

Father God, here we are.

We are grateful to be here and we are grateful to be here in your presence to worship you and you alone.

May all that we do today and all that we say today, all that we sing today and all that we pray today honor and glorify you.

May eyes be cast up, may hearts be opened, may minds be opened, may your word go out and as we know it will not come back void.

We pray that your kingdom will not only be strengthened today by our obedience but your kingdom will grow for you are our teacher, our pastor and we love you.

It's in your name Jesus that we pray.

Amen.

If you look in the back of your bulletins and you are at the screen, thank you God.

We will now participate together in something new.

It's something that Jeff found and I like very very much.

Would you please read with me?

I will begin.

Jesus sat shoulder to shoulder with those who were closest to him for one final meal before his betrayal.

His time on earth was coming to a close.

Soon he would be going to the cross.

And this meal was unlike any other.

He broke bread and poured wine.

He spoke words of life, hope, power, words that would echo for centuries.

He washed their hair from their feet.

He gave them the meal of a lifetime.

And he did this all for us one time.

All of a sudden, he made a everlasting life through his life, death and resurrection.

Can you imagine being in that room to witness a humility unlike any other?

To witness a love unlike any other?

To witness a hope unlike any other?

To taste the bread and wine.

To feel the water and all across your heart.

To share in the presence of the king.

And through all of this, he claims us kids.

He welcomes us to his name.

Amen.

Please be seated.

Taken from the gospel according to Luke chapter twenty-two beginning with verse fourteen.

We read and we understand the very teachings of Jesus.

When the time came, Jesus and the apostle sat down together at the table.

Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins.

When I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until this meeting is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it.

Then he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves, for I will not drink wine again until the kingdom of God has come."

He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it.

Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper, he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people, an agreement confirmed with my blood which is poured out as a sacrifice for you."

But here at this table sitting among us as a friend is the man who will betray me.

For it has been determined that the Son of Man must die.

But what sorrow awaits the one who betrays him, the disciples began to ask each other which of them would ever do such a thing.

Would the ushers please gather at the back of the sanctuary?

And during that very special meal, Jesus broke the bread and he told his disciples, "This is my body given for you."

As we eat this, remember the bodily sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In the same way, he took the wine and he professed it to be the blood of the new covenant spilled for all sin of all humanity.

As we drink this, remember the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Our next scripture is John chapter 13 verses 1 through 11.

Dealing with the same situation, before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and returned to his father.

He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth and now he loved them to the very end.

It was John for supper.

The devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon and Scariot to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that the father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.

So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped the towel around his waist and poured water into a basin.

Then he began to wash the disciples feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

When Jesus came to Simon, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will know."

Peter protested, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet."

Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash except for the feet.

He is entirely clean.

And you disciples are clean, but not all of you, for Jesus knew whom would betray him.

This is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Jesus went on to say, "What I have done for you, you ought to do for one another."

As disciples of Jesus Christ and Jesus as the head of this church, we will obey that ordinance.

The children are downstairs today, so the men will be in the children's room across here, and if there's not enough space, we can take turns, and the women will be in the overflow.

You're in the student list now for the ordinance of the washing of the saints feet.

So, pride, your ego, your physician, laying aside and understanding that at the core, we are image bearers of the most high God.

And as disciples of Washington's feet, we realize that we are brothers and sisters in the name of Christ.

It's a powerful experience.

Speaking of image bearers of God, I wanted to make mention, and I wanted to wait until the children had gone.

The war in the Middle East, we know, has consumed the news cycle, as it were.

We know that other parties are becoming involved, and we do not know what the outcome of such an event might be.

I, as you know, am not a dispensationalist.

I do not believe that there's an order of, like, this is going to signify something that's in revelation and all of that.

What I do know are two things.

One, all parties involved are image bearers of the most high God.

And I do know this as well.

As Jews and Muslims, they are both lost far from Christ.

Our prayers need to be for intercession, not only that reason and common sense would prevail, but that God's Holy Spirit would open eyes and change hearts.

We've seen in Scripture time and time again that there are devastating hacks that human beings perform one to the other, and God uses them to change entire cultures.

This can happen again.

I believe that.

So pray.

Pray for God's intercession in the world, and that hearts and minds may be open to the life-saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Let's say all in hope.

In the churches of God General Conference, we believe two things as well.

We believe that Scripture is our only rule of faith and practice.

What does that mean?

It means that we are not a liturgical denomination.

What does that mean?

If you have experienced a Presbyterian classic Lutheran, classic Methodist service, you will see that the order of worship is the same all the time and it almost right down to the minute.

