groups which were born in the age of revivals was the Disciples of Christ. In an age of bitter disputes among factions within American Protestantism, the Disciples decided that such divisions are due to "human opinion" which have been added to the simple basic Christian requirements. They resolved to avoid all that the Scriptures avoid. Using this resolve as their guiding principle for reform, they dispensed with creeds, sacraments, and infant baptism. But their biblical emphasis did lead them to recognize the centrality of the Lord's Supper for Christian Worship. Disciples therefore recovered weekly celebrations of the Lord's Supper - an anomaly in a time when whatever influence which the Lord's Supper had among most American Free Church Protestants was lessening."
  - F. We were unusual, as most groups continued to see the sermon as central and everything else as an appendage.
- V. So turning to Churches of Christ in recent history.
- A. We have the bread and cup separated from the meal from the 3rd century.
  - B. We sit in pews instead of at tables from the 3rd century.
  - C. We limit the Supper to immersed believers only from the 3rd century.
  - D. We have the table as altar used by lay male ministers from the 4th Century
  - E. We view the supper as sacrificial, as a work to achieve grace from the 5th and later centuries.
  - F. We view the supper as highly personal and private, from the 9th century.
  - G. We require unleavened bread from the 11th Century.
  - H. We tie it exclusively with the Passover from the 12th Century.
  - I. We have made the sermon more important than the Supper from the 13th Century.
  - J. We require Welches unfermented grape juice from the 19th century.
  - K. We require individual cups from the 20th century.

- VI. If we applied the same reasoning to Baptism that we have to the Lord's Supper, then sprinkling should be perfectly acceptable to restoration people
- A. To quote none other than F. LaGard Smith in his book, *Radical Restoration*: "For good or ill, it is not a first-century Lord's Supper that we eat today. Our highly ritualized version comes nowhere near capturing the vibrant essence of the Lord's Supper in the model church."
- VII. I would bring you back to our first two hours.
- A. The Lord's Supper was originally a fellowship meal not limited to crackers and juice.
  - B. The Lord's Supper was the primary setting and focus of the weekly assembly. The exposition of the word took place in the context of the supper.
  - C. The original bread was standard table bread and the original drink was wine, though probably wine diluted with water.
  - D. There is nothing in scripture to specifically limit the offering of the supper to Sunday, and there is some evidence that it for some was a daily meal emphasis.
  - E. There is nothing in scripture to say that the un-immersed and children were excluded from the meal.
  - F. There is nothing said about time limits and servers since these groups met primarily in homes around the dinner table, and normal food preparation and serving rules would apply.
  - G. The Supper was a community celebration, not a private meditation.
  - H. In the eating, people remembered the whole gospel, not just the Passion. The meal celebrated the reconciliation between God and men and reconciliation between peoples brought about by the Christ event.
- VIII. William Willimon (p. 125) cites the general consensus of contemporary Protestant and Catholic scholars:
- A. "A full service of the *Word* and *Table* is the normal Sunday activity for Christians. The recovery of the Lord's Supper as a frequently celebrated Sunday event is imperative."
  - B. "In our celebration of the Lord's Supper, we should focus on the entire saving work of Christ - his birth, healing, passion, teaching, death, resurrection, ascension, and the present reign not simply on the somber meal in the upper room. The Lord's Supper is not some doleful memorial to a lost hero. It is a joyous victory celebration of a resurrected and reigning Lord."
  - C. "The joy of communal fellowship with Christ and with members of the Body of Christ is its goal more than individualistic, self-centered, heavily penitential introspection. Sunday is the day for Communion and community rather than a day for one's private meetings with God."
  - D. "As the central symbolism of water is being recovered in our renewal of baptism, so the central symbolism of a meal is being recovered in our renewal of the Lord's Supper... We Protestants are learning again to trust the old, biblical symbols rather than rely exclusively upon words. We are learning again that the Lord's Supper is something which is done - tasted, touched, smelled, and acted - rather than something which is only spoken and heard."

- IX. How do we bring reform to our churches to restore the emphasis, meaning, and function of the Lord's Supper?
- A. Let me begin by saying that my congregation has been working on this for 25 years. So anything I will say about our experience has 25 years of process behind it.
1. Our traditions are so entrenched that we face the same problems Luther, Calvin, Wesley and other did. Change is feared and resisted. A push to correct and restore overnight will result in a church split.
- B. Pray
- C. Decide with your leadership that the Lord's Supper is going to receive greater emphasis.
1. If the preacher thinks preaching is the most important thing, and the music minister thinks music is the most important, then LS emphasis will never happen.
  2. It is important to educate your elders/leaders first. There is nothing like starting something and then finding that Sister Suzie corners an elder and objects, so he shuts the whole thing down.
  3. Our people are very time conscious.
    - a. One congregation decided to divide their assembly into three 30 min. segments: Praise, Word, and Lord's Supper.
    - b. If you want to get the supper out of the way in 7 minutes, then forget the idea of restoring NT worship.
    - c. If your people judge the quality of your service by the length of the sermon, then they will be disappointed as you decide how your time will be spent.
- D. Teach.
1. We must teach on this subject.
    - a. I would suggest a Bible Class.
      - i. We had classes using Williman's book *Sunday Dinner* 20 years ago. Several of the books in the bibliography would make excellent class books.
      - ii. There are numerous outlines available from this series of lectures and from our website [www.swcentral.org](http://www.swcentral.org). Go to Staff, Steve Sandifer.
    - b. Invite those class participants to plan some special worship services. Let them struggle with the changes needed and take the heat for their experiments.
  2. Begin having 5 minute Lord's Supper Meditations before the Supper designed to teach as well as inspire.
- E. Educate our Lord's Supper prayer leaders.
1. The number one way we have taught about the supper and that we create the mood for the supper is with our Lord's Supper prayers and the song that precedes it.
  2. As long as the same old prayers are said and Gethsemane songs are sung, nothing will change.
  3. I have given a meditation on joy only to be followed by a prayer leader who said the exact opposite of what I was emphasizing.

