

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for this place in which we have to worship in safety and in comfort and in peace. We come to you today humbly seeking your will, your wisdom, your purpose. We come to you today to remember through the ordinances who you are and what you did and what you do every single day of our lives. Lord, we worship you. May you lead us in that worship in song and in prayer and in your word and in the actions of the ordinances that we participate in today. Fill our hearts and minds with your Holy Spirit in Jesus' name, Amen. As we enter into the Lord's Supper, I would be reminding you of the scriptures that speak of this and why it is an important function of the Christian Church. It is called communion because it is one of the last acts that Jesus participates in with his disciples before he is tried and crucified. He is teaching this specifically to those who have already followed him for many years. It is something that is to be done within the church body. And within the church body there is a wide range of individuals and where you may be in your walk with Christ and what you may understand or not understand. And we are taught that if you approach this ordinance with an open heart, with a contrite and humble heart, then you are welcome at the table. We do not participate in this because it is a ritual that we feel like we have to or we're not going to be in Jesus' good graces. We don't participate in this because we feel hubris and look at us and we do these things and we are so Christian. We participate in this because Jesus gave it as a demonstration, as a representation, as an object lesson, however you want to phrase it, of our relationship with him. It is important that we understand that this is something that the church does in order to strengthen herself. We join together, young and old, all those who are willing to receive God's Holy Spirit. Open their mind, open their heart and receive. The scripture that I'm reading is Matthew 26, verse 26 through 30. As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples saying, "Take this and eat it for this is my body." That is what we just read, the bread of heaven. All of the symbolism that Jesus is going to participate in this Lord's Supper has been taught to the Jewish people for generations. And now it's been taught to his Christian, his followers, Jesus' followers for generations. He is the bread of life. He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it for this is my blood," which confirms the covenant between God and his people. We understand that as a junction between the Old Testament and the New. For there is no forgiveness of sin without the covering of the blood. We learned that from Leviticus on in the sacrificial system. Gallon after gallon after gallon, thousands, if not millions of animals sacrificed in order to temporarily atone for the sin of human beings. All humankind needed was the perfect human being to sacrifice himself. His blood, His blood covers you and your sins. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many. Mark my words, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. The scripture is John 13 beginning with verse one. Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his Abba had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth and now he loved them to the very end. It was time for supper and the devil had already prompted Judas son of Simon and Simeon 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, he 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 them. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, 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. No, Peter protested, you will never wash my feet. Jesus replied, unless I wash you, you won't belong to me. Simon Peter explained, 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 to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you. For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, not all of you are clean. Again, we see an example of an ordinance being performed to the church body, to the disciples of Jesus Christ. That's the emphasis of today. The ordinances strengthen the church, not only because they cause us to remember the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, but because they bind us with him spiritually and

they bind us together one with the other spiritually. Congregation means a coming together of people. A church congregation is unique because we come together as followers of Jesus Christ, as brothers and sisters bound together by the power of his Holy Spirit. Jesus is teaching to his disciples what will happen generation after generation after generation, so that his church may be unified, strong. And as we've discussed before, the point of that spear in the dark world today, we are strengthened by him. We are strengthened by one another. We are strengthened by his word and by prayer and by the worship that we carry in our hearts. We are strengthened by opening his word. All of it is contingent upon the wisdom and the guidance, the direction of his Holy Spirit. And all of that is contingent upon the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and our Lord. Remember that as we participate in this most unique of Christian ordinances. I want to say just a word about the sovereignty of God before we pray today together. We've spoken about pretty much every aspect of the sovereignty of God. And if you haven't been around, then you should just know that God is sovereign over all. We've looked at the physical, we've looked at the spiritual, we've looked at the combination of the two. We understand that he alone is worthy of our worship. One key facet that we celebrated or remembered, shall we say, today through the ordinances was his death and his resurrection. That is the pinnacle of the salvific history of humankind. And the important thing to understand as we go through this is this is done as a demonstration for everybody, not just those who follow Christ. This is the point of evangelism that we preach. This is the good news that we share. So the ordinance is he was giving his church, if you will, together and sharing with them ways in which they are going to remember him after this happens. And if somebody comes into this church while we are participating in the ordinances, they should really understand why we are doing it. And then by proxy, they will learn. But as Christians, as followers of Christ, we follow the risen Lord, living God, and it is crucial that we understand his sovereignty over life itself. We celebrate this throughout the course of the year. Every Sunday we talk about the life and death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that is the message that we send to the world, that there is hope, hope for you, hope for the world through the blood of Christ. The second point that we must understand is that human beings did not kill Jesus. Jesus willingly went to the cross. He stands and says, don't you realize that I could call down legions of angels and destroy the earth if I so chose? But I choose not to. I choose to go to the cross. He stands before Pilate and he makes clear to Pilate, you do not have the power of life or death over me. I choose to go to the cross for the sake of my creation. This should be humbling to us, especially when we consider John 13 and God himself on his knees, washing the feet of the disciples, knowing that one of them will betray him so that this process can begin. Mark 15, beginning with verse 33, "At noon darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "L-Y-L-Y lema sabachthani?" Which means, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait," he said, "let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down." Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last, and the curtain in the sanctuary of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God." Some women were there watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, the younger, and of Joseph, and Salome. They had new followers of Jesus, had cared for him while he was in Galilee. Many other women who had come with him to Jerusalem were also there. This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath. As being approached, Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Joseph was an honored member of the high council. He was waiting for the kingdom of God to come. Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet. The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth, and he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, laid it in the tomb, and had been carved out of rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph, saw where