I remember sitting in the Methodist church and you could, when it started, and when it stopped.

And when that sermon started, 20 minutes, and that sermon stopped.

Very liturgical in order.

Lots of Latin words when I first started attending there that I had no idea what they meant.

We are not liturgical in that way.

We look to Scripture to inform us on not only what we do in church but how to do church.

Does that make sense?

It is our only rule of faith and practice.

Part of that practice are the three ordinances that the churches of God General Conference have adopted.

And that is the Lord's Supper, baptism, and the Washington Field.

Each one of those ordinances has been adopted because, well let me back up.

If you'll notice, and maybe you've had exposure to this word as well, we call them ordinances, not sacraments.

What is the difference?

We do not believe that this behavior, this ritualistic behavior that we participate in as Christians is a vessel of God's grace.

We do not believe that forgiveness or grace is imparted to an individual through the act of the Lord's Supper or water baptism or the Washington Field.

We do believe that Jesus commanded, ordered us, ordinance to do these things.

And thus we adopt that term.

Throughout Protestantism and Catholicism you will find different interpretations of what that means.

And ordinance is sacrament.

This is what we believe.

And this is why we practice, the only rule of faith and practice, this is the reason why we practice what we practice in the service of the ordinances.

This is why we have been much more intentional in our prayer for one another, our prayer for this congregation, and our prayer for the church universal.

It's why we have right now individuals praying over this service.

And I hope that that interests more than just a few people.

Talk to Olivia, so put you on the schedule.

I hear that it's a wonderful experience to be praying over one of our Sunday services.

It's why we gather as congregation without the pastor involved.

Because each one of you is a leader in your own venue.

Male and female alike as you're ahead of a household, as you're taking care of your children, as you take your Christian faith to your work, whatever the case may be, each one of you is in charge of that.

And I know, because I know most of you rather well, that you are quite capable of articulating the gospel wherever you are.

You are quite capable of living a life worthy of your calling, not even using words to preach the gospel wherever you are.

That's why, very intentionally, and it's very wonderful, because as I'm over there on a Wednesday evening and you're over here, I'm praying over you, which is cool.

And I know that you have stepped up and are praying for and with one another, which is even cooler.

It's the way that it should be.

It's what we see in Scripture.

And I've been devoted over the past couple of years now, three years, toward a vision of actually living up to my commitment when I took like, vows of lifetime ordination that the Holy Scriptures, our Bible, is our only rule of faith and practice.

Don't make stuff up that isn't there.

Things that you do in church that are extra biblical, like we point to Advent, it is an extra biblical thing.

It's not a biblical thing, but it points directly to the Christ.

And anything that I do outside of Acts 2 42, you can read that again, where they meet and they sing and they share the Lord's Supper and they fellowship together, anything that I do or prescribe outside of Acts 2 42, and outside of the three ordinance that we profess to practice, I wanted to make sure that it, I want to make sure that it directs every eye and every heart to Jesus, not to church, to Jesus.

That's why you're not going to hear me preaching about you.

You're going to hear me preaching about Jesus.

I'm not going to stand here and declare and decree that all generational curses are broken and 2024 is going to be your year to receive great financial gain.

And you'll never hear that from out of my mouth.

It's not about you.

It's about him.

And if you make it about him, guess what?

He takes care of you.

That's the way it's supposed to work.

And so we have been more intentional as we have set up very specific dates for services of the ordinances.

You see, you may be sitting there saying I'm very self-conscious about this deep washing thing.

I want to, but maybe not go to the circle and sit and sing and enjoy.

Observe.

No, you're not going to hell if you are not participating in that.

Your heart is what determines your salvation.

Your repentance is what determines whether you're going to hell or not, quite frankly.

So do not be afraid to invest spiritually in some of the things that we do.

And I would just encourage that's not an admonition for anybody.

However you may feel about things, it's here that is what matters.

And as you're sitting here and praying and things are going on over there, it's here.

What are you praying?

What are you praying for?

Who are you praying for?

Have you looked in the mirror regarding your own salvation?

Are you asking God to convict you of unrepentant sin?

Those are the things that Christians do that set us free and break those chains of sin and death.

Not necessarily that.

Now Lord Supper, each one of these ordinances is representative of Jesus and some more obvious than others.

The Lord Supper, he takes the bread of the presence and you go through your Old Testament and you understand how the table is set, if you will.

There is a loaf of bread that is created specifically for one purpose and that is it symbolizes the presence of God at the table.

It's not touched.

Human beings don't touch the bread of the presidents.

