
MOMENTS
AT THE TABLE
SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR COMMUNION
GENE McGUIRE

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FOREWORD

The Table of the Lord is a place of profound memory, but it is also a place of active storytelling. When Jesus gathered His disciples in the Upper Room for that first communion, He did not deliver a rigid, academic lecture. Instead, He did what He had done throughout His entire ministry: He took the ordinary, tangible elements of everyday life and transformed them into a living parable.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus masterfully used stories to bridge the gap between the human heart and the kingdom of God. He spoke of lost coins, wandering sons, mustard seeds, and fishermen's nets. He knew that abstract theological truths could feel distant, but a well-told story settles deep into the soul. By using the familiar realities of first-century life, He bypassed intellectual defenses and spoke directly to human experience. His parables were not merely illustrations; they were windows into the divine, designed to make His listeners stop, reflect, and see the world, and God, differently.

When it came to the ultimate expression of His love and sacrifice, Jesus left us with the most enduring parable of all: a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. In these simple elements, the entire narrative of redemption is captured. The breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine are physical stories that we reenact weekly, ensuring that His sacrifice remains vivid, intimate, and deeply personal.

This book, *Moments at the Table*, is an attempt to capture that pattern. The short meditations found within these pages are designed to carve out quiet, reflective spaces in the midst of our worship. Like the parables of Jesus, they use brief moments of focus to direct our attention away from the noise of the world and toward the grace of the cross. Whether you are a worship leader looking to guide your congregation, or an individual seeking a deeper personal reflection, these words invite you to slow down, listen, and remember. **Welcome to the table**.

1

STEPPING DOWN

Philippians 2:6-8 – *"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"*

In 1880, James A. Garfield faced a profound crossroads. As a devoted elder and preacher, his heart belonged to the local church. Yet, when elected as the 20th President of the United States, he recognized he could not faithfully fulfill both roles. Stepping down from his role as a spiritual leader, he famously stated, "I resign the highest office in the land to become President of the United States."

Garfield surrendered a position of immense sacred duty to assume a temporary, earthly office. This act of stepping down provides a stark contrast to the ultimate sacrifice we remember today at the Lord's Table. In 2 Corinthians 8:9, the Apostle Paul writes, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."*

While Garfield left a higher spiritual calling for an earthly seat of power, Jesus did the exact opposite.

Jesus held the ultimate position of heavenly glory, yet He voluntarily laid aside His divine crown. Jesus traded the worship of heavenly beings for the mockery of a crown of thorns. He exchanged the glorious presence of the Father for the isolation of Gethsemane. He did not descend to a position of earthly power; He accepted a cup that could not pass from Him. Christ's poverty was not a mere lack of material wealth, but a profound immersion into human suffering.

Garfield gave up his leadership in the church, but Jesus yielded His back to the whip and His hands to the nails. He surrendered His life

to a brutal cross and He absorbed the full torment of our sin. As we take the bread and the cup, let us remember that His ultimate devastation is the sole reason we are now heirs of eternal riches.

2

HE DIED FOR ME

1 Peter 2:24 – *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."*

During the American Civil War, a man named George Wyatt was drafted into the Union Army. He was a husband and a father to a large family who depended entirely on him for survival. If he went to war, his family would face financial ruin and possibly even starvation. Hearing of his predicament, a young, single friend named Richard Whitehead stepped forward. Whitehead insisted that he had no family relying on him and volunteered to take Wyatt's place. He signed the enlistment papers, using Wyatt's name on the official roster. Whitehead was immediately sent to the front lines where he was ultimately killed in battle.

After the war, the real George Wyatt traveled to the military cemetery where his friend had been buried. He found the grave marker bearing George Wyatt's own name and carved these words underneath it: "He died for me."

The Apostle Peter captures this reality in 1 Peter 2:24:

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

This historical account offers us a glimpse into the depth and gravity of what we experience at the Lord's table. Like the soldier who looked at his own name on that headstone, we look at the cross of Christ and realize a sobering truth. That cruel death belonged to us, but He took it. Just as Richard Whitehead stepped into the battle for his friend, Christ looked at our hopeless condition and willingly stepped into our place to bear a penalty we could never pay.

In the Lord's Supper we focus on that sacrifice, proclaim His death and honor the reality that He died for me!

