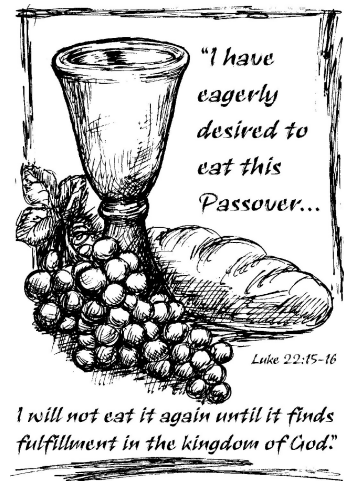


Maundy Thursday

Text: Luke 22:7-20

⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.” ⁹“Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked. ¹⁰He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹²He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.” ¹³They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.



Theme: A Special Meal with the Lord

When my wife and I were on vacation recently, one of the best parts of our vacation were the meals. At first we had planned to eat cheaply in the evening, but after we went out the first time, we loved it so much that we went out a few times. We had new favorite dishes such as Mahi Mahi and tuna. Special meals are often times of our lives that we never forget. To this day, I can still remember my grandparents 40th anniversary dinner at the Spinning Wheel in Shawano.

Jesus invited His disciples to a special meal just before He was betrayed. He said that He desired to eat this meal with them. It was a meal that the disciples would never forget and one which we continue to celebrate today. It is also a meal which helps us to look forward to when we will celebrate with the Lord in heaven. In the Lord's Supper we have an invitation to a special dinner.

I. This was a special meal for Jesus and His disciples.

Jesus sent Peter and John to make preparations. It was very similar to the way that He told them to get the donkey on Sunday. They were to look for a man who was carrying a jar of water, who would show them a guest room that was furnished. The word that is translated "guest room" is the same Greek word as the word for "inn" when it says that there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn in the Christmas story. John tells us how Jesus began by washing His disciples' feet. Then He told them that He was looking forward to eating this Passover with them, and that this would be the last supper until He eats with them again in His Fathers' kingdom. Jesus taught His disciples many things on this evening, and John records very long prayers that He prayed. There are four chapters of Jesus' teaching and prayers on this special evening. It is possible that Jesus celebrated the Passover three times with His disciples, but this was the most special of all of those meals. It was

His last meal before His passion. Jesus said it all when He began the meal with the words, *“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”* (Vs 15)

II. This meal continues to be special for us.

Jesus did two things that were very different during the meal. When He distributed the unleavened bread, He told the disciples, *“This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”* Later after the meal, Jesus took the cup of blessing and said, *“This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.”* The disciples must have been confused about what Jesus meant. How would His body be given for them? How would His blood be shed for them? But soon they would realize what Jesus meant. They would leave the upper room and go to the Garden of Gethsemane. He would be betrayed, and by this time on Friday, He would be dead..

After the Lord’s resurrection, they came to understand what He meant when He said that His body would be given and His blood would be shed for them. They had all failed Jesus. When He was betrayed, they ran. When Peter was asked whether He was one of Jesus’ disciples, He denied it. But Jesus’ first words to them were, *“Peace be with you.”* Jesus also assured Peter of His forgiveness. These men all failed our Lord miserably, but they came to trust that when Jesus died, He gave His body and shed His blood for their forgiveness. Every time that they would celebrate this meal, they would remember how much Jesus loved them. They were unfaithful to Him, but He remained faithful to them until the bitter end.

Jesus told them to continue celebrating this meal, which is exactly what the church began to do. We read in the book of Acts that the Jerusalem congregation devoted themselves to the breaking of the bread. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about how to properly celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Throughout the history of the Christian Church, Christ’s command to celebrate this meal in remembrance of Him has been followed by His people

This sacrament continues to be celebrated in our Lord’s church to this day. We gather like Christians around the world to celebrate this meal tonight and on Sundays throughout the year. There are times when people are facing an operation, and they will ask me for the Lord’s Supper. When I say the words of institution, it is just as if Jesus were inviting you to His feast as He invited the disciples that first Maundy Thursday.

The most important words of all in the Words of Institution are the words “for you.” Jesus said, *“This is my body, which is given **for you.**”* *“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out **for you.**”* Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world on the cross. The new covenant is based on the forgiveness of sins, which was made through Jesus’ innocent blood. But the marvelous part of this sacrament is that we remember that Jesus gave His body and He shed His blood for me. In a personal way, Jesus reminds us that the salvation which He won on the cross is for us.

He reminds us by giving us the things that won our salvation. Some people say that the bread is just a picture of Christ’s body, and that the wine is just a picture of Christ’s blood. But the Lord’s word is clear. Jesus said, *“This **IS** my body and blood.”* In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul writes that if we receive this sacrament without recognizing the body and blood of the Lord, we are sinning against His body and blood. This sacrament is a communion with the Lord’s body and blood. It is a reminder of the

greatest deed of love that anyone ever did for us when Jesus gave His innocent life for the forgiveness of all of our sins. Just like the disciples we must confess that we have failed our Lord so often. This sacrament tells repentant sinners, "I gave My body and shed My blood for you." You are forgiven.

II. It is also a foretaste of the feast to come.

Jesus told His disciples that He would not eat this meal with them again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. This meal will be fulfilled when the Lord returns to take us to Himself in His glory in heaven. The disciples would live the rest of their lives in anticipation of the time when Jesus would return or when He would call them to His glory. They would be persecuted and suffer many hardships. Most of them would be martyred, but their focus was always on the prize, their eternal life with the Lord. Their celebration of our Lord's Supper would help to keep their eyes on the celebration that they would have with the Lord in heaven.

It does the same for us. We are tempted to find our joys in the riches of this world and to give little thought to the eternal life that Christ has won for us. But this sacrament reminds us that our greatest treasure is to be with the Lord in heaven. In Luke 14:15 someone said to Jesus, "*Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.*" Jesus then told the parable of the Great Banquet in which people made all kinds of excuses why they couldn't come. One person just bought a field. Another bought a cow. Another just got married. All those people found excuses for other things that they wanted to do. We could be like any of those people, focusing on the cares and joys of this world.

This sacrament helps us to focus on what is to come. In heaven we will feast with God in the greatest banquet ever. It says in Revelation 19:9, "*Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.*" That is where we want to be. We want to be with Christ. We want to be with those who have died in Him. This Sacrament reminds us that because Christ lives we will live too. We will see Him in all of His glory. We will be with the saints in heaven. It reminds us that He will come again, and we will celebrate with Him for all of eternity.

Tonight the Lord invites us to a special meal, just as He invited the disciples on Maundy Thursday. By giving us His body and blood, He reminds us of what He did 2,000 years ago on the cross. He assures us that when He gave His life, He did it "for me." He also assures us that we will feast with Him in the glory of Heaven. We thank the Lord for the strengthening of our faith that this sacrament brings to our lives and the hope that it gives to us of the eternal joy that we will have in heaven.

Amen

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