

GIVEN FOR YOU

Luke 22:7-20

Maundy Thursday (Series C)

April 18, 2019

Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND

The gospel lesson for Maundy Thursday comes from *The Gospel According to Luke*, chapter 22, verses 7 through 20. Please stand as you are able for the Gospel. From Luke 22, beginning at verse 7, we read in Jesus' name.

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹ They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰ He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹ and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹² And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."

¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Father, these are your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

You may be seated.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

A few months ago I started doing something a little bit differently during the Lord's Supper. It wasn't a big change. Most of you probably didn't even notice, but I suspect a few of you did. It's a fairly minor thing, so if you didn't notice, that's okay. You might even think I'm kind of crazy for even mentioning it. But I did it for a good reason, so I want to tell you about it. And, even if you did notice, you might not know why I started doing this. So I want to explain it.

Instead of placing the bread in your hand right away, I hold it at your eyelevel for just a moment. I think I confused a few of you, because you reached up to grab it. You probably thought, *Oh, I have to go get it now*. But don't worry; I will place it in your hand.

I don't know if other pastors do this, but it seems like the right way to do it. I hold it in front of your eyes while I say, "This is the body of Christ." I do this because I want you to remember the first basic truth of the Lord's Supper: that it is Jesus' body and blood. I know many of you have your heads bowed, and that's obviously okay. That's a pious practice; keep doing that if you want to. But if you want to, you can also look straight at that little wafer as you hear the words, "This is the body of Christ." Go ahead. Look straight at it. See it. That cheap little piece of unleavened bread is what we're talking about when we say, "This is the body of Christ."

GIVEN FOR YOU (Luke 22:7-20)

And then I place the bread in your hand while I say, “Given for you.” And I do it this way because I want you to remember the second basic truth of the Lord’s Supper: that it is *for you*. When the body of Christ lands in your hand, you know that it is *for you*. This is that moment where you can’t say, “Jesus might be the Savior for all these other people, but my sin is too great.” When you’re listening to the absolution or the sermon, you might be able to think that the words of the gospel are for someone else. You shouldn’t, but I can see how it can happen. You think, *They don’t know how great a sinner I am. That forgiveness isn’t actually intended for me; it’s for all these other people.* That idea is wrong, but I can see how someone might think it. But when the body of Christ lands in your hand, that can’t be intended for someone else. It’s in your hand, and it goes into your mouth. I suppose you could deny the first basic truth, that it is the body of Christ, but you cannot deny that whatever that is, it is for you. The body of Christ did not miss its intended target. It landed exactly where it was supposed to: in your hand and in your mouth. It is the body of Christ ... given for you.

So there are these two movements that are intended to emphasize two basic truths. It is the body of Christ ... given for you. If you think the movement is just so minor and insignificant that you don’t care, that’s fine. You don’t have to look at it when I hold it before your eyes. And you don’t have to care about the timing of it when I place it in your hand. Whether you think about the timing or not isn’t really what matters. What matters is that you believe these two basic truths: that it is the body of Christ and that it is for you. Likewise also with the cup. It is the blood of Christ, and it is for you. These two basic truths do matter, because confessing these two basic truths is the difference between eating in a worthy manner and eating in an unworthy manner.

This is what we learned from the epistle lesson. “Whoever ... eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:27). And, “Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Cor. 11:29).

So there is a danger in receiving the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. And notice that we are talking about eating in an “unworthy manner.” We’re not talking about how you and I are by nature unworthy of this gift. Of course we are unworthy recipients. Because of our sin we are unworthy to receive any good thing from the Lord. But that’s not the point here. Unworthy sinners receive the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner when we believe these two basic truths: that it is Christ’s body and blood, and that it is given for us, for the forgiveness of our sins. To deny one or both of these truths is to eat and drink in an unworthy manner. If you think the bread and the cup are mere symbols of Christ’s body and blood, you eat and drink judgment upon yourself. This should make us pause and examine ourselves before we come to the Lord’s Table.

First we examine our own sin. The blood of Christ is poured out for the forgiveness of sins. So what sins do I have to confess? How have I trespassed against God’s Law? Consider yourself in light of the Ten Commandments. If you are a sinner, then you need forgiveness through his blood, and it is given for you. And then examine your own confession of faith. Do you confess that this is Christ’s body and blood? You might still have doubts. It’s hard to believe that this cheap little wafer and this little plastic cup contain the body and blood of Jesus. I know that’s hard to believe. But there is a difference between struggling through doubts and outright rejecting it. So what do you confess? Yes or no? Is this the body and blood of Jesus Christ? If your answer is *yes*, then you may eat and drink in a worthy manner.

GIVEN FOR YOU (Luke 22:7-20)

But what do we do if your answer is *no*? Many good and sincere Christians deny that the bread and wine are truly Christ's body and blood. They see it as a mere symbol. And it's natural to think this way. Even though Scripture always speaks of it as a reality, and never as a symbol, our natural minds naturally interpret it as a symbol.