4. Who says Churches of Christ don't have liturgy. Just listen to the lord's Supper prayer!
- F. Incorporate the Supper into your sermons.
1. I believe that there is everything that is a valid topic for preaching that is a valid emphasis for the Supper.
  2. When I was preaching it was not unusual for me to speak several times during an assembly with readings, singing, and the communion between the points of my "sermons." In reality I was trying to minister through an entire assembly, using all of the elements woven together to teach and encourage.
  3. The sermon can be a prelude to the supper, instead of the Supper being an appendage that has to be worked in without destroying your sermon emphasis.
    - a. Commitment - lead up to the LS as "blood of the covenant."
    - b. Marriage - LS as wedding feast between church and God.
    - c. Bigotry - LS as a table open to all with no elevated seating.
    - d. Giving - LS as God's gift to his people, as our thanksgiving meal to God.
    - e. Heaven - LS as the great meal in heaven.
    - f. Sexual sin - LS calls us to decide at which table we will eat.
    - g. Disputes - LS calls us to be reconciled before we eat.
    - h. Our problem is that we have failed to explore the breadth of the Supper!
  4. Have special Lord's Supper emphasis sermons.
    - a. John: I am the bread of life.
      - i. I had a large Jewish Hallel Loaf of woven bread on a pedestal.
      - ii. I talked about what it meant for Jesus to be the bread of Life.
      - iii. Then I took the loaf down, broke it into pieces which I put into our communion trays, then it was served.
    - b. Talking about elders as servants.
      - i. John's text begins with the washing of feet.
      - ii. Call the present elders to serve communion to the congregation.
      - iii. The same could be done with deacons, teachers, etc.
  5. Have a family prepare your communion for a month, including baking the bread. Then have that family take a lead in serving it to the church and/or preparing a meditation on the supper.
  6. Do you know there will be a baptism next Sunday. What a wonderful opportunity to tie together water, word, and wine.
- G. We must learn to think differently before acting differently will be received or at least tolerated. But after some time teaching the church, change the form of the service occasionally to give form to your teaching. Our church architecture is anti-community, so some things require creativity. Some of the things we have done at Southwest Central:
1. Serve the Lord's Supper to everyone Sunday evening.
    - a. How can people commune when they are dismissed to another room or singled out for participation?
    - b. Serve it to everyone, give members permission, and let their conscience decide if they will eat.
  2. Use one big loaf and one cup, or begin with the drink in a very large pitcher, bless it, and then pour it into goblets to be passed. Out individual cups, and

now the individual “bits” of cracker work against the emphasis on unity and community.

3. If you have a baptism, encourage the friends of the baptized individual to sit with them for communion. Give congregants time to get up and move to that person.
4. If you have a baptism during the week, immediately after the baptism have those present stand around the new convert, pray for them, and serve communion to all who are present.
5. If someone is leaving the congregations to move away - ask members to circle around them and eat communion with them this last time.
6. Save the supper to the end of the service. Set up tables around the building with bread and juice on them. Ask people to move to those tables and serve one another, sharing verbally something good the Lord has done for them. (Use pita bread and paper cups of juice for emphasis.)
7. Have communion set up at the front and ask families and friendship groups to come and serve themselves in self-chosen groups. Have them be alert for elderly and take the communion to them and eat with them.
8. Do anything to break the silence and emphasize community and joy instead of individuality.
  - a. Sing during the serving.
  - b. Select celebrative songs.
  - c. Have congregational responsive prayers for the supper.
  - d. Assign things for people to say as they eat:
    - i. Pass the bread to the person next to you and say aloud, "This is the body of Christ."
    - ii. .... "I am glad that we are part of the body of Christ and members one of another."
    - iii. ... "Jesus loves you. He came to earth, lived, died, and was raised because you are special."
    - iv. .... "Tell your neighbor something that God has done for you for which you are thankful today."
9. If you are having a mission emphasis Sunday, rearrange your service and communion to reflect the practices of a foreign mission area. (In our case, that meant buying some real wine to serve and using 8 large goblets instead of individual cups.) This assumes that the foreign service is not a transplanted American service.
10. Have a pot-luck meal instead of a "regular" worship. This might be a "Commitment Sunday" when the church is being asked to covenant for a special emphasis, building expansion, etc. Serve communion as a part of the meal.
11. Have an annual Seder Meal at Easter time at which the Passover is explained.
12. Home groups are an excellent place to begin with Lord's Supper emphasis.
  - a. Design some lessons for your home groups on the Supper.
  - b. Have everyone sit around a common table for a fellowship meal.
  - c. Direct the discussion at the dinner table to the blessings of God. Seek to recognize the divine participation in everything spoken of at the table.

- d. Include the bread and juice as elements of the meal.
  - e. Involve the children and play spiritual games with them as is done at Passover.
- X. John Mark Hicks in his excellent book, *Come to the Table*, lists 12 points where the church should revision the Lord's Supper: The church should *revision* the supper as:
- A. a table rather than an altar.
  - B. a meal rather than simply bread and wine.
  - C. an experience of spiritual communion with the Triune God.
  - D. an experience of interactive communion with the people of God.
  - E. an experience of grace
  - F. an experience of hope and joy
  - G. a socio-ethical witness through shared food.
  - H. ethical commitment to the Lordship of Christ
  - I. the visible, concrete display of the unity of the body of Christ.
  - J. a moment of inclusiveness that transcends all cultural, ethnic and gender boundaries
  - K. the participation of all except the rebellious
  - L. a family event, including children.