

Ultimate Things

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[0 : 00] on his last night, Jesus said, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you. He'd eaten other Passovers with him, no doubt, but he was looking forward especially to this one.

He gives us a reason in the next verse it was going to be a long time before the next meal together. I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

The length between that meal and the very next one was what made this one so special to our Lord. At least one reason why it was so special to him.

And honestly, that's how I feel about tonight. I can say I've eagerly desired to eat this communion with you. It's been a year since the last one.

And what a year it's been, a long year. A year filled with things, and I mean this very respectfully, but I mean this, a year filled with things not ultimately important.

[1 : 18] And don't get me wrong, we've had to wait. Our times are in the Lord's hands, in God's hands, and all of this waiting, all of the things that have happened, ourselves, we've been in God's hands.

And so I have no complaints. I have no regrets. We've done what we've had to do. But I can also say how I miss this. How I've missed this.

Since last February, we've had to deal with a lot. A lot of things to think about. A lot of things to process. And a lot of things that will ultimately, ultimately be forgotten and won't be important. It's been good. It's been necessary. The Lord's had good intentions for it. It's been stretching to us. Iron sharpens iron. But iron sharpening iron can create sparks.

And so that's precarious. It's dangerous. But it's been good. And in the middle of all this stretching and testing the Lord has been giving to us, he's had an agenda in it all.

[2 : 32] And he's working it out. And it's been good. But Satan has also had an agenda as well. He wants these things, which are so pressing, to become ultimate things.

Things that rule our hearts, that control our fears, that control what we think about all of the time. He wants to make these important, but not ultimate things.

He wants us to make those ultimate things. He wants us to make these things that are not ultimate. He wants us to make them ultimate. And so he wants, Satan wants masks and elections and pandemics and Trump and Biden and MAGA and vaccines and everything else.

He wants us to make these things ultimate in our hearts, to take the highest place in our thinking and how we relate to one another, how we think about God, how we think about ourselves.

And it doesn't even matter what side you fall on. He doesn't care what side you fall on as long as you fall on the side of, this is the most important thing.

[3 : 46] This is the most pressing thing. This is an ultimate thing. This is the most important thing that you could possibly care about. And that has been the ongoing pressure.

It's been an onslaught this year. And after a while, it does become more and more difficult, harder and harder to keep things where they should be, to keep God first and everything else somewhere far below him.

And so, yes, I have to think about all of these things. I have to come to some sort of decision, but they're not ultimate. They're not the most important thing.

And I think we need to have a somewhat of a spirit of a rebellion against the world. The world wants us to make these things the first, the most important. And we have to push back against that and say, no, no, no, no.

They're not the most important thing. They aren't food for my soul. I can't live on this. I can't live tossing and turning here in this place where everything is confused and all of these issues are first and foremost in my mind.

[4 : 57] When they become that, and maybe you've experienced this, they become like the poisonous air in the bottom of a cave.

They're dangerous. And this evening, we want something other than the poisonous air on the bottom of the cave that is so easy to breathe in.

We want some fresh breezes blowing out of heaven's hills. We want some heavenly, fresh breath of air. And that's what tonight is.

Tonight really is about things that are ultimately, ultimately, finally, really, really. These things matter. They're the first things, the most important things.

And so tonight is a stiff, fresh, cold breeze right out of heaven's air to fill up our lungs.

[5 : 58] Tonight is real food for my soul. And so the elements that we're going to partake of, the communion that we are going to enjoy together, it's pointing to things that really, really matter.

All these other things, important, yes, in their own way, but secondary. Here is the thing that is most important. And that's why I can say I've eagerly desired to eat this with you.

Because tonight, I, with you, can focus on the main things. The things that really, really matter and last and count.

So what really matters? I have three points this evening. The first is the gospel matters. The gospel matters. Communion is a stark, vivid reminder that the gospel matters.

We only have two sacraments, two ordinances in the New Testament church. Baptism and communion. They're reserved for the most important things.

[7 : 13] Baptism and communion. So are you born again? Have you been raised to new life? Have your sins been washed away? So these are ultimate life and death issues.

Have you passed from death to life? Have you died with Christ and been raised to new life? Well, that's baptism. It is so special, so unique, that we hear, if you live any length of time, you're going to hear hundreds, thousands of sermons.

But you're only baptized one time. Once. Communion is different, too. It's not preaching. It's not praying. It's not singing together.

It's a unique gospel expression. It's something very different than almost everything else that we do in the church. It's eating.