It is there representing the presence of God at this table as we celebrate, as they celebrate the Passover meal.

Jesus Christ grabbed it and all, and you can imagine, you know some of the things that he said in the New Testament and immediately afterwards it says from that moment on they said not to kill him.

This is one of those things that definitely would get it killed.

You don't grab the bread of the presence but he did and he said something very specifically.

We're very big on pronouns today.

He said this, this, bread of the presence, this is my body.

Whoa!

You saying you're God?

Yes he was.

This is my body given to you and some people say the body, the blood, okay I can get the body.

What's about the body?

Well there are a couple things about the body.

Jesus Christ is not an apparition or a ghost or an angel.

He is human.

So when he says this is my body given for you, he's saying I am God, I am human.

Thus I am the sacrifice, the Messiah that you have been seeking.



This would have all come together very clearly through at that time when he said these things.

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

Yes he was and he is giving his physical body.

It's very important because if he is just an apparition or a ghost or an angel or a messenger or a whatever, an average human being with a regular human spirit that is somehow divinely inspired by God, however that might work, then none of this works because he's not the perfect sacrifice.

As a matter of fact, he's a liar.

That doesn't work.

Perfectly a human being with a divine nature, that works.

That works.

And so when he takes the bread and he breaks it, it is very much symbolic of the fact that he is Immanuel, God made flesh.

He is thus the weighted Messiah.

When he talks about blood, now we talk about blood and I said the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Remember the sacrificial system and we talk about the animals, the amoral animals that don't make moral decisions.

So therefore, as you confess your sin and you drain the life's blood out of an animal, that animal's life will be substituted temporarily for your life.

Temporarily, I say, because the very moment that your sin is atoned for by the blood of that ram, you begin sinning again and then you have to wait until the next time that you make such a sacrifice because the blood of an animal that is not the blood, the necessary blood of atonement.

What do I mean by that?

As I mentioned, animals don't make moral decisions.

They don't sit around going, I wonder what is right and wrong.

I will choose right.

If there were only one human being on earth ever that was a moral human being that made such moral decisions and made the correct decision every time, wait there was Jesus Christ.

Foytay, both making the same decisions that you and I are confronted with and choosing morally correct every time thanks to his divine nature.

Thus, his blood doesn't just cover you until the next time we can sacrifice a Messiah.

If blood represents life, his blood represents what?

Eternal life, one and done.

Not the blood of the ruler, a ram, or a bird, or a goat.

That can only suffice for a very short period of time.

His blood and his blood.

If blood represents life, then his blood represents eternal life.

The forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life.

When Jesus bends down to wash the feet of his disciples, we see a couple of things that are very representative.

He takes off his cloak.

That doesn't sound like much of a big deal, but theologically we see a few things happening.

Jesus carries with him, of course, in his divine nature what we should call his Shekinah glory.

The glory of God resides in him, and that is representative when he says he stood up and took off his cloak.

He releases the Shekinah glory of God, and we see him at perhaps his most, if this is even a word, humanist.

His most human.

He takes off the glory of God and puts on an apron of a slave.

We often speak of feet washing in terms of the humility on display.

How about we talk about the humiliation that he is willing, willingly participating in as he's willingly going to the cross to die for you.

He puts on the garnish of a slave.

He bends down before his creation and does what any household slave would do when you entered a person's home in the Middle East.

Wash their feet because they were dusty.

You wore sandals and they were dusty.

Servant, wash his feet.

If you didn't have servants, then the woman would come and wash feet, and you could suck with another person.

You'd be their guest.

Do you remember when he was with Simon and Jesus says, "I've come into your home, you didn't even bother to wash my feet?"

This woman has washed them with her tears and dried them with her hair.

This, I tell you, is a greater act of worship than you could ever have as a Pharisee.

So you see that it is a practice that Jesus uses and adopts and just puts on display and teaches and tells us to participate in because it is a big deal.

And the pushback is always, it is so very, very uncomfortable.

And I've written this and I've preached this and I've spoken this.

News flash, it's supposed to be.

It's supposed to be.

Jesus Christ made himself vulnerable on his knee before his creation.

What is the greatest sin of humankind?

What do we carry with us that drives our sin?

It is our pride and our ego and our sense of self-worth.

And I'm going to kneel before Josh and wash his feet.

Guess what?

That puts Josh and I pretty much in the same place.

That's what he's trying to show you.

That's what he's trying to show you.

It is, I've been doing it now for 12 years or more.

I started as an apprentice here at church town and his seminaries are about 15 and it's still uncomfortable.

And if new individuals come into the church, I want to try to be the first one to wash their feet.

