

April 1, 2021  
Christ the Rock Lutheran Church  
Farmington, New Mexico

### Maundy Thursday

<sup>14</sup> When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

<sup>17</sup> After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

<sup>19</sup> And 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.”

<sup>20</sup> In 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: “We See Jesus -- in the Lord’s Supper”**

In the name of our Lord and Savior, Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus gave His disciples of all time a special sacrament which we call the Lord’s Supper. Tonight our attention is drawn to the Lord’s Supper because there is something very meaningful about partaking of Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday. It’s not that the Supper is less important or less beneficial at any other time; it’s just that on Maundy Thursday this meal gets our full attention. Tonight those words of Jesus, “*Do this in remembrance of me,*” take on special meaning as we see Jesus in the Lord’s Supper.

**1. We see God’s deliverance in the past**

During our time here in Farmington, my wife and I have acquired a few mementos. They will go home with us and remind us of our time here with you. Some folks look at the Lord’s Supper in the same way. They say that when Jesus took that piece of unleavened bread used in the Passover meal, broke it and gave it to His disciples with the words, “*Do this in remembrance of me*” (v. 19), that He was simply saying, “Think of Me every now and then.” Unfortunately, many Protestant churches today consider the Lord’s Supper in such a sentimental fashion, nothing more than a trigger device to aid in remembering the Lord’s suffering and death.

Now it is true that God used such memory devices on occasion, such as when Israel crossed the Jordan River and God ordered them to set up twelve stones to serve as a memorial marker of that miracle when the river stopped so the people could cross over on dry ground. Those stones simply marked that event. But on other occasions God’s memory devices had on-going meaning. For example, in the Book of Numbers God commanded that the clothing of the people of Israel should have tassels at the corners with a blue cord on each tassel. And He tells them why with these words: “*You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the*

***commands of the Lord, that you obey them***” (Num.15:39). Those tassels had more than sentimental importance. They were to spur the Israelites to live as God’s people.

So, too, the Passover meal was meant to be more than a sentimental reflection on the past. When God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He wanted them to remember that mighty act, how He slew the firstborn throughout the land as the climax of His confrontation with Pharaoh, and how He protected Israel from the angel of death through the blood of lambs painted on the doorways of their homes. The Passover meal was not to be a one-time event, but was to be celebrated annually. You see, this on-going action renewed the covenant the Lord had made with Israel, and though it God blessed His people.

Now think of it. God could have chosen any device He wished to help us remember Jesus’ death - if that was the only purpose it was to serve. But Jesus very deliberately chose to use the elements of the Passover meal, unleavened bread and wine. The Passover, remember, was the symbol of the Old Covenant. It would now give way to God’s New Covenant, a covenant made and sealed with the blood of Christ. The choice is deliberate, carefully planned, as is always God’s way. Jesus intends to do more than just stir up sentimental memories; He intends that this supper should impart the blessings of a very real deliverance to His followers. We see the parallel, from the lesser to the greater, from the shadow to the reality. Through the night of the Passover God delivered Israel from slavery and set them on their way to the land He promised to them. Through this Lord’s Supper, Christ announces His deliverance from the slavery to sin, death and hell, and leads His people on the road to the promised land, heaven. Passover is, therefore, the greatest of all the Old Testament shadows because it points to the Lamb of God whose blood takes away the sin of the world.

## **2. We see God’s love in the present**

This deliverance from sin is what we treasure above all in this present hour as we approach the Lord’s Supper. We receive the bread and hear our Savior’s words, ***“This is My body given for you”*** (v.19), and we remember ... we remember that Jesus was made to be that sacrificial Lamb of God for us. He was the Passover lamb, the Lamb without blemish. Though He was whipped, tortured, suspended on a cross like a common criminal, not a bone of His body was broken. In the Lord’s Supper we receive that very body of Christ that housed God the Son, who was as perfect as we could not be, as holy as we are unholy.