It's drinking. And it is a New Testament Passover replacement or New Testament Passover fulfillment. So that's why Jesus says, I've eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you.

[8 : 25] And it was in that context of their eating this Passover where the communion meal came right out of. So, it's helpful to think about what happened at Passover.

What did the disciples experience that night? What had generations of Israelites seen and experienced in the Passover? And why does the communion itself, this meal, remind us of the gospel and point to the fact that, you know what?

The gospel is one of those things that ultimately matters. What happened at the Passover? Well, you would bring a lamb to the temple.

A spotless lamb. The lamb would come to the temple. And the priest there would slit its throat. A young lamb.

Isaiah 53, like a sheep to the slaughter. So, the priest slit its throat. And the blood ran down.

[9 : 27] And then they would skin it. And then they would cut it open and take out all of its organs. I'm glad I'm not an Old Testament priest.

But then you would take it home. So, you have this picture of this lamb that you've now killed and skinned and removed its organs.

And you would take it home and you would put it into the fire. It needed to be roasted. And so, that meant right on the flames. And so, you can picture this lamb in the flames.

And you roasted it. And you salted it. And you put bitter herbs all over it. And then the family would all sit down. And they would eat it.

This lamb that began its day very much alive. Ended its day being consumed by these people. Now, it was a reminder that the Lord had passed over Israel.

[10 : 31] Remember, in Egypt, there was this last greatest plague where the firstborn was killed. And so, the Lord passed over Israel.

His wrath was falling all over this one dark night in Egypt. And so, there was wailing outside. Wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth all around.

And this angel of death is visiting everyone in Egypt. Every house. But God's wrath passed over them.

Why? And they could say, it's because of this lamb that we are eating. Because of this lamb. Because his blood was spilt.

So, the lamb began the day alive. And ended it completely consumed. And that is what saved their lives.

[11 : 29] This innocent lamb slaughtered and burned. Insulted and devoured. Is why we get to live. That's what the Israelites could say. And it's a picture, isn't it?

Pointing to Jesus Christ. His death is the only reason that we will ever get to live eternally. His death is the only reason that we get to live any length of time here on earth.

His sacrifice is the only reason God's wrath won't fall on me. And so, this communion. The breaking of bread. The drinking of the juice of this grape.

Those are similar pictures. The Bible often uses. And you could be on the lookout for this. The Bible often uses the image of God's wrath coming as him trotting on and exercising using the wine press. And so, you put all the grapes in. And you're having people walk on these grapes. And the picture is as these grapes are crushed. And this red juice is squirting everywhere.

[12 : 33] It was a picture of God's wrath. It was a picture of blood and sacrifice and destruction. And so, you see this meal is shouting to us the gospel.

His body. Crushed. Broken. For me. He said to the disciples, this is my body.

Given for you. Eat. Now, that's why I eagerly desire to eat this with you. Because the gospel matters. You know, ultimately, you and I, I don't have a virus problem.

I don't have a political problem. You and I, we have a sin problem. And it goes much deeper and is far more significant than any other problem I face.

So, getting along with you and our relationship with one another and how we think about all of these things. Yes, they matter. But they matter very little compared to how I stand with God.

[13 : 38] So, how can I, a sinner, stand and have a relationship, a good relationship, with my holy creator?

Who I've sinned against and rebelled against and disobeyed time and time again. Well, how can I ever be right? How can I ever hear him welcoming me and approving of me?

And the gospel is my only hope. And that's it. I could die of COVID-19. I could be on the wrong side of the political, some sort of political decision.

And that matters very little. How do I stand with God? The gospel is my only hope. And so, we can say, I live because Jesus died.

I get to live. I get to survive. I live because he was crushed. So, Psalm 51, against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

[14 : 42] And so, David goes on, so you're right when you judge. If God were to bring me into condemnation and announce condemnation, that would be right.

It would be just. It would be fair. Any condemning word that God gives to me is completely, it's fine. It's what I deserve.

So, then how can I live? How can I be forgiven? You know, I'm not going to find peace out there. I'm only going to find peace here in the gospel.

I don't find forgiveness out there. I find forgiveness here. I don't find cleansing for sin out there. I find it here in the gospel. I don't find fellowship the way I was meant to live with God.

Sweet fellowship. That's the way I was made for and what I was made for. I don't find it out there. I can't find it. I can't get it. I can't do it out there.

[15 : 46] It has to be within the gospel. Soul rest is here. Real spiritual food is here. And so, I hope you can say with me, I eagerly desire to eat this meal because the gospel matters.