3
RITUAL OR RELATIONSHIP

John 4:23 – *"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."*

In John 4, Jesus tells us the Father is actively seeking people who will worship Him in *"spirit and truth."* But in Matthew 15, He gives a sober warning: it's possible for our worship to be vain if we just go through the motions while our hearts are far away. As we come to the Lord's Table, we face that same choice. Is this a religious routine, or maybe just a ritual that we go through at church each week, or are we seeking a deeper encounter with our Savior and Lord?

Maybe this illustration will help. Think of a married couple celebrating their anniversary with a candlelit dinner. One spouse might show up, eat the food, and say the right words, but he's constantly checking his phone and looking at work emails the whole time. The ritual happened, but the relationship wasn't nourished. Vain worship is like that. On the other hand, when that same couple looks across the table and truly remembers why they love each other, their hearts are present and they reinforce their commitment to each other. Worship in spirit and truth is like that.

To worship in spirit is to let the Holy Spirit awaken our hearts to the love of an amazing Savior. To worship in truth is to anchor our minds in the reality of the cross. His body was broken to make us whole. His blood was shed to wash away our sins.

Jesus is here as our Host. He isn't asking for a performance; He's inviting you to connect your spirit to Him and remember the cross.

Prayer:

Lord, bless this bread. We confess that it is easy for us to let our

minds wander. We ask now that you help us to focus on the sacrifice of our Savior.

Father, bless this cup, strip away our distractions and help us to feel the joy of being your children.

4
HE UNDERSTANDS

Psalm 103:10 – *"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."*

Every Sunday we gather and we pray together, we sing the songs of faith, we hear the gospel all over again, and we share a meal together and focus on Jesus. And we consider this a significant part of our time together. James 5:11 says, *"The Lord is full of compassion and mercy…"*

We serve a God who understands.

There's an old story about a farmer who had some puppies for sale. And a little boy walked up and wanted to know if he could buy a puppy. The farmer said, "I don't know son, they come from good breeding, they cost a lot." The little boy reached in his pocket and pulled out 39 cents and asked, "Could I just have a look?" And so the farmer whistled and out came Dolly and 4 little bouncing balls of fur right behind her. A few moments later, a much smaller ball of fur came down the ramp and kinda gimped along, well behind the others. And the little boy's eyes brightened and he pointed and said, "That one! That's the one I want!" And the farmer said, "No son, you don't want that one, that one's the runt. He's lame. And he would never be able to keep up with you." The little boy rolled up his trousers, and there were braces down each side of his legs, down into his shoes. And the little boy looked up at the farmer and said, "You see, I don't run very well either, and he would need somebody that understands."

You know, you and I need someone who understands too, don't we? And Calvary proved that God has been there, and He understands our pain.

Psalm 103:10 says, *"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."* And it's true! God has not dealt with us according to our sins, because God has dealt with Jesus, according to my sin and yours.

And God knows that we have short memories. And God knows that we get caught up in the temporary and trivial. And so, the Lord's Supper is our reminder, to bring us back to the important things, or should I say to bring us back to the most important thing. God gave his Son to die in your place, so that you could live with him forever. And this is a time for each of us to focus on that sacrifice, and just to say, Thank You!

5
I NEED A FRIEND

Matthew 11:19 – *"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."*

You know, Jesus's critics weren't always truthful about Him, but one thing that they accused Him of, was entirely accurate. They said that Jesus is a friend of sinners. That's true, isn't it? I like that. Because as sinners, we all need a friend like Jesus, don't we?

And in John chapter 8, we see a woman that needed a friend, as much as any woman ever needed one. They brought a woman to Jesus that had been caught in the act of adultery. She couldn't get free. She couldn't even hold up her head. They were ready to stone her. And ironically, these religious leaders were completely indifferent to the pain and the humiliation they were inflicting on this woman. But that's not how Jesus saw her. Because with Jesus, people always come first. So, they turned to Jesus hoping to trap him, saying, *"In the law, Moses commanded that we stone such women. Now, what do you say?"* But the Lord, just wrote on the ground with His finger. Then they all began to walk away when He said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Jesus rose and turned to the woman, "Has no one condemned you?" "No one sir!" Now listen to what He said next. *"Then neither do I condemn you."* That's how Jesus treats sinners like you and me.

