

Maundy Thursday
March 29, 2018
*CW-S – “The Lamb”

Mark 14:12-26
714*-109-135-123

May Christ the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us His peace. Amen.

“This is My Body – This Is My Blood”

- I. A miracle we believe.
- II. Blessings to be treasured and enjoyed.
- III. A most gracious invitation.

Dear Christian friends,

Our special Wednesday Lenten worship this year focused us on Jesus’ seven words from the cross. Each word is SO SPECIAL – so full of meaning and comfort.

Today takes us to the NIGHT BEFORE Jesus was crucified. There was so much that happened that night – the Garden of Gethsemane – Judas’ betrayal – Peter’s denials – Jesus’ arrest and trials before Annas and Caiaphas. But BEFORE all that happened Jesus gathered with His twelve apostles in an “upper room” in Jerusalem. IN THE QUIET of that room they celebrated the OT Passover. AFTER that Jesus instituted this **special NT meal that we call** Holy Communion – the Lord’s Supper – the Sacrament of the Altar.

“This is My body – this is My blood,” Jesus said. JUST LIKE Jesus’ seven words from the cross the words of Holy Communion are SO SPECIAL – so full of comfort and meaning. So we focus on JUST THOSE WORDS – ***“This is My body – this is My blood.”*** Holy Communion is 1)a miracle we believe, has 2)blessings to be treasured and enjoyed and is 3)a most gracious invitation.

I. A miracle we believe.

“While they were eating,” Mark writes – ***“eating”*** the OT Passover meal. JUST LIKE Holy Communion the Passover was a ***“do this in remembrance of Me”*** meal. As the Israelites ate the Passover they were to ***“remember”*** how God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt – and to especially remember HOW THE BLOOD of those **first** Passover lambs smeared on their doorposts had protected them from the angel of death. The Israelites were to remember that their deliverance from Egypt was ALL GOD’S DOING.

To help us remember that our deliverance from sin and guilt, death and hell **is also** ALL GOD’S DOING Jesus gave us this **NT meal** of Holy Communion. Matthew, Mark, Luke and the apostle Paul all record the institution of Holy Communion. The words of institution that we use in our Communion liturgy are a COMPILATION of those **four** accounts. Jesus’ words show us that Holy Communion IS A MIRACLE we believe. We **can’t explain** Holy Communion EXCEPT TO SAY that Jesus’ words are clear and we TAKE JESUS AT His Word. Just because we **can’t explain** something doesn’t mean it’s NOT TRUE.

Jesus took some of the LEFTOVER bread. Passover bread was UNLEAVENED – made without yeast – so **it was flat**. You couldn’t slice it **like** a REGULAR LOAF of bread **so** you broke pieces off to eat. We’re not told what words Jesus used as He ***“blessed*** (the bread) – ***gave thanks.***” Jesus then “broke” the bread INTO PIECES **to give** to His disciples. As He gave them the **blessed bread** Jesus said, ***“Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you.”*** THEN Jesus took a cup of grape wine – ***“the fruit of the vine”*** Luke tells us. AGAIN we’re not told the words Jesus used as He ***“gave thanks.”*** As He gave His disciples the **blessed cup** of wine Jesus said, ***“Drink from it, all of you, this is My blood of the new testament, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”***

There should be NO CONFUSION about what exactly Holy Communion is. We simply take Jesus AT HIS WORD. ***“This is My body – this is My blood.”*** The bread and wine don’t simply remind or PICTURE for us Jesus’ body and blood **once given** for us. That’s NOT what Jesus said! The bread and wine are not miraculously changed into Jesus’ body and blood so that they are NO LONGER bread and wine **but only** Jesus’ body and blood. The Bible says we still ***“eat the bread and drink the cup.”***

“This is My body – this is My blood” – and Jesus specifically adds, ***“given – poured out for you.”*** WITH THE BREAD **Jesus gives us** the VERY SAME body He gave into death on the cross for us. WITH THE WINE **Jesus gives us** the VERY SAME blood He shed on the cross ***“for the forgiveness of sins”*** – the VERY SAME blood that established God’s ***“new testament”*** of forgiveness.

Taking Jesus at His Word Holy Communion is FOUR THINGS – bread and wine, Jesus’ true body and blood. We DON’T see or taste Jesus’ body and blood but that doesn’t mean they’re NOT REALLY there. Jesus never lies to us! EVERY TIME we come to Holy Communion Jesus actually does a **miracle** for us – we PERSONALLY participate in a **very real** miracle. We can’t explain Holy Communion – we SIMPLY BELIEVE Jesus’ clear and simple words, ***“This is My body – this is My blood.”***

Taking Jesus at His Word here in Holy Communion are...