It matters. It's my life. And I want you to appreciate that even more tonight. What else matters? The family of God matters.

The family of God matters. The Passover meal was a meal that you ate with your family. Now, you went into the house and you shut the door.

It was not a festival where you hung out in the streets with your friends and neighbors. There were other festivals where there was a bunch of mixing and other things.

That was not what this was. You would go into the house. You would shut the door. It was you and your family and maybe your closest neighbors. You can read about that in the Old Testament.

[16 : 51] If they didn't have someone to eat with, you would bring them into your family for the night and they would be a part of your family. And so, that's what Passover was. It was this intimate family remembrance.

And that's what you see in John 13 through 17. That's what you see in all of the Gospels. The last night where Jesus instituted the communion meal, it was a family time.

There were more disciples than the 12. You know, Jesus sent out the 70. But there was the 12. And he took them into that room. And it was just him and them. And he poured out his heart to his brothers and his friends. He comforted them.

He prayed for them. He said to them, this is my body broken for you. This is the blood of the new covenant poured out for you. You, the family of God. You, my brothers.

[18 : 02] The people of God. We need this meal because we need to remember. You need to remember. You're not a political party.

You're not an opinion on masks. You are not for or against any candidate. You are not an opinion on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.

You are not an opinion on conservatives, conservative or liberal. You're not a news network adherent. You are a child of God.

And that's not what you are, ultimately. Ultimately, here's what you are. We remember it tonight. You're a child of God. Jesus Christ is our brother and what unifies us is none of those things Jesus Christ is our peace just like our world I mean nothing really has changed just like our world the ancient world was divided Greeks thought that barbarians were stupid backwoods you see that today don't you where the urban folk look down on the rural folk and vice versa it was a divided world the great division in the church was Gentile and Jew they had both come to Christ but they had both come out of very different backgrounds they had been separated for generations and if you don't think being separated for generations doesn't create some cultural divide and cultural difference and cultural difficulty of course it does but listen to what the apostle Paul said but he himself is our peace not barbarian or Greek not Jew or Gentile male or female slave or free he himself is our peace who has made the two one that's what we are we need to remember that tonight the two whatever separate whatever part of the issue you're on the two are one and he has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility his purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two thus making peace and in this one body this one body that we eat of this one body that we partake of that's symbolized in the bread in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross by which he has put to death our hostility hostility between differing parties is the very natural and worldly thing to do and what Paul is saying is is that the cross he puts to death that hostility we cannot be separated disunited at odds anymore because of what Jesus has done we both have been reconciled to God through the cross so we aren't divided not ultimately we can't be because Christ died so we've been both reconciled to God through the cross so now this is what he says later on in Ephesians so now we are fellow citizens

God's people and members of God's household thank God we are not any of those things that the world classifies us not ultimately we are members of God's household his family and so we eat together because here is what really matters here's what is lasting here is what ultimately and finally really really counts not all that other stuff Jesus Christ is our peace and so if you are going to turn against your brother because of something less than that if you are going to turn against your brother or sister you are going to have to reach through the blood of Christ to get to them you are going to have to reach around the cross to get at them and how could we do such a thing how dare we do such a thing no the family of God our unity in Christ it outstrips and makes small all of our differences and so we need this meal because we need to remember that we need to remember that and that's why I've eagerly desired to eat this meal with you and I hope you can say that too because here is where I can say to you and you can say to me you matter we matter to reaffirm to each other everything else all the differences all the the strain everything else is small potatoes compared to our solidarity to our familiarity to our unity that we have in Christ in Christ we are together we are one and we need to remind ourselves and we need to say that and the one way that we say that is not just with words but by eating together so in the family of God matters here's the third thing that really matters

[23 : 40] Jesus Christ matters he really matters do this in remembrance of me who is at the center of this communion meal Jesus puts himself right at the center and says this is about you recognizing once again who I am what I've done what really matters who really matters so who is

the judge of the living and the dead there's lots and lots of lesser judges there's only one who judges both the living and the dead and all who ever lived and whoever will die who will you stand before and he will either claim you or deny you to your everlasting life or to your everlasting death see as much as we if anyone belittles or pushes Jesus Christ away this is the reality that finally finally your road will come to him you will have to deal with him and more importantly he is going to deal with you so who's the great priest who pleads his sacrifice to make you right with God who is the only one who can save your soul from hell who like the high priest in Israel remember he wore that that breastplate with the names of the tribes of Israel on his chest it was a picture that he carried them on his heart he was carrying them carrying them before God that's what Jesus Christ is for us he's our great priest he carries our names on him he carries us and he offers his sacrifice on our behalf and so what was the cross he was carrying us on his heart and making his sacrifice on our behalf who's king of kings and lord of lords who sits on the throne and no one can impeach him no one can remove him no one can vote him out of office he will never be removed who is that it's Jesus Christ who has the words of life