That's how He treats you and me when we've been humiliated by sin. And here's the point. Religion that truly reflects the heart of God, is friendly to sinners! Don't miss this. Religion that truly reflects the heart of God is friendly to sinners.

You see, every one of us, every one of us knows what it's like to feel like that woman. And let me tell you why. Satan lies, and accuses each one of us. And some of us, have become experts at accusing

ourselves. And we wonder, how could Jesus ever want someone like me? And you see, Jesus never dismisses this woman's sin! He never excuses her guilt. This woman has fallen far below God's calling for her life.

But Jesus is a friend to sinners. How can Jesus be a friend to sinners without compromising the justice of God? And here's the key. He would not condemn her because He was willing to be condemned for her!

You see, her past...didn't disqualify her. Her past didn't disqualify her. And here's the good news that I want you to take home with you today. Your past, doesn't disqualify you either! That's the heart of the Lord's Supper!

This morning, as we focus our thoughts on Jesus, remember, He still welcomes sinners and this is our time just to say…

Thank You!

6
OUR PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Hebrews 7:25 – *"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."* ESV

When we approach the Lord's Table, our hearts naturally gravitate toward the past. We visualize the Garden of Gethsemane as well as the torture and terror of Calvary. We rightly honor the sacrifice of Christ and the moment He cried out, *"It is finished!"* signaling that the price for our sins was paid in full.

However, Hebrews 7:25 challenges us to realize that while His sacrifice is "finished," His ministry toward us continues. That verse tells us: *"He is able to save* ***to the uttermost*** *those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*

The phrase *"to the uttermost"* means Jesus doesn't just save us halfway. He doesn't just open the path to salvation and leave us to walk the rest of the way alone. He saves us completely, through every doubt, every stumble, and every season of spiritual weakness. If you feel "beyond help" today, the Lord's table reminds you that His saving power reaches further than your most reprehensible sin.

Under the Old Covenant, the high priest was like a revolving door. Priests grew old, they grew tired, and eventually they passed away. Their ministry was as fragile as their next heartbeat. But we serve a Priest who has "the power of an indestructible life." He didn't just rise from the grave to prove that He could. He rose to take up His seat at the right hand of God as our permanent representative.

Think of what it means that He *"always lives to intercede."* At this very second, as you take the bread and the cup, the Son of God is repre-

senting you to the Father. He is not a distant judge. He is an active advocate for you. When the accuser speaks of your sins, Jesus speaks of His wounds. When you can't defend yourself to the Father, Jesus does it for you.

As we take this bread, let it remind you that His body was broken to bring you near to Him. Let this cup remind you that His blood is the assurance that you belong to God. We are not remembering *a dead hero*. We are communing with *a living Savior* who is, at this very moment, interceding on your behalf.

7
THE GIFT

Romans 6:23 – *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Every Lord's Day we come together to celebrate the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

To understand the weight of that gift, we must look at what Jesus endured. Hanging on the cross, He refused a narcotic drink mixed with gall. He chose to feel the full, unmitigated agony of crucifixion. Yet, in that physical torment, His focus remained on others. He secured His mother's future; He offered paradise to a dying thief; and He cried out, *"Father, forgive them"* for those that tortured and crucified Him. His grace was absolute.

But the physical pain was not the worst of it. In the Garden of Gethsemane Luke tells us that Jesus' sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. He wasn't just dreading the nails or the beatings. He was dreading the cup of judgment. On the cross, He cried out, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* For the first time in all eternity, the Godhead was separated. God turned His face away because Jesus was carrying your sins and mine. He was betrayed by friends and abandoned by His disciples, but nothing compared to being forsaken by His Father. He endured that ultimate isolation so you and I would never have to.

At that exact hour, Jerusalem was bustling with the Passover. The historian Josephus estimates that over 250,000 lambs were being sacrificed at the temple. The city echoed with the prayers of people begging God to remember His covenant and send a Redeemer.

They were sacrificing lambs to cover their sins, completely unaware that the true Lamb of God was hanging just outside the city gates.

Jesus answered their prayers, and ours, with one final, victorious cry: *"It is finished."*

The debt was paid. The sacrifice was complete. As we take the bread and the cup today, let's pause our minds, quiet our hearts, and simply say, *"Thank you."*