In the Lord’s Supper we receive the wine and hear Jesus’ words, ***“This is my blood, which is poured out for you”*** (v.20), and we remember ... we remember how that His blood, real life-blood, oozed from the wounds on His scourged back, dripped from His head pierced by a crown made of thorns, blood that flowed from His spear-pierced side. We remember ... and we recognize, as St. Paul declared, that that same blood of our Lord is present here in the cup we drink.

To eat bread and drink wine and to receive at the same moment the very body and blood of Christ is a miracle, one beyond our mind’s comprehension. Yet we believe it to be so because it

is the very clear declaration of our Lord. Just as the blood of a lamb painted on the doorpost of those homes in Egypt did not of itself save those inside the house, but the Word of God that stood behind that action saved them, so the bread and wine are nothing more than bread and wine. But it is the word of Christ that imparts His presence to them, so that we can, “In, with and under this bread and wine, we receive the true body and the true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” All the Lord asks of us is that we do the same as those Israelites long ago: believe His word and then enjoy the deliverance He brings.

Now occasionally someone will ask me why receiving the Lord’s Supper is so important. “Is it, in fact, even a necessary part of my practice of the Christian faith?” I like to answer with this illustration: Suppose you said to your son or daughter, “I intend to help you with the cost of your college education.” Would that appreciate that offer? Of course. But until they actually hold your check in their hand, all they have from you are words of good intention. The check is what backs up your intentions and makes them real.

When you and I come to church, we do so carrying a lot of baggage, the sack of our sins of thought, word and deed. I hear the Lord promise that these sins are forgiven through His holy life and sacrificial death. The Gospel promises tell me this in every reading, and I hear it in every sermon. I hear that I, a sinner, have been forgiven – not by my less-than-perfect obedience to God’s Law, but through the One who took my place under that Law. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I lay hold of that Word in faith and believe it to be as God tells me.

But when I come to the Lord’s Table, God’s promise becomes even more certain – not more true, but more certain. Here at the Table the doubter in me is assured that this word of forgiveness applies to me, too. Here God, as it were, places the check in my hand. Here is the tangible proof of His love and forgiveness. Here is the witness that my sins have been wiped away and that I really do have peace and a restored relationship with God. I receive the very body and blood of Christ as the guarantee of all this. That’s why this meal is so important, and it’s so important that we do as Christ says and partake of it often. My faith needs that contact with Christ Himself.

### 3. We see a joyous feast in the future

Unlike farewell dinners that are often the last time we see those friends who are moving elsewhere, Jesus tells us that this is not the last time we will eat together with Him. His words tell us of a time to come, of a future celebration of this meal like no other. ***“He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God’ (v.15,16).*** Though the time of parting had come and the Savior was about to suffer and die, Jesus is looking beyond the cross, beyond the empty tomb, beyond even the mountain of His ascension. He is looking to that kingdom of glory

where He and His disciples and believers of every age in history will be with Him forever. He is looking to that Passover land of heaven!

So these words of Jesus, ***“I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes”*** (v.18), ought to remind us that such a time is coming. In Holy Communion we proclaim that we believe a day is coming when we will join the company of God’s elect and celebrate this meal with a joy beyond any we have known in this world.

This celebration of the Lord’s Supper tonight is a foretaste of the blessedness of heaven our Lord has promised to us. As we kneel at the communion rail, we express our togetherness in the body of Christ, His holy Church. We say with the Apostle, ***“Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are we body, for we all partake of the one loaf”*** (1 Cor.10:16). It is toward that grand and glorious day we are looking also when we say to the Lord in our communion liturgy, “Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we praise Your holy name.”

As you come to the Lord’s Table this night, may it connect you to that past when Christ suffered for us, assure you of the forgiveness of all our sins in this present hour, and fill you with joyful anticipation of that blessed fellowship; we shall know with Christ and all the redeemed in glory. Oh, how wonderfully we see Jesus in this holy Supper!

Amen.

*Sermon by Rev. Theodore Lambert, retired  
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