Not because I would say, "Look at me, I'm a super humble pastor."

It's because it's really actually very selfish because that makes me really uncomfortable because this person doesn't know me.

And I want to feel that way because I want John 13 to hit me in the face every time I read it.

We also see Jesus tactile, Immanuel, God with us, touching, washing.

That's another huge piece of this.

Some apparition, some ghost, some manifestation of God's spirit isn't going to be there washing feet.

Jesus is because he's fully human and fully divine.

Jesus in the Lord's Supper, Jesus in the washing of the Saint's feet, Jesus in water baptism.

We learn that it is a practice as old as our faith.

We know that John the Baptist baptized with water representing ritualistic cleansing oftentimes before you would go and make your sacrifice, that sort of thing.

We understood that it was the physical washing and it was a ritualistic nature.

You hear that word all the time, ceremonially clean.

And he tells us, "I wash you with water as you profess your sin and you are being ceremonially clean but one is coming who will baptize you with spirit and fire."

And you won't need baptized again because you are baptized in spirit the moment that your heart opens to Jesus Christ in redemption.

The moment that you repent and turn and open, you are filled with God's Holy Spirit, you are baptized by God's Holy Spirit, you are not just ceremonially clean, you are made clean by the righteousness of Christ who died for you.

You are made clean just like his blood represents eternal life, you no longer have to go through a cycle.

You are made clean because you are covered by the righteousness of Christ.

How do we represent that?

How do we share that?

How do we make that more impactful for a new believer?

Well, we do what we hear and read in the New Testament and we also then follow up by baptizing with water.

And when we do this, we quite literally put a person up to least their knees in water and we cross them.

If you've ever been to a Christian funeral, more often than not, then especially the old funerals, you'll see this.

It represents death.

And we go back into the grave and we are covered by the water, covered by the blood, covered by the grace, and we come up out of that water a new creation.

All of it is about Jesus.

Everything that we do here, everything that we have been focusing on, the ordinances that we participate, it all points to him.

And I just wanted to touch base with you on that today because I felt that it was necessary that we don't want to stop digging more deeply, digging deeper into this because we are told to be obedient.

Why do you call me master and lord and don't do what I say?

It was years, a few years ago, I read that and I was like, "Lord, I'm sorry, you're right.

I call you master and lord and I'm actually called a spiritual leader and I don't do what you say."

I can't have that.

I can't have that in my own mind.

And I can't be a fraud or a hypocrite standing here preaching these things, not willing to be intentional about fulfilling these ordinances, about fulfilling the word of God.

And I would hope that you wouldn't want a pastor that would be.

That is obviously not what I was going to preach about today.

We will save the first John's temperature for later and fits perfectly with where we are going next week.

Josh, would you join me up front?

We will conclude with this.

Josh has made the decision.

This is by no means an ordinance.

Oftentimes people will tell me, "Well, you know, becoming a member is not in the Bible.

It's only our own people with faith and practice.

This isn't in the Bible.

You're right.

This is extra biblical, much like Advent, because what we do see in the Bible is order.

We do see a polity, a way of doing things, ownership, deaconship.

We do see that it is not a free for all or total chaos.

And becoming a member is a step up and a step out.

That's all it is.

You're saying, "I'm making a commitment here to these people that I profess to love.

This is my place.

These are my folks.

And I'm promising before them that I'm going to be there for them.

And this man here took an application months ago.

And here's what I really appreciate.

Because he felt moved to do it, it wasn't a good enough reason.

He gave it months of prayer.

Is it something I want to do?

Is it something I shouldn't do?

Is it something I can live up to?

Because much like the vowels of marriage, you can stand here to say anything you want and then walk away.

And that's what I really appreciate.

So I feel like I poked him a couple of times.

He's still on that application.

You want to talk about him?

He's like, "I'm praying.

I don't want to just do it to do it."

I appreciate that so much.

That's what it should be.

And if you'll notice in the application, I looked at that application and I had a great conversation with a great friend this week about this membership.

It wasn't with Josh, it was another individual.

And we talked about the legalistic language in the old applications.

You promised to tie, then you promised to attend, and you promised to do all these things.

I said, "You know what?

No.

That isn't what membership is about.

Membership is about a free will choice that you're going to make to say, "This is my place.

These are my people.

I want to stay here.

I'll be here for you."

And so on the application, it says, "Hey, are you a Christian?"

"Yes."

"Been baptized by water?"

"Yes or no."

"We'll take care of you either way."

"Why do you want to become a member of church?"

"That's it."

"I would rather hear that."

"Why do you want to become a member of the Church on Church God?"