Jesus Christ who rules the nations with an iron scepter Jesus Christ who is the only one that brings final lasting peace to a sin ruined world it's Jesus Christ all the whole world is longing for what he will bring even if they're not longing for him who laid down his life for you do you have anyone else who's laid down their life for you who took your penalty who saved your soul who opened heaven for you and then says come now I'll take you there who was broken battered and beaten to save you to give you life who was that so who's so important now again we want to compare him our lord to everyone else just you can think of people that everyone is watching now and hanging on their words and hanging on their words with joy or with anxiety so what will they say what will this mean for me what will they do what does this mean you know all these people who do they matter compared to him so whoever they are bring them in the room and bring our lord

Jesus into the room do they matter compared to him I've read lots and I continue to read lots and lots of history and I can tell you this everything that you see right now everything you see and hear that seems and is seeming so important right now will eventually be footnotes in history there will be a paragraph in a history book and then some poor 8th grader will have to learn them for the test they'll have to try to remember the pandemic of 2020 and remember what happened and they'll learn it for a test and then promptly forget it if the lord should tarry and they're still teaching history in school but that's the benefit of reading history you know I find it all very interesting but you get something of a god's eye view of the history of mankind you realize just how things that seem so important and maybe they were in their own time fade and you realize these people that seem so important and their words seem so powerful they're really just phantoms going to and fro there's psalms that talk about that you know and I can say that and I can take all of them very seriously but we need to have in mind what Isaiah 40 talks about the whole nations are just a drop in the bucket compared to the lord now they're nothing the nations are nothing and all those who inhabit them are nothing but there is one and there is only one who matters and we're remembering him tonight his cross and his kingdom and you know what his love his love for his people a burning undeniable will not be denied love for his people he's he's heaven's son come down to earth god's own son we need to remember this again who he was he was god of gods lord of lords co-equal with the father in glory and power and majesty not a lesser god not a secondary deity but he as it were could stand face to face with the father and as co-equals as equal lovers as equally worthy of each other that's who he was and he sacrificed himself for you he sacrificed himself for you and so let those two things i hope those two things get to you and take a hold of you his greatness just who he was who he is and his love you know all of history hinges on him he's the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end the first and the last everything begins and ends with him i said earlier that your footsteps are going to find their way to him it's going to end with him and so think about how great he is how important he is and he is the one who laid down his life for you because he loved you he noticed

you he took your distress your guilt he took it all to heart he had pity and mercy on you and so who what is everything else compared to him and so remember him and remember him in faith tonight remember who he is remember what he did and with faith's hand cling to that and bring it into your heart and let it weigh upon you his greatness and his goodness his love for you and this is where I have to end with just a word to everyone have you come to terms with Jesus Christ and I'm saying mentally have you come to terms with him spiritually in your heart have you come to terms with his

claims he claims to be Lord now he either is or he isn't he's claiming to be Lord he claims to be the Savior and he is coming to you tonight with a well intention well meant offer of the gospel he says I will save you he's crowding in he's moving towards you he insists on being heard and really nothing else really finally matters except what are you going to do with him what is he going to do with you and so tonight should be just another what is happening is Jesus Christ is slamming into the side of your life you're driving along in your car and he is just totally t-boning you and driving you off and saying you have to deal with me you have to hear me and so I want to encourage you to settle with him to deal with him to take him into your heart to open your eyes to yourself to your life to the brevity of it to where you are going and your desperate need for the gospel and I want you to take him into your heart and so you lay down your arms you turn from your sin you repent and the other side of repenting that always goes along with it is faith you lay a hold of him you say you're the savior you say you're the savior you say your sacrifice was enough you say you love sinners you say all

[34 : 23] I need to do is believe then that's what I'm doing you hold him to his word you hold him to his promise and I say this humbly you challenge him you say here I am you said you would take and save sinners here I am a sinner now do what you said you would do that's what faith does and I want to encourage you to do that tonight well I hope that we all I hope he meets us and I know we will that will be a sweet time of thinking about him and remembering him and we want to do that as we eat together