

Radical Witness in Hostile Times: A Eucharistic Prayer

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**“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you *proclaim* the Lord’s death until He comes”
1 Corinthians 11:26**

This Easter we consider the radical nature of this covenantal meal, particularly in a culture that is increasingly hostile to the Christian witness.

Even though many national governments have decreed "lock-down" because of COVID-19, the kingdom of God is not and is still advancing! While churches around the world are unable to meet, as a single person or as families we can still celebrate the Lord's Table in our own homes. Christ is our Great High Priest! Through Him we have direct access to and communion with the Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Therefore, let us join together with the great cloud of witnesses and the angelic hosts to worship the Lamb and celebrate His Sacrifice. His covenant table is open to all who would come.

As the essence of the church’s life, by participating in this covenant meal, we are not only renewing the covenantal arrangement, agreeing to the terms of the treaty, but in doing so we proclaim Christ’s Lordship over the totality of creation—over all of life and culture. The Lord’s Table is, therefore, a radical declaration of war against all other illegitimate claims to Lordship, directly challenging the Hegelian idea, which is alive and well in today's neo-pagan world, that the state is god walking on earth.

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Lord in receiving this covenant meal we acknowledge that it is a covenant between unequal parties—You as the Sovereign King and we Your vassals. We turn to You and receive this gracious covenant in Your blood with thanksgiving: grateful that by it You have once-and-for-all paid the penalty for our violation of its terms, so that there is no longer condemnation under its sanctions, and have set us free from sin so that it is now our desire and delight to obey Your law, having written it on our hearts by Your Spirit, as our charter for liberty and life in this world.

We recognise that while the blood of the covenant is for our redemption, it is also a witness of judgement for all who reject it. There is no peace for man outside this covenant—there is only enmity for man against God, against one another, and against the earth. While, in obedience to God, man was purposed to have godly rule over the earth, the peace and unity that he enjoyed in the beginning was lost through Adam’s disobedience. As the head of the human race, Adam’s sin – his illegitimate claim to sovereignty – with all mankind following him, did not nullify Your rule over the totality of creation. Rather, it set man in ethical hostility to You and the rule of Your law whereby we are justly condemned, ruled by sin, until *the promised seed* would deliver man from Satan’s tyranny and re-instate us in Your kingdom.

It is only in Christ – *the promised seed* – as the Last Adam and Second Man that Satan’s rule over man is destroyed and man set free from enmity toward God and slavery to sin that he may be restored to his original mandate in the kingdom of God. Thus despite man’s ineradicable desire for social reunification, expressed in the counterfeit communion sought through the humanistic doctrine of ‘inclusivity’, the unity and freedom of man cannot be achieved through political coercion but is made possible only as he participates in Christ – the peace treaty between God and man – as the head of a whole new world order. As the lawful possessor of all things, Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth whose law is for the freedom and just governance of all men and nations. While His kingdom is redemptive and spiritual rather than political, Christ rules dynamically through His Spirit-filled people, bringing every area of society – including the state – under His reign. And this, not by force of arms, but by the power of truth in the propagation of the gospel, causing the willing conversion of all peoples to the personal, infinite God and His law-word.

Consequently, the antithetical nature of this meal, as a witness of judgement against the humanistic colossus, amplifies the warning, not simply for those who reject the covenant, but for those who participate in this covenant meal unworthily; those of the redeemed society who maintain the divisions and lawless autonomy of the Adamic society, rather than maintaining the covenantal solidarity of the one new man – as the locale of God’s government on earth – in submission to Christ the King. There is no middle ground in this table between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers: as Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me”.

Therefore, as we come to the table to renew the covenant, help us to take warning: to tremble at Your word, demonstrating that judgement begins with the house of God; to repent of our divisions and presumed autonomy; and to live as Your people in the bond of peace. As those who have been delivered from lawlessness through regeneration by one Spirit to be one new Man subject to one Lord and God over all. And to be Your delegated authority in the earth, displaying Your justice to the world as one body in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So, in the midst of an apostate church and culture, through the act of eating and drinking this bread and wine, against all other illegitimate claims to sovereignty we declare that Christ is Lord over all. All power, dominion, and glory belong to Him. We recognise that in our cultural moment, as it was in the earliest preaching of the gospel, to declare Christ’s Lordship – Your ultimate authority and law over every area of life – is increasingly a political offense. In the face of the totalising secular state, with its messianic claim to sovereignty and salvation through the false gospel of ‘social justice’, we proclaim that Christ alone is the Lord and Saviour: the source of true salvation, justice and communion. For all men are slaves to sin and there is no freedom – either personal or political – apart from Christ’s gospel liberating men’s hearts to live in terms of His just law. Eternal salvation – embracing the total restoration and just rule of this earth in time-space history – is mediated through no other name. To You alone belongs the obedience of the nations. Your gospel and law is the only way of justice and peace, for which the ends of the earth await.

And so, in this meal together, we are compelled to pray for the nations, particularly those of the West whose freedom and justice were established on the truth of Your gospel, yet now trample under foot the blood of Your covenant in the public square. As nations that affirm in their constitutions their covenantal reliance upon You – the Almighty God – we acknowledge that we, as nations, stand under Your righteous judgement. We have sinned, spurning the blood of Your covenant, by turning aside to false gods and forsaking Your commandments. Having once been enlightened by Your word, we are now apostate, openly scorning Your moral government by the making of unrighteous laws. As a consequence, disorder, greed, and injustice prevail in every level of society.