Jesus' body was laid. Saturday evening when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene married the mother of James and saw they went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body very early on Sunday morning just at sunrise. They went to the tomb on the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You're looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He isn't here. He is risen from the dead. Look, this is where they laid his body. Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died." This is a story that we should know as Christians. This is the pinnacle. Everything before this piece of scripture points toward this piece of scripture, and everything after this piece of scripture points back toward this piece of scripture. This is it. Jesus, both human and divine, became a living sacrifice, the perfect Lamb of God to be sacrificed, and in so doing, he grants you freedom as his creation. Through the ordinances today, we learn that the blood of Christ covers us, covers our sin. We turn, we repent, we ask forgiveness. It is there. It is done. It is the free gift of God. It is made possible because of this sacrifice. And we go further because we understand that not only is Jesus Lord of our lives, Jesus is alive. He is not some form of idol that supposedly did these things, and now we worship this person because of what they did. We worship the risen Lord. He has conquered our sin, and he has conquered the power of sin in our lives. He has conquered death, and he has conquered the fear which is the power that death has over us in our lives. He is sovereign over all, and he wants to, he seeks to, he has made a way to bring you into relationship with him so that you may commune with him, so that we may commune with one another in him. We are the church. We are, as we've been talking back and forth, part of the great secret that God is keeping from all of humanity, was keeping from all of the angels and all of the demons. How would this be accomplished? Jesus rose from the dead. How will anybody else know that? They will know it because of the outpouring of his Holy Spirit and the creation of the Christian church. Everything that we've done today, the Lord's Supper, feet washing, the understanding of the life of the dead, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is all a part of our DNA as Christians. It's all a part of the foundation of this church and the church universal, and the freedom in which we live. And that freedom goes beyond all human understanding. Because we have a bigger, much bigger picture in our minds and in our hearts of what is right and what is wrong, and nobody can ever take that away from us. I heard a great piece during this election season, and I want to share it with you because it's relative to this. Whether you believe your vote counts or not is kind of irrelevant. Because ultimately we won't be able to control what our government does. But we can control what government does to us. We can control what that secular entity seeks to impose upon humankind, but we cannot let it change who we are as Christians. Regardless of anything that's happening out there, we cannot allow it to change us as Christians, because we have a different understanding of right and wrong, good and bad. We have a different understanding of kingdom. We have a different understanding of truth, and we stand on it. And we are not afraid. We are not afraid. Jesus rose in bodily form, and He rolled that stone away. And He appeared from that point on for the next several weeks in front of hundreds, thousands of people, teaching and preaching and leading and ascending, promising God's Holy Spirit to return and create His church. Create what you are a part of today. And that is significant. It should be freedom in your life, freedom to live, freedom to experience joy, all regardless of your circumstances. You know that you are forgiven and you are in relationship with our holy God. And you know that you will have eternal life with Him. You do not have any weights holding you down because of this. His church should not be afraid. His church should not act afraid, nor should all of the disciples of Christ be afraid or act afraid, for the battle against evil is won. You are living proof of that. He has conquered sin and the power of sin in our lives. It's over. He has conquered death, giving us eternal life in Him, and He has also conquered the power of death over human beings, which is the fear of death. Taking off these chains empowers us to live. And we live to deliver this message that your soul can be saved by the Christ of God. Repent and turn to your holy God. Give your life to Him and

accept His will over you in your life. And you will be free. You will be free from all of the lies and all of the weights and all of the anxiety and all of the worry and all of the concern. You will be free to live because you're not afraid to die.