"I've got some good answers over the years."

"No, that'd be good.

I mean, that'd be good."

But it's a really good answer.

Moving answers.

But that's all there is to it.

Okay, here we go.

It is with humility and honor that we open our arms as a family of God and love.

And look, if you judge, it is our simple expectation that you'll choose every day to walk in love with your brothers and sisters here at church town as you also choose to submit to the spiritual authority of Christ Church universal.

I have come to realize in my own journey that I need the church a whole lot more than the church needs me.

But it is the relationship with the church that I find.

It is in the relationship with the church that I find complete fulfillment.

I pray that you continue to love and support this congregation in any way that God calls you or blesses you to do so.

I thank you for your choice.

As a pastor, I am always humbled by this decision.

Here he says to exert upon completion of the service, you will receive a certificate of membership.

I put that in here years ago and I decided not to take it out because it's just kind of...

Everybody can take a breath now.

Would you please recite, Josh, as I lead the covenant of the church universal?

Now this is the part you say with me.

"I, whose name will be recorded as member of the church of God, do mutually covenant for the glory of God, the salvation of others, and the promotion of our spiritual welfare to unite in church fellowship, live in Christian peace and love, and walk and live according to the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, as He has revealed them to us in His holy scriptures."

Another piece that I was convicted.

I embraced many people into the church as members and we have said those words.

You promise to be there and commit to the ordinances of the church of God.

And then we weren't doing.

Again, Josh, would you please recite, as I lead your covenant with the church town, Church of God?

"Having personally experienced the new birth through faith in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and being in agreement with the doctrines and practices of church town, church of God, and desiring to be fully vested in this congregation, I hereby declare before all present, that it is my desire to be in fellowship with this congregation and to invest in my channeling at church town through all the gifts with which I have been blessed."

Now, Josh, as I recite the vows of membership, I say this at every wedding I do.

I say this at every membership I do.

Now it's your chance.

Because if you don't believe these things, please do not agree with me.

Nothing hurts my heart more when somebody says, "I do agree with this."

And three months later, I'm going to receive.

So it is a significant statement that you're going to make.



Have you accepted, Josh?

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?

Having been reborn by the word and the spirit, will you follow and serve Him as Lord of your life?

If so, answer, "I have and I will."

You accept the Bible as the inspired word of God to make it your guide through life, and do you promise to follow its precepts faithfully?

If so, answer, "I do and I will."

Do you promise to support your church town family faithfully by your presence, your natural gifts and talents, as well as your spiritual giftings, as the Lord has seen fit to bless you?

If so, answer, "I do."

"I do."

At this time, all people who would like to come to the front of the sanctuary, and work to lay hands on our brother, and pray for him, and/or to reaffirm their own vows of membership at church town, are welcome to do so.

Would you please come forward at this time, counsel and anybody who step down so everybody can gather around you, because we are going to be embarrassed. - I'll bring you. (audience laughing) - There we go. (audience laughing)

Brothers and sisters, stand up today at the church town, church of God.

If we are to pray that what is being created here at church town, yet by the power of God, be blessed by God, then we must be determined and intentional about living the holy word of God.

Please hear this prayer of our brother Paul, and let's join him in submitting ourselves and this church to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, its creator.

And let us not only affirm the covenant of membership made by Josh today, but the membership of all who believe in the visible church, the congregation of the church universal, that Jesus Christ began by the power of his resurrection 2000 years ago. (audience applauding) Ephesians 3, 14 through 21.

"When I think of all this, I hold on my knees and pray to the Father, the creator of everything in heaven and on earth.

I pray that from his glorious unlimited resource, he will empower you with inner strength through his spirit.

Then Christ will make his own in your hearts as you trust in him.

Your roots will grow down into God's love to keep you strong, and then you have the power to understand as all God's people should.

How wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully, then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now, all glory to God who is able through his mighty power at work within us to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask within.

Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever.

Amen. - Amen.

God bless you, Josh.

Would you welcome him, please?

(audience applauding) (audience chattering) Would you stand as your able for our traditional chorus of Family of God?

(audience chattering) (piano music) (audience chattering) (piano music) (audience chattering) (piano music) (audience chattering) (piano music) ♪ I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God ♪ ♪ I eat wash in the fountain ♪ ♪ Let it fly as far ♪ ♪ Joy nears the trees, oh, it's the treble ♪ ♪ I saw a part of the family ♪ ♪ Of family of God ♪ (piano music) Please be seated.

Let's enjoy our time of prayer together as I mentioned. (piano music) [BLANK\_AUDIO]