We pray for all those in high positions of authority. Our appeal is to You – the Most High God – the One by whom all other legitimate authorities derive their power. We therefore commit to You our civil and political leaders as those who must render an account to You for their stewardship. May they bow the knee to You the King of Glory. Enable them to exercise their sacred trust in godly fear and righteousness, acknowledging that their authority and gifts are not self-generated, but devolve from You for Your benevolent purpose. Bring down the pretensions to godhood of those who, in wilful opposition to Your determinations, attempt to arrest human destiny, remaking the world in terms of their own decrees. Frustrate and confound the counsels and plans of the ungodly, those who exalt themselves against You and conspire against Your will. May You turn the evil of man’s designs to Your own good purpose. Oh Lord, raise up righteous leaders in church and state, that they may restore the biblical limits of the state’s jurisdiction as Your servant; that the civil magistrate may again learn righteousness so as to administer Your justice. Enable them to guard the hard-fought freedoms of past generations and support the freedom of the gospel’s proclamation in the public square.

We acknowledge that the loss of freedom in our time has come upon us because, as Your people, we have ceased to be the salt of the world, arresting its corruption. The greatest threat to the church is not from without but from within. And this through the loss of true worship and of the knowledge of God. While maintaining an outward form of worship, the reality of our lives denies You as the LORD God – the Sovereign – hence enslaving us to the predestinating will of man in the dictates of the state. Promoting human wisdom, we have foolishly demoted the inerrancy and the sufficiency of Your law-word as the rule for all of life, private and public, narrowly limiting its jurisdiction to the personal and ecclesial. Rather than submitting to Your Lordship over every area of life, we have acquiesced to the gods of this age, either by capitulating to the *zeitgeist* or by abandoning the world in pietistic retreat. In unbelief we have surrendered the world to the devil, instead of believing *the promise* that in Christ *the new creation* – the renewed world – has dawned and that we, as *heirs of the world*, are empowered by the Holy Spirit and equipped by the word of God to diligently labour to remake this world in terms of Your kingdom.

Far from a distant deity unconcerned with the affairs of men or whose word is irrelevant to those affairs, You are asserting Your active government of the world by bringing upon our nations the sanctions of Your covenant. As enumerated in the Scriptures, these are manifest in wars, economic recessions, pandemics, and panic.

We therefore humble ourselves under Your mighty hand. LORD God, forgive us for our unbelief and pretence, our rationalising and downgrading of Your word. Though we have multiplied beyond number transgressions against You, to You alone belong mercy and forgiveness. We appeal to You Lord—the God who determines the times and boundaries of the nations that they might seek after You. For it is Your mighty hand that first delivered our nations from their pagan darkness, prospering them as a Christian civilisation through the power of the gospel. And so, for the sake of Your name, in the midst of judgement remember mercy! *For why should the nations say “Where is their God?” Our God is in the heavens and he does all that he pleases.*

Deliver Your people from the tyranny of men so that the nations of the earth may see that there is none in heaven but You. Stir up Your jealousy, cause us to return to You with our whole hearts! And may we be renewed by Your Spirit to revere your Name, restored as *the faithful city*; the residence of Your presence and power. Then Your people shall no longer turn to the wisdom of men, but instead the nations will turn to them to learn Your ways and walk in Your paths. Remove from us the reproach of being a byword among the nations, and restore us, as before, to be a blessing to them. May we fulfil our destiny to discipline the nations in Your ways, teaching them to obey all Your commands that justice and peace may flourish in the earth.

Let all who fear the Lord, praise him! Give thanks to Him for His great salvation! A salvation that is not only for man but also his habitation—for the cosmos. One that, therefore, promises not escape from this world, but victory in the midst of it. As the last Adam and Second Man, You, Lord Jesus, have defeated sin and claimed this world, and us, as Your own. Therefore, while we submit to the authorities that You have ordained, we do so only as far as they remain within the constraints of Your word. As we submit to You, in the face of opposition, like the first Christians, who loved not their lives even unto death, strengthen us to resist the over-reach of the messianic state and to stand courageously for truth in a hostile world. No matter how big the cultural challenge, help us to be steadfast and faithful to what has been entrusted to us, refusing to adulterate Your word, not only preserving the past freedoms that were won for posterity but possessing more ground for Christ; pressing His crown rights comprehensively over every area of life and culture. Cause the diligent self-government of Your people, under Your Lordship, in their personal, familial and vocational labours, to be a culturally transformative leaven, furthering the advance of Your kingdom in our generation.

And so, as we eat and drink this covenant meal we proclaim Your death – Your finished work of atonement and salvation – that anticipates Your progressive victory in history over all Your enemies until the last enemy – death – is destroyed in the resurrection and the renewal of all things at Your coming. Through this meal, as the visible sign that sets forth Your covenant grace and judgement, we celebrate Your covenant mercies as a witness to all the earth that justice and freedom is not of human effect or determination but the provision of God in Christ.

Let us eat and drink.

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