II. Blessings to be treasured and enjoyed.

Did you read the back of your bulletin? Did those words sound familiar? They’re straight from the Small Catechism and I hope you realized something else. Luther answered those **questions about** Holy Communion by GOING BACK what Jesus said about Communion. Luther explained that Holy Communion is Jesus “true body and blood with the bread and wine... for us Christians to eat and drink” BY QUOTING Jesus’ **words of institution**. Luther then asked, “WHAT BLESSINGS do we receive through this eating and drinking?” Again Luther went back to Jesus’ words. “That is shown us BY THESE WORDS: ‘given’ and ‘poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.’”

The chief blessing of Holy Communion is **God’s FORGIVENESS** of **all** our sins. The better we understand HOW MUCH WE NEED God’s forgiveness the MORE we will treasure and enjoy coming to Communion. That will only happen when we TAKE SERIOUSLY and PERSONALLY each one of God’s commandments.

I’ve never met anyone who CLAIMED to **be perfect**. I have met people **who try** to MAKE EXCUSES for their sins – who see their sins as NO BIG DEAL – who expect God to “UNDERSTAND” and condone their sins. I’ve met people who believe hell is real but that God would NEVER SEND THEM to hell because they’re not that bad. When I look in a mirror I see another person who would LOVE TO THINK like that too.

Each commandment is a DIRECT ORDER from our Creator that He fully expects us to GLADLY **obey**. **Each commandment** is a “NEVER-EVER” order. We are to **“never-ever” let anything** or **anyone** COME BEFORE God in our lives. That is simply UNACCEPTABLE to God. We are to **“never-ever” use God’s name “in vain”** or BE SLACK in our prayers. We are to **“never-ever” DESPISE** God’s Word and preaching – **“never-ever” disobey** our parents or break the speed limit – **“never-ever” bully** or pick on someone – **“never-ever” watch a movie** or show that DOESN’T MEET God’s approval, etc. **“Never-ever” simply because** GOD SAYS so and because God promises to PUNISH BOTH the sin and the sinner STARTING now and lasting forever in hell. Just stroll through a cemetery and COUNT HOW MANY people got away with their sins!

When we’re honest about our **sins** and the **hell we deserve** WHAT A BLESSING to savor and enjoy – ***“This is My body given for you – My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”*** Here God saw us in ALL our **rebellion** and **defiance** and yet IN AMAZING GRACE He sent His own Son to be

our perfect Savior. God never took back His DEMAND **from us** of a whole life of perfect love, trust, obedience. Jesus was born one of us – stepped in for all people **as our substitute** – and He actually did live that perfect life for us. God credits and clothes us with Jesus' righteous, holy life. God never shrugged off our sins with a "THAT'S OK." God took our sins OFF of us and put the sins of the whole world ON His own innocent Son and punished Jesus in our place. If you're ever tempted to BRUSH OFF your sins with a "**nobody's perfect**" listen again to Jesus' cry of "**My God, My God, who have You forsaken Me?**" Jesus literally went through HELL on the cross – Jesus was damned for our sins – because THAT'S HOW SERIOUSLY God takes every one of our sins and THAT'S HOW MUCH God loves every sinner. We are forgiven ONLY BECAUSE Jesus "**gave His body into death**" and "**poured out His blood**" ON the cross IN our place "**for the forgiveness**" of all our sins.

How God wants us to BELIEVE and BE SURE of just that! God not only tells us that **again and again** in His Word. Jesus also does this MIRACLE of Holy Communion. When you're wondering HOW God **could ever** forgive you – when the devil's whispering God WILL NEVER forgive you – when you're overwhelmed by your **sin** and **guilt** and **the hell** you deserve SAVOR AND ENJOY the blessings of Holy Communion – Jesus' body and blood "**given and poured out FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.**"

Think of Communion THIS WAY. Here's Jesus asking you, "Do you WANT PROOF that I really do love you – **proof of just how much** I love you – **proof** that **all your sins really are forgiven** – that I really do keep all My promises? Do you want to BE SURE you **really are** a redeemed child of God – an heir of eternal life in heaven? Then COME – **'take eat – take drink – this is My body – My blood'** – the VERY SAME body and blood that I **'gave and poured out for you'** on the cross **'for the forgiveness of (your) sins.'**" Oh SAVOR Jesus' Supper and ENJOY its blessings!

III. A most gracious invitation.

"Take, eat. Take, drink. Do this in remembrance of Me." Jesus actually ORDERS us to come repeatedly to His Supper. That's not Jesus CRACKING the **whip** over us but Jesus understanding us and our CONTINUING NEED for His **love** and **forgiveness** – His **strength** and **help** and **reassurance**. If anyone thinks he DOESN'T NEED those blessings that person has MAJOR **spiritual problems**.

Understanding WHO we are – sinner guilty of **ignoring** and **defying** our Creator – understanding WHAT Jesus has all done for us and what Jesus all has for us in Holy Communion – THEN we will see Jesus' **commands** as a most gracious invitation. Then we won't ask "**How often** SHOULD I come to Communion?" but we'll instead be asking, "**How often** CAN I come to Communion?"

Indeed, it all goes back to Jesus' CLEAR and SIMPLE words, "**This is My body – this is My blood – FOR YOU.**" Amen.

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