I see this whenever I teach the Lord's Supper in confirmation class. I ask the students, "Are the bread and wine really the body and blood of Jesus Christ, or do they merely represent the body and blood of Jesus?" And, at first, most of the students say, "They just represent Jesus' body and blood." Then we go back to the passage where Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. We look at his words, and I ask them, "Does the word 'is' really mean 'is'?" Then they start to rethink their answer. This is one of the reasons we do confirmation before admitting them to the Lord's Supper. It is important for us to know what we are eating and drinking so that we might receive it in a worthy manner.

It is all too easy to miss the miracle. It is too easy to forget the promise of Christ. And so, somewhat understandably, many good and sincere Christians deny the bodily presence of Jesus Christ. It's even possible that you, even though you're in a Lutheran church and are probably a member of this Lutheran church, it's even possible that you deny this basic truth. So what should you do? What do we do if your answer is *no*? To eat and drink without recognizing the body of Christ is to eat and drink in an unworthy manner and bring judgment upon yourself. This is not good. So what should you do?

Some pastors would say, "Don't take it." And you know what? That's not bad advice. We recognize that not everyone buys into what we confess. If that's you, you can stay in your seat; no one will think less of you. If you still want to come forward, just cross your arms over your chest. That's the universal Christian symbol for, "I would like a blessing, but not the Sacrament." That's okay. This is hard to believe. So if you don't confess the bread and wine to be Jesus' body and blood, you don't have to take it. That's good advice.

But there is still a better option: change your mind. Listen to the words of Jesus, and believe them. Our two basic truths come straight from Jesus' mouth when he instituted the Lord's Supper: this is the body of Christ, and it is for you.

Consider the words of Jesus when he instituted the Lord's Supper. It's recorded in four places: Matthew (26:26-29), Mark (14:22-25), Luke (22:14-20), and 1 Corinthians (11:23-26). We heard it from Luke and 1 Corinthians already tonight. The wording varies a little bit from one to the other. They don't contradict each other, but they all contribute something different. There's usually at least one little detail that is unique to each account. The words we use in our service are a combination of all four. That's why, when you're reading through one of the four accounts, it's not going to be identical to what you hear in our communion liturgy. But what you hear in our liturgy is faithful to all four.

The same meaning comes through in all four, and there are some parts that are exactly the same in all four. One of those parts is these words: "This is my body." Jesus could have said, "This represents my body," but he didn't. He said, "This is my body." And we take him at his word. That's why we believe that the bread truly is Jesus' body.

Some doctrines are hard to explain. This one is very simple. Jesus said it, we believe it. It's almost too simple. Sometimes, when someone explains a doctrine to us, it actually helps if the explanation is a little bit longer. As they take us through step one, step two, and step three to reach a certain conclusion, it gives our brains time to process it. But the explanation of this doctrine doesn't really give our brains time to process. It's too simple for that. Jesus said, "This

is my body.” Therefore, we believe that it is his body. If you want something complicated, look up the objections to this simple doctrine. Sometimes the answers match the complexity of the objections, but it always comes back to this simple statement of Jesus: “This is my body.” It doesn’t stop being bread. It is still bread, but it is also the body of Jesus, because he says it is.

Then Luke and 1 Corinthians add the phrases, “Which is given for you,” and, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). That last phrase is part of the reason why we continue to observe the Lord’s Supper. It wasn’t just a one-time thing. It is to be received repeatedly.

When Jesus gets to the cup, there is a little more difference between the four accounts, but it’s mostly just a difference in word order. The meaning is still the same. Luke and 1 Corinthians both have something like this: “This cup that is poured out for you is the New Testament in my blood” (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). Matthew and Mark both have something like this: “This is my blood of the Testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24).

Again, we have this simple statement of reality: “This is my blood.” It doesn’t stop being wine. It still is what it has been. But it is also the blood of Jesus, because he says it is.

So we hold to this first basic truth of the Lord’s Supper: It is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ. And we cherish this truth so highly because of the second basic truth: It is given for you, for the forgiveness of sins.

This, ultimately, is what the Lord’s Supper is all about. It’s about the forgiveness of sins. It’s about receiving the salvation Jesus earned when he subjected his body to suffering and poured out his blood to death.

There isn’t some magical power in bread and wine. The power is in the work of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness comes to us through these physical elements because of the promise of Jesus. This is his body and blood, the same body and blood that was crucified and is now raised from the dead for our salvation.

This sacrament is nothing and means nothing if not for the events that took place later that evening, when Jesus was betrayed into the hands of men; and the next day, when he was condemned and crucified; and on the first day of the next week, when he rose from the dead.

When you receive the body and blood of Jesus into your own mouth, consider what this body and blood went through in order to bestow this forgiveness upon you. Consider the cross. His body was beaten. Blood flowed from his head, his back, and his hands. It dripped from his feet onto the ground. It poured from his side, mixed with water, when his lungs were punctured by a spear after he breathed his last. At the cross, body and blood were separated. At this altar, body and blood are given to you, and you receive the one Christ into your own body. Consider the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and rejoice that he endured it for you. Consider the sufferings of Christ and rejoice. That might sound weird. Joy is not always happy or fun. Here it is bitter. It is solemn. Jesus Christ gave himself into death for you. He surrendered his body to the cross. He poured out his blood unto death. Consider his bitter sufferings and death, and remember what it was for. This is his body; this is his blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Amen.